

Drawstring Backpack Tutorial

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To make one bag, you'll need two 16" x 18" pieces of fabric and two pieces of cord or ribbon that are each 2 yards long (so that's 4 yards total).

Toolbox

- two 16"x18" pieces of fabric
- two 2-yard-long pieces of cord or ribbon
- two [grommets](#) and setting tool
- sewing machine
- scissors
- safety pin
- needle and thread
- straight pins
- (Optional) embroidery machine or [iron-on transfer paper](#)



Sewing the bag

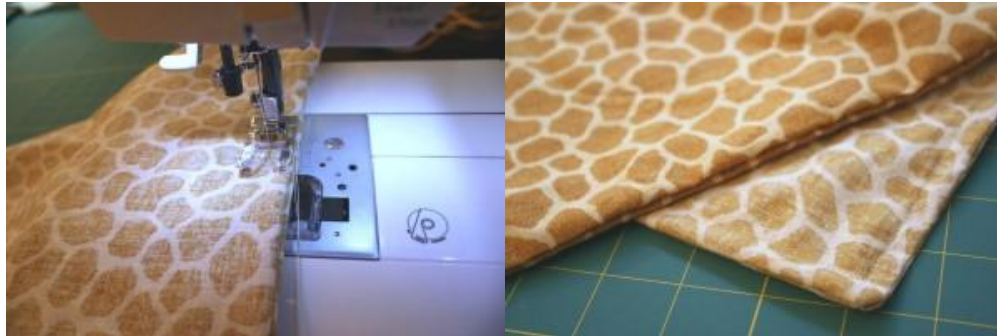
Put your two pieces of fabric together, wrong sides touching, so that the 16" sides are across the top and bottom and the 18" sides are on the left and right. Measure down three inches from the top right corner and mark the spot with a pin. Do the same on the top left corner. These pins will tell you where to start and stop your sewing, since we don't want to sew the very top three inches of either side.



Now start at one of the pins and sew along the two sides and bottom of the fabric, leaving the top (and the top three inches of each side) open. When you're done, trim the seam as close as you can (without risking cutting the stitches!) with a pair of scissors. Turn the bag inside out.



With the bag inside out, now sew again along the same three sides. Be sure that you sew in far enough to encase the edges from the first seam, which are now inside the bag. The reason for this double-sewing is to create a “french seam”, which completely hides any frayed edges and gives you a pretty seam, inside and out. I love the clean look this gives. When you’re done, turn your bag right side out again and you’ll see what I mean.



Now we need to sew the top of the bag into a pocket that will hold the cords. Turn the bag inside out and fold down the very top edge about 3/8". If you've got the time, go ahead and iron this fold flat — it will make the next step MUCH easier for you, trust me. Fold the top down again so that the ironed edge comes down to where the stitches start on the side (remember our 3" mark with the pin?). Pin in place. See how this is making a nice pocket for the cord?



Then fold the sides of the flap in so that the fabric edges aren't showing and pin them in place. Do this step for the front and back of the bag. As you do this, be sure that you don't pin the front of the bag to the back of the bag — just pin the flaps in place to make a pocket. The bag should still open with the pins in.



Now take the bag to the sewing machine and sew along the edge of the flap, where the pins are. When you get to the opening on either side, keep sewing straight and do not make any attempt to sew the openings closed. You need that gap on each side of the bag for the cords to go in and out of later.



Look at the arrows in the picture below to see where the pocket and openings are on the sewn bag.



Attaching the strings

Turn the bag right side out and lay it flat on the table. Using your favorite [grommets and setting tool](#), put a grommet into each of the two bottom corners of the bag.



Cut two 2-yd-long pieces of your cord. Take one of them and put a safety pin into the end of it. Insert the pin into the opening on the right side of the bag, into the pocket on the front of the bag. Using the [technique for threading a drawstring](#) that I told you about before, use the safety pin as a guide to push the cord through the front pocket until it comes out the opening on the left. Then feed it right back through the left opening, this time into the pocket on the back of the bag, and push it through until it

comes back out the opening on the right side of the bag. The cord should have made a loop around the whole top of the bag and both ends should be hanging out the opening on the right. Remove the safety pin from the end of the cord.



Now take the other cord and put the safety pin into the end. Mirror the technique you just did, this time starting on the opening on the left side of the bag. Push the cord through the pocket on the front of the bag, from left to right, until it comes out the opening on the right. Then feed it right back into the opening and this time go through the pocket on the back of the bag, ending up back at the opening on the left. Both ends of the cord should come out the hole on the left now. Here's a diagram showing how the two cords (indicated in red and yellow) are positioned in the pocket.



Take the two ends of the cord that are coming out of the right opening and line them up nice and straight, and push them through the grommet in the lower right corner. Tie them in a knot on the back and trim any excess.



Repeat with the cord on the left, pushing it through the grommet on the lower left corner, and tying a knot on the back.



The result

Look, the bag is done! All you have to do to close the bag is pull on the two cords. Because we doubled them up in the pocket, a simple pull will automatically gather up the top of the bag and close it with minimal effort. So cool!

