

How to Create a Simple Rod Bag

When using a sewing machine, you are using electrical equipment, and as such you need to maintain a dry area all around the machine as well as the foot feed control. The foot control works just as a car accelerator—push down on the tallest part of the wedge to make it go, and the harder you push the faster it goes. When sewing, maintain a relatively steady, slower speed. When you pick up speed, it makes the feed dogs move faster as well, and the fabric can creep to one side or the other, which is not good for a very straight line of stitching. Let the machine feed the fabric—do not pull your fabric from the back of the machine, nor push the fabric from the front. You just GUIDE your fabric or your project, not steer it. There are a lot of sharp objects when you use a sewing machine—scissors you are familiar with, sewing machine needles you might not be. These can sew through fingers, even with several stitches. Not only is this painful, but you will have thread in these stitches which can cause serious infections. **KEEP YOUR FINGERS AWAY FROM THE NEEDLE AREA!**

We will be practicing sewing a straight line and doing a back-stitch with the machines on pieces of fabric so you can get used to the feel of letting the machine do the work, as well as see what a good stitch looks like. Please ask questions. When learning this skill, sometimes “how you do it” does not make sense. Please make sure I know when you have a question or problem.

When you stop your machine, always make sure the needle stays in the fabric when you are adjusting your rod bag. That prevents the fabric from doing strange things and going to different places than where you want it to. You will have to manually turn the fly wheel TOWARD you to lower the needle into the fabric. By turning the fly wheel TOWARD you, you will prevent thread knots and tangles under the machine.

Fabric: choose a fabric that has a little bit of heft. Use cotton content fabric having a smooth surface that is not fuzzy. Lighter weight cotton twill (sometimes labeled fine line twill) works very well, but can be harder to find. Denim is very heavy and will be very hard to work with. Quilting cotton is a little light.

Thread: choose polyester sewing thread. This thread has the durability needed for use, and will not rot easily. This thread can be matching the fabric (one shade darker will make it almost invisible) or can contrast the fabric. Contrasting thread will show uneven stitching much more than matching thread.

Stay with well known brands—stay AWAY from cheap polyester thread (2-3 spools for a couple of dollars). A spool of thread will make several bags.

Don't forget to fill a bobbin with matching thread. Make sure you have the correct size bobbin for your machine. When winding the bobbin, allow the machine to fill the bobbin evenly. Watch that it is not filling heavy on either the top or the bottom. It must fill evenly to give you the best stitching with the least problems. Do not fill past the edge of the bobbin—a little less than that is good. Do not wind thread over existing thread on the bobbin. Take the time to remove the base thread or use a new bobbin. Thread is not so expensive that you want to invite problems in the middle of stitching.

Needles: Most machines can use Schmetz needles or Organ needles. If using a Singer sewing machine, always use Singer needles. Universal point are just fine and readily available. I suggest using size 12. Today's needles are very strong and this size is good.

Set the stitch length at 3mm. Test the tension on some scraps of the same fabric. The stitches should look the same on the top as on the bottom of the fabric. If the thread pulls to the top, loosen the tension on the front of the machine in VERY small increments. If the thread pulls to the bottom, tighten the tension on the front in VERY small increments. Usually you do not need to touch the tension at the bobbin.

When cutting fabric for your rod bag, it MUST be cut either parallel to the selvedge (the woven sides of the length of fabric) or perpendicular to it. This keeps your rod bag straight and keeps it from twisting.

The piece of fabric for your rod bag will be cut the length of the butt section plus 1 ¼ inch for the top finish fold and ½ inch for the bottom seam plus ½ inch for the depth of the butt section, by 9 ½ inches wide for a rod with a butt section and 2 tips, which allows for one ½ inch seam along the side.

We will start by making the top finish fold. This can be folded to the inside or the outside of the bag. If folded to the outside, your ferule and tip tops will not catch when removing from the bag. We will turn down ½ inch, then turn down another ½ inch and then stitch that down quite close to the bottom fold.

We will then fold our bag the long way with the long edges together with our top finish fold to the inside of this long narrow tube.

Then we will stitch this long seam on the sewing machine. We will then stitch across the bottom. When stitching we will do some back-stitching at the beginning and at the end of the seams. This will re-enforce these ends during turning right side out, as well as during use.

The bottom/side seam allowances will be trimmed diagonally before turning so the corner will lay square. This will be done by cutting close to the right angle stitches without cutting through the stitches.

Then the fabric tube will be turned right side out. After the corners are worked out to be as square and flat as possible the bag needs to be pressed with an iron so the channels can be stitched.

You now have a nice smooth, flat tube of fabric with a fold along one long edge and a stitched seam along the other long edge. You decide which side you would like the butt section on. This will be stitched with a 2 inch channel from the top of the bag to the bottom. Then one more row of stitching will be done right between the other edge of the bag and the first channel stitching; again from the top of the bag to the bottom. These channels must be stitched the same direction to keep the bag flat and straight.

Your Rod Bag is DONE!

Suggestions for Fabric Sizes and Finished Sizes for Common Rod Bags

All with one butt section and 2 tips

7' Rod—Cut fabric : 44 ½ inches long by 9 ½ inches wide

Finish Bag: 43 inches long by 4 ¼ inches wide

7'6" – Cut fabric: 47 ½ inches long by 9 ½ inches wide

Finish Bag: 46 inches long by 4 ¼ inches wide

8' Rod-- Cut fabric: 50 ½ inches long by 9 ½ inches wide

Finish Bag: 49 inches long by 4 ¼ inches wide

When beginning this skill of making rod bags, these measurements are quite close. It is absolutely acceptable to allow more fabric when making these first bags. You can always sew a new seam to make the bag smaller, but just like your rods, it is difficult to make a rod bag larger.

If you have a 3 piece rod, the channel for the mid will need to be 1 ¼ inch wide, so if that rod has two tips your fabric will be 11 ½ inches wide.

The butt channel needs to be stitched 2 inches wide and each tip section should be stitched 1 inch wide.