
Sewing Drawstring Bags with Ashley Nickels

Chapter 1 - Sewing a Drawstring Bag

Overview

(ethereal music) - Hi, I'm Ashley Nickels. I'm a modern quilter and a sewing and quilting instructor. I'm gonna show you how to make a really simple drawstring bag. I'm gonna show you how to make your own drawstrings and also how to finish the inside seam with a French seam so it's very polished. I like to use fat quarters for these drawstring bags. It's a really great way of using up leftover fabric or going to the store and buying fat quarters. These bags are really simple to make and I actually like to make them in all different sizes, especially maybe in a group of three. So they make a wonderful set. (ethereal music)

Materials

- To make this bag you'll need a couple of rectangles of fabric. I personally like to use a fat quarter for this project. They're really easy because you don't have to do a lot of cutting. But you can use any size rectangle you want. You'll need a cutting mat and a ruler, a loop turner, this is for pulling your drawstrings through the bag, a pair of scissors, some pins, a rotary cutter, and I always like to have some snips on hand. You'll need an iron and an ironing surface. You'll need a sewing machine with a regular presser foot. A 1/4 inch foot will do as well. And lastly, you'll need some coordinating thread. I like to use 100% cotton thread, but it's up to you.

Make Bag

Cut out fabric and sew drawstring channel

- The first thing I'm gonna do is cut off strips of fabric from my fat quarter and save them for the drawstrings which I'll do later. I've taken both of my fat quarters and I've lined them up and I've stacked them. And, I'm gonna cut off, starting here at the selvage edge, and obviously this selvage is where the sort of label of the fabric is, you know, where all the information about who designed it is, that's the selvage. But then this one doesn't have anything on it, but if you flip it you can see that it is a finished edge, so that's what we call the selvage. So what I'll do is I'll line up the edge using my mat I'll line up this edge right with one of the lines, just like that. And I'm going to cut one and a half inch strips, okay. So I'm using the lines of my ruler here, so one and a half is there, and I'll line it up here at the top as well. And cut all the way through. Okay. And now I have two pieces. Now, this isn't going to be long enough for my drawstring so what I'm gonna do now is I'll cut the same width of strip from the length of the fabric. In order to do that I'm gonna turn my mat. I know they're not totally lined up so I'll adjust, it just takes a little finesse here. And, again, we are cutting the entire length here, and we're using a one and a half inch strip, so let's find one and a half. There we are. And we'll just cut this length. And now we have two more strips, and we are actually going to set those aside to use later. The next step is to create a top hem for our drawstring bag. And I'm gonna take one of my rectangles and using my iron, you see how my rectangle is obviously shorter in width, so I consider this to be the top of my drawstring bag. And the first step is to fold down about a quarter of an inch along the whole edge, and then using my iron I'm going to press this seam down. And it's an estimate, it doesn't have to be an exact quarter inch, okay. And then, I think I'll

turn this because my next step is to do the same quarter inch but not along the entire edge. I'm gonna say that I will do this for a little more than maybe four inches. So, let me just use my ruler here and see. Yeah, so this is about good, maybe five inches. And I'll just press that down. This is just creating a nice finished edge. And then I'll do the exact same thing on the other side. It's about a quarter inch, and about four to five inches, all the way down. So, do that. Okay. And our next fold down will be to fold this down and now this is the point where you wanna just make sure that the two sides are gonna be consistent, and in order to do that I just like to make sure it's an exact two inches. Okay, so from this edge to the top edge, two inches. And I'll actually grab a pin just to hold that in place. Okay. And we'll go to the other side and see again if it's two inches. It looks about perfect. Use another pin and then I'll just press this edge at the top. Okay. You're gonna go ahead and do the exact same thing with the other rectangle, and I have mine here already done. And our next step is to sew the drawstring pathway using two straight seams. My first seam is going to be along this bottom edge and where the pin is. So let's take this over, let's take our pin out. And I'm gonna start with a good back stitch. And I'm gonna use a quarter inch seam allowance, you can also just follow the edge of your presser foot with the edge of this folded seam, it's a really good way of keeping it straight. And again, we start with a back stitch because this seam is gonna get a lot of wear and tear because it's where the drawstrings are. And then just go straight down, following this edge here. (machine whirring) And then again once we come to the edge, the other edge, we'll remove our pin and also we're gonna make sure to do a good back stitch. Our next seam, we've just done this one over here on the left, and our next seam is gonna be approximately an inch from the top edge. And on my machine I have these little grid lines here, and if you have those too that's great. If not, you can always mark this line. And I like to use this first little notch on my plate here, and line up the edge of my fabric right with that line throughout the whole seam. And in turns of sewing, it's gonna be exactly like the other seam. So I'll start off with a back stitch. And then straight down following this edge. (machine whirring) And again it doesn't have to be entirely perfect. (machine whirring) And then again we'll end with another back stitch. Okay. Go ahead and do the exact same thing for your other rectangle.

French seams

- Now it's time to sew together the sides of our bag. And in order to do that, we take right sides together but because I'm gonna show you a really cool French seam, the first thing with a French seam is that we actually take wrong sides and put them together. And I'm gonna pin around the edge, especially up here at the top, I want to make sure that these two are pretty lined up, especially where that draw string pathway is, so I'm gonna use a pin here. And then I'll pin on the exact same location on the other side, just to make sure that my draw string pathways are lined up. And then I'm also gonna place a few pins around the edge here as well. For example, maybe one over here. Maybe one at each corner. And this is also a good time to check that our bottom edges are lined up. So this one actually looks like, you know, for whatever reason we have one side that's a little longer, but that's okay. We'll use another pin on this corner. And then another one on this side. And we'll be ready to take it to the sewing machine now. The first thing that I'll do, even though it's really not connected to the French seam but important for the finishing of the bag, is I'm gonna actually stitch shut this one inch seam here at the top. So between the top edge and the draw string pathway. And I'm gonna use about a quarter inch inseam but maybe even a little less. And what I'm gonna do is start about a quarter inch from the top with a back stitch. Again, we want to make sure these are really reinforced. And then I'm gonna continue down. And make sure you do not cross

over this line here, whatever we do, we don't want to seal this pathway, because that's where our draw strings will go. And right when I get to that stitch I'll back stitch. And I might even go just back to where I started, and then I'm done. So you see what I did here is I stitched all the way up until this line, which is where the pathway starts, but not crossing over into it because I want to make sure that this is left open for my draw string, and then I back stitched up to where I started. I just did the same thing to my other top edge and now I'm ready to work on my French seam. In order to start my French seam what I'll do is you can see how where we had ironed this under, we can actually pull, I kind of want to pull it, unfold it, and pull it out as much as I can. And the cool thing about the French seam is that you're gonna actually hide this raw edge that you've sewn. I want to make sure I give it as small of a seam allowance as I can, making sure I sew through both layers of fabric. So I'm gonna use probably even less than a quarter inch seam allowance when I can. And I'll show you what I mean by that. So I'm gonna start sewing along this edge. And you can see I have less than a quarter inch seam allowance because this edge of my presser foot is a quarter inch, and I want to check, see these are perfectly lined up so I'm good with the seam allowance how it is. But if you noticed, for example, that one of your layers of fabric was a little bit smaller, you would have to kind of make up for that to make sure that you're sewing through both layers, okay? So you've just gotta kind of keep checking. Keep checking as you sew to make sure that you're gonna be going through both layers. Take your pin out when you get to one. And see how I'm kind of coming up on a place where this top layer is a little bit, bigger, and I can kind of move that over if I wanted to. Or I could make my seam allowance a little bit wider. And I'm coming up to my corner. And I'll just look, I'm okay with my seam allowance. And then at your corner, obviously you'll turn and continue with the same seam allowance. I remember noticing that my bottom layer of fabric was a little smaller, which it looks like it evened itself out. So I'm gonna keep going. Looks like maybe towards the other edge we have a little bit of a discrepancy here. So let's keep checking here. I'm just gonna kind of move this over. Take my pin out. Make sure these are lined up. And, I'm gonna, to my last corner. And now let's see about this edge, looks good. Okay, and then I'm gonna, once I get to this edge here I'm gonna pull this seam back, unfold it from where we pressed it. And then I'm done! Now I'm gonna trim the edges, and the reason why I want to make sure I do that is so that when I complete my French seam I don't have little threads poking through to the outside. So you can see how there are all of these sort of rogue threads all around the edge, and those will definitely go through to the finished edge so let's trim them all. And you know, I actually can take away some of the fabric too, as long as I am not cutting over that seam that I just did because that would obviously create a hole. And then here at the corner as well, I might actually just get rid of that whole corner. And I'm gonna turn my bag here. And then continue to, you can see like, sometimes these threads get kind of stuck in that seam as well, so we can just use a pin to kind of pull those out. Because those, we don't want to be seen again. They're just annoying. Okay. We're good there. I'm gonna actually trim some of this. And again at that corner, we'll get rid of that whole corner. And then we'll do this third edge. And then up here I think there's a bunch. Yep, see how they were hidden? Let's make sure we get all those. All right, now we're gonna turn this bag inside out, we'll remove our pins first. And we'll also be using our iron. So we'll turn it. And, using just my fingers is fine, I'm gonna pull, poke this seam as far out as I can. And we'll use the iron here, and I'll go around the whole edge and just, with my fingers, kind of flattening out and making sure this edge gets flattened as much as possible, we don't want to lose any of this seam allowance here. It'll really make our French seam much more polished. Flatten that edge, and then I'll turn my bag. You'll go ahead and iron around all three sides of the bag, and then we'll be ready to sew our last seam in our French seam. We're gonna sew all

the way around the edge starting at the bottom seam of the draw string pathway, and remember how we used less than a quarter inch for that first seam in our French seam, and so for this seam I'm gonna probably go with a five eighths or even, you know, a little smaller. And again, my machine has these lines marked. I'm gonna go between three eighths and five eighths, I believe, is what I'm gonna choose. But it's really up to you, the main idea is that you can feel with your finger where that seam is, and you do not want to get close to that, again because we want to hide that seam from the outside, so if you don't make up for that you'll have little threads poking through and probably be pretty sad, so make sure you keep that in mind, okay? And I'm gonna start with a back stitch. And then I will just continue on, and again I'm using this line as sort of a guide on my sewing machine. I'm like, a little bit bigger than a three eighths seam allowance. And then at my corner, let's make sure we leave enough. We can check, see that looks about good. I'll continue, it's the same, I'm at the same seam allowance that I had before. You're gonna go ahead and complete all three sides of this seam, making sure that you stop at the bottom edge of that pathway so that you don't sew through the opening for your draw strings.

Make drawstrings and finish

- Now we're gonna make drawstrings out of the strips of fabric that we cut from our original fat quarter. If you are gonna use ribbon, you can do that as well, but here I'm gonna show you how to make your own drawstring. Here I have the one and half-inch strips that I cut from my original fat quarter, and you'll remember that I cut two from the salvage edge, and then I cut these two from the length. So we have a discrepancy in the length which is fine, but I'm actually gonna trim these long ones down because I'll then use these little squares, scraps, to actually make some end-pulls for my drawstring. So I'm gonna come over and cut them down. I can cut them just about as long as the salvage strips. I'm just gonna do that. And then, careful not to lose these, 'cause I do wanna use those little squares. And now, I'm going to take one of the salvage strips, and one of the non-salvage strips and I'm going to sew them together. And to do that, I'm actually going to cut them on a 45 degree angle. You can see that my cutting mat here has this line, which is a 45 degree angle, and I'm just gonna take both strips and line them up together. I'm gonna actually cut them together. Careful not to waste any fabric. So I'm gonna line up right at the edge of that, 45 degree angle. Take my ruler... and my rotary cutter, and I'm just gonna cut both of these. Okay, and then I'm going to sew these together and to do that, you want to put the right sides together, and I'll use a quarter-inch seam allowance, but in order to that, I want to make sure I leave these little tabs on the edge, okay? If I sew them together end to end, it would not work out because I need to allow for a quarter-inch seam allowance. Okay, so take them and move them over slightly and leave these little tabs. And I'm gonna hold this in place with a pin before I take it over to the machine. I'm going to stitch these two pieces together. (sewing machine revving) Make sure I take my pin out. (sewing machine revving) And that's it. You're gonna sew the other strip together in the same way. And now we're gonna press open the seams. So I will take this seam, and with my finger, start pressing it open and then bring my iron over and just press it nice and flat. And then we'll do the exact same thing with the other one. Okay, and then at this point I'm also going to trim both this extra thread and this little tab just with a pair of scissors on both sides. Other one. And now we are ready to fold and press to make our drawstring. So starting, I like to start at this center seam, and I'm gonna fold in half, and then I'm gonna press down the entire length. And you can probably just start on one side and just line it up and press as you go all the way down. Move it down if you need to. And then come back and do the other side. And just, nice and easy, press it in half. And then, in order to hide

these raw edges, we're gonna press again. This time we're gonna open it up and using this center crease that we have just created, I'm gonna actually take both sides and fold them in. And I'm gonna press as I go as well. And now, be careful when you're pressing this salvaged edge, it's pretty thick and it kind of resists pressing. So just give it a few extra seconds. And we don't need to go all the way to the center, but you know, as close as you can get it. It doesn't have to be perfect. All the way down the edge on both sides. Okay, and your fabric will heat up pretty hot. So be careful not to burn your fingers. Okay, and I'll come back and do the other side. And this side should be easier 'cause there's no salvage. So just bring it towards the center, and then once we get down to the edge, our last step for pressing is we're gonna press it together. And this might be not be a entirely necessary step because that crease will still be pretty intact but it's a good step to do. And then, especially this side with the salvage, again it likes to resist pressing. Okay, and... This drawstring is done. Now I'm gonna bring my drawstring over and just stitch down the entire length. And I'm gonna use just the edge as my guide. I'm not gonna sew entirely down the middle. I'm gonna sew a little bit more towards this side where the two seams are because I'd like to flatten that. (sewing machine revving) And I just like to use my fingers to make sure that it's all flat 'cause remember we pressed this shut. So you just want to make sure that it stays, sort of stays where it should be. (sewing machine revving) And every time that you kind of noticed that it's unfolded just use your fingers. (sewing machine revving) Now we're gonna insert our drawstrings in our bag. And this is the point that we're gonna use this loop turner. This is one of my favorite tools. I like to use this for turning things and for poking corners and things. But the cool feature of this is that it has these two little things. So you can either use this little grabby thing, I don't know what the real word is, but this little grabby thing, I think my drawstring is a little thick for that so I'm actually gonna thread it through this part and then just pull it down so it stays put right there. And then how we do this, we take one end of our bag, and because of the way that we've sewn this together, it's gonna be a little tricky to find exactly the pathway. So see how my finger goes through there? But we don't want it to go through the center. We want it to actually go down this pathway. So you're gonna have to use... Use your loop turner to find that pathway. And then, just start feeding it through. Careful not to pull too much on this end. And then... Bunching it slightly, you're gonna feed it through, and then once you get to this other side, it's gonna be a little bit tricky to fish this guy out. So just kind of use your finger and help him find his way out into the world. This little guy, see how he's getting stuck on the seams? But that's okay, it'll just take a minute here. Or longer. There we go, okay. So, pulling him through. And now, don't pull him all the way through. Once the loop turner pops out, you're gonna feed directly back through on the other side. Okay. So find the other pathway, and... Woops! I guess that might just take a minute. There we go. And we're gonna start feeding him through back to where we started. And same thing here, you're gonna get caught up in these little creases, in these little seam allowances. Persevere. It will be worth it, okay. And now, here's the payoff moment because you can pull him out of the loop turner. And now, we can kind of, grab both ends evenly. And now we have one of our drawstrings fed through. Okay. And we can just leave him be, and we're gonna do the same thing with the other drawstring. This time starting on the other side. You're pretty much at the end of your bag. The last thing to do is somehow close these ends of these drawstrings. So you could tie them into a knot, if you wanted to. I personally like to make my own end-pulls. And you remember those little squares of fabric that you cut off of the original strip? That's what I'm gonna use for my end-pull, and I'll show you how I'm gonna do that. So I'm gonna take one of my little squares here and one of my ends, and there's really no real formula. I like to kind of improv this, but I think I'll try to do a little triangle for this one. So I'm gonna fold in, and this

is really where you can kind of get creative. But I think I'm gonna try for a triangle if I can. So I'm just using my fingers to kind of fold. Basically what I'm doing is hiding all of these raw edges in some way, okay. Or as many of the raw edges as I want, or as I can. I don't know that I like this. So I'm gonna actually change to a square. So I'm folding those edges in, and then I'm gonna fold them again. And I think I'm just gonna leave those little edges raw. And I'm just gonna snip these. And then, I'm just gonna slip my little... end in there, and again like I said, this is not a science because you can do kind of whatever you want. Or if you have a piece of ribbon you could use, that way you wouldn't have to worry about those raw edges. Basically, you are kind of ad-libbing and improvising here. The important thing to keep in mind is that it looks clean. Okay, so as long as you got it looking clean then you should be all set. So I think I'm happy with this. See how I folded it into kind of a square. And again, the stitching is gonna help clean it up too. So let's put a pin in and we'll get the other side ready for stitching. I'll take this over and I'm gonna sew a little bit of a square pattern onto my end-pull, and I'm gonna start here in the middle. Take out my pin. And again, remember that the purpose of this is to reinforce this drawstring. So you want to make sure that you give it a few times around. So I'm gonna go kind of like in a square-circle. If that's an expression. But I'm just gonna kind of swing it around. (sewing machine revving) And so, it's obviously the purpose is to reinforce this, but there's no reason why we can't also be decorative. So I'm just gonna kind of start a little spiral towards the center. Woops, I'm getting a little close, but that's okay. And then, come more towards the center. Keep spiraling. And then come back around. And I like to kind of end where I started. So I'm gonna come back here. And you can see, how I started and stopped in the same spot, sort of, and I created a little pattern. And now my end-pull is done. Now your bag is done. And this is a really good time to go ahead and press the whole bag. And you'll notice that your tabs look really great. And you can give them a pull. They're really fun and easy to use and open back up. And this is a nice time to observe the inside of your bag and how beautiful that French seam turned out. And it's just a really, this one is a really cute one. And I have a few variations to show, as well. I have just a different color in the same size. So this was also made with two fat quarters. And I also have a smaller size that I made using one fat quarter. So you can see, once you know how to make one size, you can really start making these bags in any size that you want. As you can see, there are a lot of possibilities with this bag. And for as little amount of time as it took us to make it, it's actually a really polished final project, and because of that French seam we've hidden all of the raw edges, meaning that this bag is gonna wash really well. So I hope that you have a lot of fun making this bag.