I love a tote bag, because I seem to always have lots of non-purse suitable items to carry- children's toys, files, magazines and books, liters of vodka. (Just seeing if you were paying attention.)

This tote is a 14" x 11" x 3-1/2" deep tote with one exterior pocket and two interior pockets- one zippered. It is designed for hard wear with two layers of fabric at the bottom and straps that won't rip off. Fabric shown on the exterior of the bags above is Brown Sunflower and Black/White Victoria. The totes below are made from fabrics in the Modern Flora Collection.
Materials Needed:

- 1 yard fabric for exterior of bag
- 1 yard fabric for interior of bag
- 1/3 yard fabric for contrast bottom
- 1 yard of heavy stabilizer (I used Pellon 70)
- piece of closed cell foam 3-1/2" x 13-1/4" (I use 3/16" to 1/4" thick- see footnote 1)
- 2-1/2 yards of 1-1/4" heavy duty cotton webbing
- 1 8" long zipper (if inside pocket is desired)

Pieces to Cut:

- Exterior Fabric:
  1. Body- Cut 1 piece 15" wide x 25-1/2" long (if a one-way fabric, see Note 2)
  2. Sides- Cut 2 pieces 4-1/2" wide x 11-1/2" long
  3. Exterior Pocket- Cut 1 piece 8-1/2" wide x 7" long (If you are persnickety about matching the fabric, the pocket should match one side of the body 1-1/2" from the top, 3-1/4" from the side.)
  4. Bias Trim- Cut a piece 2" wide x 37" long
- Contrast Fabric:
  1. Body- Cut 1 piece 15" wide x 10-1/2" long
  2. Sides- Cut 2 pieces 4-1/2" wide x 4" long
- Interior Fabric:
  1. Body- Cut 1 piece 18-1/2" wide x 25" long
2. Patch Pocket- Cut 1 piece 9" wide x 13" tall
3. Zipper Pocket (won't be visible so use any fabric)- cut 1 piece 10" wide x 12" tall.
4. Foam cover (again- won't be seen, so use anything)- cut 1 piece 9" wide x 16" long.

- Interfacing:
  1. Body- Cut 1 piece 14-1/2" wide x 25" long
  2. Sides- Cut 2 pieces 4" wide x 11" tall
  3. Exterior Pocket- Cut 1 piece 8-1/2" wide by 5-1/2" long

Step 1:
Cut the material following the dimensions above.

Step 2:
Press down top of exterior pocket 1/2". Press down another 1/2" to hide raw edges. Place interfacing on the wrong side of the fabric and top stitch across top of the pocket.

Step 3:
Working with the largest piece of contrasting fabric (the bottom), press under 1/2" on each of the long
sides. For the contrasting sides, press under 1/2" on the top edge along the longest side.

Step 4:
Cut two pieces of webbing each to 38" long. If you want to cover your webbing, see Note 3.

Step 5:
Place the exterior body fabric right side down on a flat surface and center the interfacing on the fabric. Pin the interfacing to the fabric. Do the same with the sides. If being poked with pins drives you crazy, you can baste all around the interfacing to achieve the same thing. I like to baste with the interfacing side up as it seems to feed through my machine more evenly.

Step 6:
Place the exterior fabric pieces right side up. For the sides, pin the contrasting piece to the bottom of the sides. For the body, place and pin the contrasting bottom 8" from the top of one side.

**Step 7:**
Position and pin the exterior pocket on one side of the body, 3-1/4" from the edge and 2-1/2" from the top.

**Step 8:**
Now position the outer edge of the webbing 2-3/4" from the edge of the body, tucking the bottom raw edge under the contrast fabric by 1". Pin in place. Repeat for the other side of the bag. Mark the webbing 2" from the top to mark where you will stop stitching.

**Step 9:**
Now you can stitch the entire conglomeration together, securing the interfacing at the same time. Stitch the contrast fabric to the bottom, catching the ends of the webbing. Then stitch both edges of the
webbing and across the top 2" from the top (where you marked). For the sides, topstitch the contrasting fabric. If you pinned the interfacing in Step 5, you may also want to baste the edges of the sides to keep the interfacing in place.

Step 10:

Find the center of the long edge of the body piece and mark on both sides. The center is 12-3/4" from each edge-- I mark it with a nip of the scissors within the seam allowance.

Step 11

Find the center of the bottom edge of both side pieces. The center is 2-1/4" from each edge-- nip with the scissors.

Step 12:

Place the side pieces face down on the right side of the body and match the center marks you made. Pin the sides and body together. Mark 1/2" from each
Step 13:

Stitch between the marks on each side piece.

Step 14:

Clip the body piece where the side stitching ends, being careful to clip just up to the seam. Repeat for the other side.

Step 15:

Starting at the bottom of a side, pin the side piece to the body piece. Stitch from the bottom to the top. Repeat for the three other seams. I prefer to stitch from the bottom to the top because if your cutting was off or if your machine feeds the layers unevenly, it is easier to clean up the top of the bag that any
gunches created at the bottom.

Step 16:

Take your piece of fabric for the foam cover and fold around the foam. Stitch the fabric to the foam on three sides. The zipper foot on your machine will help you get close to the edge of the foam.

Step 17:

On what will be the inside of the bag, pin and then stitch the fabric "tail" of the foampiece to the seam allowance at the bottom of the bag. Again, you might find it helpful to use your zipper foot to stay close to the foam. Repeat for the other side of the bag.
Step 18:

Turn the bag right side out. Use your fingers or a pointy object to get the corners pushed out. If your bag isn't straight around the top, trim it down to meet the piece. Don't panic about little wrinkles ("gunches") around the corners - I haven't made one yet that didn't have a little of that.

Step 19:

Now you're working in the interior of the bag. Take the patch pocket piece and fold in half lengthwise. Pin and stitch around all three open sides, leaving an opening on the top of about 3". Clip the corners. Turn the pocket right side out, using a pointy object to push out your corners. Tuck in the raw edges at the opening and press.
Step 20:
Position and pin the pocket 3” from the lining top, 5-1/4” from each side. Make sure the unsewn opening is at the bottom of the pocket (the top of the pocket will be the folded edge). Stitch around all three sides. Be sure to backstitch at the top to enforce the pocket. If you want to divide your pocket into sections, you can stitch vertical lines on your pocket.

Step 21:
On the other side of the lining, you will place a zippered pocket. Take the piece of fabric for the zippered pocket and place it wrong side up on your table. (10” is the width, 12” is your height.) 2” from the top, mark a rectangle (centered width-wise) that is 8-1/4” long and 1/2” wide. Now pin the pocket fabric to the lining piece, right sides together, placing the pocket approximately 1/2” from the top and 4-1/4” from the sides. Stitch around all sides of your marks, using a shorter stitch length at the ends and about 1” from the corners.

Step 22:
Carefully cut down the center of the rectangle and about 1/2” from the ends, clip toward the corners as close as you can without clipping the stitching. That corner clip determines how smooth the zipper rectangle will be.

Step 23:
Turn the pocket material right side out through the zipper hole you just cut. Using your iron and steam, press the rectangle flat, working the pocket fabric.
until it is hidden when viewed from the front side.

Step 24:

Flip back the sides of the interior fabric, revealing the little triangle formed by your clipping. Stitch across the triangle to secure as shown by the black line.

Step 25:

Place the zipper under the rectangular hole and pin. Stitch around the rectangle (about 1/8” from the edge) to secure the zipper.
Step 26:
Fold the pocket fabric in half (parallel with the zipper) and pin on three sides. Stitch to form the pocket.

Step 27:
Fold the lining piece in half lengthwise, right sides together. Stitch both sides.

Step 28:
Form the bottom and sides of the lining by creating a triangle at the bottom of the side seam and stitching a 3-1/2" seam 1-3/4" from point. Repeat for the other side.
Step 29:
Place inside the bag exterior and pin around the top. Open up your seam allowances as you pin - I find it helps to trim as much interfacing from the seam allowance as you can (just down the seam about 1"). Adjust the side seams of your lining, if necessary, to get a nice fit. Baste the interior and exterior pieces together.

Step 30:
I like to use a Clover Bias Tape maker to make my bias tape - it eliminates another variable. Starting 2 to 3" inches into your bias tape, keep the seam allowances even (of the tape and the bag top) and stitch just inside of the fold created by the bias tape maker. If you didn't use a bias tape maker, stitch 3/8" from the edge as straight as you possibly can. Stitch all the around the bag, stopping 4-5" from where you started.

Step 31:
Position your bias tape around the bag and pin or mark where the bias tapes will meet. Stitch together. Trim the seam and press flat.
Step 32:
Finish stitching the bias tape to the bag.

Step 33:
Let me just preface with I am not a good bias tape sewer, so if I can get this to work, you can too. Fold the bias tape over to the inside of the bag and pin in place. Do your best to keep the same amount OR MORE bias tape on the inside. Stitch around the outside of the bag on the edge of the bias tape, making sure you also catch the inside bias tape.

Closed cell foam is a dense, thin foam that doesn't compress much. It is usually black, blue or white. It is not the cushy yellowish foam you find in your seat cushions. Where do you find closed cell foam? The easiest solution if you want just a little is to buy Foamies or another brand of foam sheets at a craft store and glue them together to get a thickness of a 1/4" or so. If you want closed cell foam in bulk, find a marine or auto upholstery business. If you're lucky, maybe they will give you a small piece to play with before you commit to a 10 yard roll! I'm sure you could also find it on the internet, but it is bulky (and thus expensive) to ship.

If you can't find any closed cell foam, your next best option is chair cushion foam or cardboard. The disadvantage of chair cushion foam is it has to be thicker (like 1") to provide any rigidity. The disadvantage of cardboard is if it gets crushed or bent, it doesn't recover. It also disintegrates when wet.

If you have a one-way fabric (the design definitely has a right side up), you want to cut the body in two pieces and stitch at the bottom. Cut 2 pieces 15" wide x 13-1/4" long. Stitch the bottoms together using a 1/2" seam allowance.

If you prefer to cover your webbing to better match the bag, just cut two 2" wide strips 38" long. Press under 1/2" along each edge (a bias tape maker makes this really fast). Apply Heat ‘n Bond to the bias tape and then press to the webbing. Topstitch along both sides of the bias tape. Repeat for the other piece of webbing.
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