
Supplies and Tools

binder clips	pens or pencils
burnishing tools or	rulers
wooden craft sticks	scissors
cardboard (lightweight) or	Styrofoam trays
heavy card stock	thimbles
containers to sort	
materials	
embroidery floss and	
needles	
glue sticks	
hole punches (heavy-duty)	
packing tape (high-	
quality) with dispenser	

Materials

buttons, snaps, beads for closures and embellishments
clear vinyl (available at fabric stores) or a clear vinyl
 shower curtain
heavy cording
leather or plastic cord or embroidery floss for lacing the
 panels together
pictures to create the panels; 10 pictures per bag (Look
 for pictures in recycled calendars; magazines [the
 heavy, glossy travel or fashion magazines work best];
 and garden, nature, animal, or children's picture
 books that are worn and on the "throw away" list.
 Book dust jackets, comic book or graphic novel
 pages, photos, large postcards, posters, or large
 graphic magazine inserts also work well.)
ribbon and/or strapping for the handles

Step 1: Choosing Materials

Read all the instructions first!

Have two or three teens at a time go to the side table to choose their pictures, strap and lacing materials, vinyl, and closures and embellishments and take them back to their places. Each participant will need ten pictures, two for each panel.

Step 2: Laying Out the Design

Choose your largest pictures for the front and back panels of the tote. Your choices will determine the final size of your tote. Trim your pictures as needed to make them neat and even (use your ruler). You should end up with four pieces for the front and back. Choose which pictures you want to be facing out and which to face in. Then put the pictures aside.

Tip: Look at your pictures closely and center them so that the best part or color of the picture shows and is framed well.

Cut your side panels as tall as the front and back panels. Then cut the width of the side panels to, at most, half the size of the front and back panels. It's very important that both of the side panels are the same size, so you may want to cut them at the same time. Again, you will end up with four pieces for your side panels. As with the front and back, choose which images should be facing inside and which should be facing out. Line them up and set aside.

Cut the bottom panels. These should be as long as the front and back panels and as wide as the sides. You will end up with two pieces for the bottom. Again, choose which image should be facing up into the inside of the tote and which will face down outside.

Take a quick measurement to make sure all your panels will match up.

Step 3: Forming Panels

Glue the pictures for each piece of each panel together, back-to-back. If you are using pictures on lightweight

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paper, you will want to reinforce them with thin cardboard. Measure and cut the cardboard to the same size as the pictures. Glue the pictures onto the cardboard.

Make sure each image is facing in the right direction!

Step 4: Planning Your Handles

Decide if you want long handles for a shoulder bag or shorter handles for a shopping or purse-type bag. Using the cord, ribbon, or other strap supplies, cut your handles 2 inches longer than the desired length.

You can attach the handles in one of three ways:

1. Arrange the handles centered on the *inside* of the front and back panels allowing for a 2-inch overlap. Glue into place on the inside of the panel and tape over with packing tape.
2. For a single strap or handle, arrange the handle centered on each side panel, glue into place, then tape over with the packing tape.
3. Sew or grommet the handles to the front and back panels or to the side panels. (These handles would be attached to the tote after it is completed.)

Step 5: Cutting the Vinyl

Once the teens have their panels prepared, give them the clear vinyl pieces.

Fold or layer the vinyl. Carefully trace around the edges of the picture panels onto the vinyl and cut on that line. You will need two pieces of vinyl for each panel.

Sandwich the panels between the two pieces of vinyl and lay out to make sure everything fits well.

Step 6: Taping

For this step you will need to clear your space.

Start with the front panel. Line up the picture panels and the two vinyl pieces and clip into place with binder clips. Keep the edges as even as possible.

Pull out a strip of packing tape long enough to cover the top edge of the panel. Lay the tape on the table, sticky side up. Place the panel on top of the tape so that an equal amount of tape will be on each side. Carefully fold the tape over the panel edge and smooth it into place. Watch for wrinkles or air bubbles and smooth the tape down firmly.

Continue taping all edges of the panel, moving the binder clips as needed to hold the pieces together. Check the taped panel and smooth out any wrinkles with your finger or a wooden craft stick.

Tape all the edges on all the panels in this way.

Lay out all the taped panels on the table as they will go together.

Step 7: Punching Holes

Using the premade hole punch guides, determine how many holes you will need to lace your tote together. Line up the hole punch guide on the long side of one of your side panels and use two binder clips to hold it in place.

Get your hand muscles ready and punch each hole through all the layers of the panel. Do the same with the other side, bottom, and front and back panels until complete.

Once you finish, you should have holes on each edge of all your panels, *except* the top edges of the front, back, and side panels. You can do the top edges if you'd like to add lacing for embellishment.

Step 8: Lacing

Line up one of the side panels with the bottom panel along the short edge. Make sure that the bottom panel is indeed lining up with the bottom of your side panel. Thread cord through all the holes on this edge. Tie a knot at the end of the cord (leaving a 2-inch tail) to secure the cord in place without pulling it through behind you.

Once that bottom side edge is laced, bring the back panel into place. Again line up the holes, being careful that your images are facing in the same direction. Carry the lacing over from the bottom/side seam into the first hole on the bottom edge of the back panel. Then with your next loop, lace the bottom edge of the back to the side edge of the bottom. When you get to the end of the back/bottom seam, tie off your lacing securely and clip the cord. Leave a tail to make sure things don't come unraveled. You'll go back and glue the knot at the end.

Next, lace together the back and the other side panel (top to bottom). Again tie a knot at the beginning of your lacing to make sure things stay in place. As you come to the bottom of the seam, lace through the last hole of the back side *and* the first hole of the bottom panel. Continue lacing along the bottom, and then up the other side of the side panel, bringing the front into place.

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Next, going into the finish, lace the bottom of the front panel to the long side of the bottom panel, then continue up, lacing the front to the opposite side.

As you go, be mindful of the length of your cord. You can tie a section off as you go and pick up with a new strand, but you should try not to do so in the middle of a panel edge.

Step 9: Attaching Closures

If you want to put a closure on your tote, here are three ways to do this:

1. Punch a hole in the center of both the back and front panels. Tie lengths of cording to each hole, and use as a tie closure.
2. Sew a large snap to the center of the front and back panels.
3. Punch a hole at the top center of the back panel. Thread a sturdy piece of yarn or string through the hole so both ends are on the inside of the bag, with a loop of yarn on the outside. Tie the ends in a large knot so the yarn won't slip through the hole (it may take more than one knot). This creates the loop portion of your closure. On the opposite panel, sew a large button on the outside of the bag. The loop of yarn should slide securely over the button for the closure.