

## Small Wheelchair Tote Bag (for attaching to arm of wheelchair)

Editor's note: The original instructions for this bag came from Geneva in Florida, whose quilt guild--the Creative Quilters of Citrus County--made 735 of these for "Make A Difference Day" in 1997 to give to nursing homes in their county. They were designed to tie to the arm of a wheelchair so the person would have easy access to small personal items like paperbacks, notebooks, tissues, etc., without having to ask for help.

In re-writing and illustrating Geneva's instructions, it became very clear that there is no one "right" design for such a tote. Wheelchairs vary. So do the people in them. While this bag design will work for many, it will not work for others. Some people will want a longer bag; some will want it shorter. Some people will want to use it on the inside of the arm, others will want it flipped to the outside. Still others will prefer to tie the bag to the back of the wheelchair, or to use it with a walker (and will probably want it longer).

All of this is to say, before making 735 of these totes <g>, you might want to check with your local nursing home to determine that the design will work for them... or ask how it might be changed to better suit their needs.

--Nancy Restuccia

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### *For a Finished 13x5-inch Tote Bag You'll Need:*

- One 14"x14" piece of fabric (something fairly sturdy; colorful is also nice--e.g., home-dec fabrics, bottom-weight cottons and poly/cottons, twills)
- Two yards of twill tape, cording, or ribbon (nothing slippery) for ties

### *Construction:*

1. Cut tie material into two 1-yard pieces; fold each piece in half lengthwise.
2. Pin or baste folded end of each tie to the right side of fabric, positioned two inches down from top on either side, folds of ties aligned with raw edges of fabric.

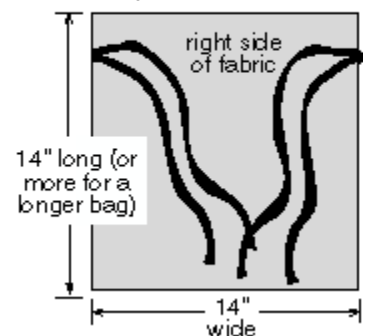
Fold fabric right sides together; stitch side seams; reinforce stitching over ties



3. Fold fabric in half widthwise, right sides together (covering ties).

4. Stitch side seams using a 1/2" seam allowance, catching ties in stitching; reinforce ties by stitching again within the seam allowances.

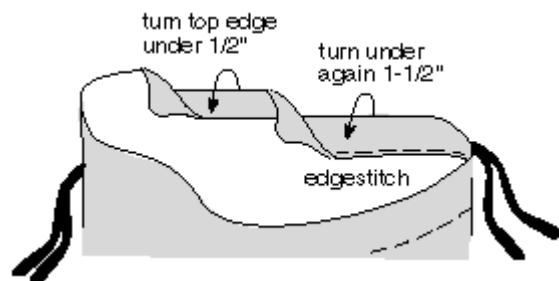
Pin or baste folded ends of ties to right side of fabric, 2" from top at either side



5. Finish raw edges (serge, zigzag, bind, pink, etc.).

6. Turn top raw edge under 1/2"; turn under again another 1-1/2" (to the point where the ties are attached); pin. Edgestitch along fold to secure hem.

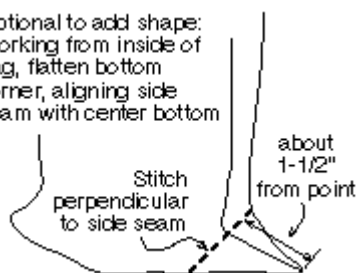
7. Turn right side out and tie bag to arm of wheelchair.



**Optional to add a bit of shape (insert between steps 5 & 6 above):**

- With bag wrong-side-out, flatten one corner to create a triangular point, aligning side seam along center-bottom line.
- Pin; stitch perpendicular to the side seam, roughly 1-1/2 inches from point.
- Repeat for other corner.

Optional to add shape:  
Working from inside of bag, flatten bottom corner, aligning side seam with center bottom



**Variations:**

- Add an inner pocket (or two or three or) for medications, eyeglasses, etc. It can be as simple as cutting rectangles in the appropriate sizes, then hemming, folding, and edgestitching them to the inside of the tote fabric between steps 2 and 3 above.
- Add a lining of coordinating or contrasting fabric. (If adding pockets, stitch them to the lining fabric.)
- Substitute "ties" made from strips of matching fabric that attach to the wheelchair using buttons and buttonholes. If buttonholes aren't your thing but you like the look, consider using heavy-duty snaps and stitching buttons on top to simulate a buttoned closure!

From <http://www.make-it-easy.com/wheel2.html>