

Making a Desert Bag

The Materials

- 1.1m of 140cm or 145cm wide fabric, *after* washing
- About 7m of strong cord or rope - old fashioned washing line works a treat
- Play Sand

The finished, usable, internal size of the desert bag should be 61cm by 81.5cm (24" by 32").

When buying fabric ...

Use strong upholstery or curtain fabric ... desert colours are best, so that they blend with the sand.

Two pieces of thinner fabric sewn together also work. But don't be tempted to bond them together, as this can make the bag stiff.

If you are using a single layer of fabric, please make sure that it is tightly woven or has a rubberised lining, otherwise you might just be making a fancy sand sieve ... and, yes, that has happened.

The fabric also needs to be flexible enough to be drawn up into a bag. Check that it 'scrunches-up' before you buy it.

The velvet types of fabric are very attractive, but they often shed lots of little bits of fibre, so are not ideal for people with asthma, either when sewing or working with the finished bag.

To wash or not?

I recommend that you wash the fabric before you make the bag. This will remove chemicals that have been used in the manufacturing process. If you think that the fabric will shrink, then it is probably best to buy 1.2m or 1.3m of fabric, to allow for shrinkage. Not all fabric shrinks, but there is nothing worse than washing it to find that it is only 1m and you don't have quite enough.

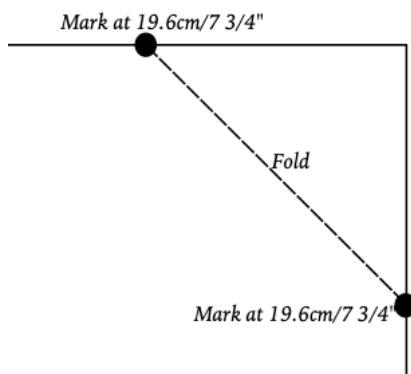
Cutting

After washing, cut the fabric to 105cm by 125cm (41" by 49"). This allows for the folds in the fabric.

Sewing

Make sure that the edges won't fray. You can do this using an overlocker or by doing a zig-zag stitch on a sewing machine.

Mitre and Sew the Corners

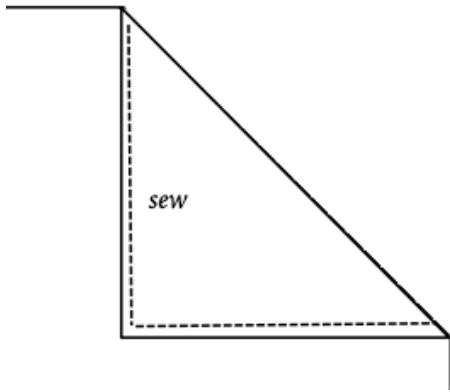


Mark out the mitred corners to 19.6cm (7 3/4")

Pin

It is a good idea to iron these flat, as it gives a flatter finish.

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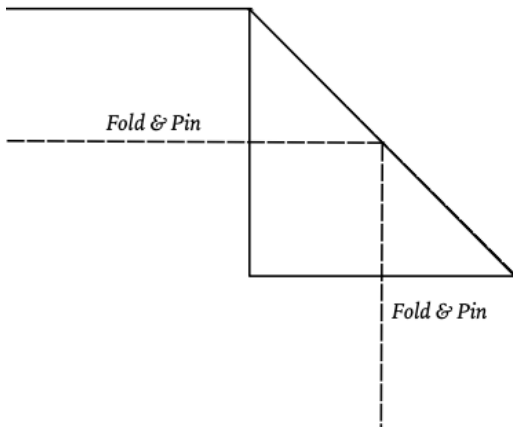


Sew the mitred corners.

Sewing these means that there is nothing for the cord to get stuck in when you put it through.

Repeat this for all four corners.

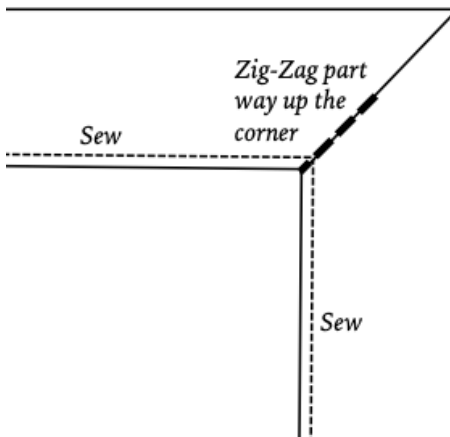
Fold and Sew the Hem



Once you have the corners sewn, fold and pin the edges.

It is sometimes a good idea to iron these as you fold them, and then pin.

The fold should give you about a 9.5cm/3.5" hem – this allows for the thickness of the fabric.



Sew round the hem and part-way up each of the mitred corners ... please remember to leave a gap for the cord to thread through.

I usually sew round the whole hem with a zig-zag stitch. I zig-zag each of the corners and then back stitch over this, back to the hem. This makes the corners a little stronger.

I sew around a second time with a straight stitch.

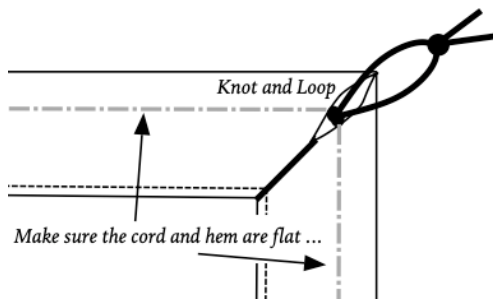
Adding the Cord

Thread your thick cord or rope through the holes in the mitred corners to create a drawstring bag.

I usually put the cord through the whole bag first. Then I pick a 'starting' corner and measure 46cm/18" of cord and pin it to the bag – so that it doesn't slip through.

I then work round the bag, making a loop at each of the other corners. At each corner, I make sure that the hem before the corner is flat and the cord isn't pulling at all. Then I measure a 31cm/12" loop – so 62cm/24" of cord – and I tie a loop knot to secure it.

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Once you are back at the 'starting' corner, again make sure that the hem is flat and the cord isn't pulling. Tie a loop knot at this corner and another knot at the end of this loop, to join the two ends of your cord together, giving yourself about a 31cm/12" loop. Cut the ends even.

Add the Sand

Fill with **dry** sand. I have found the best way to dry sand is just to put it in the oven – whenever you have the oven on, add a tray of damp sand and allow it to dry.

It makes for interesting dinner conversation and sometimes makes your house smell of the sea. You can also dry it with a hairdryer or by just leaving it somewhere warm and wait for it to dry.

Please remember that oven dried sand is very hot when you first take it out of the oven.

And Play ...

Enjoy the stories of the many wonderful and important things that happened to the People of God in the desert.