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**Fabric Holiday Bags**

**By Joyce Moseley Pierce**

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by: Joyce Moseley Pierce – 641 words

As my children were growing up, it always bothered me to buy wrapping paper only to see it ripped open and thrown in the fireplace or trash after Christmas gifts were opened. I tried using comics but soon discovered I didn't like the black newsprint it left on my hands and everyone else's. For me, gift wrap was right up there with fireworks – we spent good money only to see it go up in smoke. I began to look for a solution.

I bought craft paper and stenciled things on it, but still, I felt the paper was going to waste. Then one year after Christmas I saw holiday fabric on sale and had an idea! I bought yard after yard of it on clearance and brought it home to make gift bags.

I cut the fabric in various sizes. Sometimes I only got 2–3 bags out of a yard, but I knew that they would be able to hold the bigger items, and better yet – I would be able to reuse them next year. I basically cut and sewed them like a pillowcase. I sewed a seam up three sides and left the top open. Then I turned that edge in slightly and stitched it on the machine to finish it off.

Then I folded it in about 3 inches (or more on bigger bags) and hemmed it. I then put another row of stitching about a half inch above that one to create a casing for the ribbon. I slipped a piece of ribbon through the

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casing and tied it shut. If you have noseey kids, you may want to tie a knot!

Once the gifts are stuffed in the fabric bags and poofed up with tissue paper, stand them up around the tree and enjoy your creative artwork! They look like miniature Santa bags. The best thing, besides the fact that in the long run you are saving money by not buying wrapping paper, is that you don't spend hours wrapping the gifts and don't need scotch tape or bows. One satin ribbon will last the lifetime of the bag. I still use gift tags and punch a hole in them so

they can be run through the ribbon. You might save old Christmas cards and cut them up for gift tags.

At first my kids hated it – I guess they liked the sound of the ripping paper and the big mess it created. As years went by, I was determined to make this work, and feel I have now succeeded. I continue to buy fabric occasionally because my family has grown and now includes in-laws and grandchildren. I make the bags big enough that I can insert a shirt box, or whatever size I may be using. Sometimes I just wrap the item with a lot of tissue paper and then stuff it in the fabric bag. Tissue paper allows people to hear the crunching of paper and seems to satisfy the need for noise! Tissue paper is also reusable for the same purpose next year. Just fold it up and put it away with the bags. All of the bags can be folded and stuffed inside the largest bag. You can save space, time, and money.

If you have wrapping paper left over from last year (some people unwrap gifts and save the paper) try running it through a shredder to use as stuffing for your bags. The fuller the bags, the cuter they look under the tree.

Use whatever fabric catches your eye or whatever is on sale. I like the red and green holiday fabric, but I've since incorporated some blue and gold into the group. Even plain muslin or pillow ticking can look good if you spice it up with fancy ribbon. Be creative.

Joyce is a freelance writer and owner of Emerson Publications. She is the creator of "All They'll Need to Know," a workbook to help families record personal and financial

information.<http://www.emersonpublications.com/pages/843554/index.htm>She is also the editor of The Family First Newsletter, an ezine for families with young children. To subscribe: <http://www.emersonpublications.com/pages/848640/index.htm>

### **Leather Handbags**

**By Amanda Pavis**

There's no such thing as too many leather bags. Because of their durable fabric, and how wear-and-tear actually add texture and actually make them look better, leather bags are the ideal for "everyday" use—perfect for everything from work to the church cake bake.

In fact, if you're going to spend thousands of pounds on a designer bag, then get classic brown or black leather bags. It's the best, and most practical, fashion investment you can make.

Leather bags come in many shapes, colors and styles. Aside from the basic black and brown leather bags, you can also find dyed leather bags in every shade from baby pink to a bright lime green. These "trendier" leather bags are great for adding a little spice and style to the standard suit.

Designers are also injecting a lot of playfulness into their lines of leather bags, by incorporating other fabrics and unusual accents.

You'll see leather bags with Swarovski crystals and metal studs, leather bags with faux fur trim, leather bags with fine Indian embroidery, leather bags with jewel-encrusted buckles.

Designers are also developing new shapes, including 2005's hobo bag and messenger bag. This indicates that leather bags, while classic, can still be very, very "now."

How can you distinguish authentic leather bags from fakes? The smell. Genuine leather has a distinct aroma that faux leather just can't fake.

Quality leather bags should also be free of any scratches, scuffmarks or fine lines.

Leather bags will last you a lifetime if you take care of it properly. Don't store leather bags in damp, dark places as the material will crack and flake (and periodically take the leather bags out to aerate them).

Leather bags should be wrapped in soft tissue before storage to avoid scratches.

If stained, leather bags should be brought to the drycleaner's—don't submerge in the wash, as leather bags take a while to dry and can get moldy!

If you're a working woman, ideally you should own at least 4 types of leather bags: structured leather bags (like a purse or shoulder bag) for the office, larger leather bags for travel, and rectangular leather bags for documents and files.

Amanda,s Comments are for the best information visit the

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