

How to Make Reusable Cloth Gift Bags

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About

December 14,
2016



I'm excited about this post because it is co-written by my 8-year-old daughter who came up with the idea when trying to think of some natural and eco-friendly ways to wrap gifts this year. She sewed these reusable cloth gift bags on her own (and with the "help" of her little sisters) and is so excited to share them with you!

The 20-Year Old Paper Gift Bag

Before you can fully understand why I am so excited about these cloth gift bags (besides the fact that my child made them!), you have to understand the story of the 20-year old paper gift bags.

You see, these gift bags are infamous and one of the many things that my husband and I have in common.

We both grew up in families on budgets and while we never went without anything we needed, we certainly didn't get everything we wanted (I am very grateful for this). Many of my favorite gifts came from garage sales (and my own kids play with some of those things today). And then there was the gift bag...

The gift bag that kept on giving... itself.

You see, both of our moms were great about not being wasteful and filling up landfills before it was trendy. They wouldn't throw away a perfectly good gift bag (good for them) so they just kept being reused, year after year.

After Christmas our moms would carefully fold up the bags and pack them away for the next year. Of course, this only worked with gifts we gave to other family members, but they had a system. They also saved bags from birthday parties and reused them to give birthday gifts.

They Don't Make Them Like They Used To

I'm convinced they don't make gift bags (or most things) like they used to, because those gift bags lasted for years and years and years. I didn't realize just how long until I saw one a couple years ago that I'd gotten for the first time as a child! That meant it was over 20 years old and still kicking!

As impressive as it is that the bag lasted that long, I knew that most paper gift bags wouldn't these days and we wanted to find a better option.

Reusable Cloth Gift Bags

My daughter came up with the idea for cloth bags and this is what we will be using this year. I love that they are fully reusable, and I was surprised to find that they are really not much more expensive than buying paper gifts backs (and they will last more than 20 years!).

In fact, if you wait until after Christmas sales, you can probably find Christmas fabric at such a discount that these would actually be cheaper than disposable paper gift bags!

Reasons to Use Cloth Gift Bags

There are several great reasons to use cloth gift bags!

1. Reduce Waste

Holiday waste is a BIG problem and getting bigger!

Consider this, In the US alone, we use 4 million tons of gift wrap and decorations each year and this just gets added to landfills after the holidays! This is a 25% increase over normal waste volume between Thanksgiving and New Years.

Over two billion cards are sent and enough ribbon is used to tie a bow around the Earth... and this all ends up in landfills.

Reusable bags solve this problem... and you never have to buy wrapping paper again!

2. Easier to Wrap (and Store)

Ever spent hours wrapping presents on Christmas Eve? With six kids and a lot of in-laws, there is a lot of wrapping, even though each person only gets one gift. These bags have cut my wrapping time in less than half. Just put the gifts in the bag, tie with a ribbon and you're done!

Also, no need to try to keep tubes of partially used wrapping paper from coming unrolled in the closet or attic. These just fold up after you use them and stick them in a box until next year.

3. They Look Better

So this one is completely subjective, but I really think these bags are cuter than most wrapping paper!

The only downside to these bags is the little bit of sewing they require, though they are a super-easy sewing project. My girls (ages 3-8) loved making these!

You will need:

- **Christmas fabric of choice:** There are some really cute prints available online, but I really recommend supporting a local store and you can find some great deals on Christmas fabric after Christmas.
- **Pinking shears:** Not absolutely necessary, but these pinking shears cut the edges of the fabric in a zig-zag so it won't fray. This will help the bags last even longer and can also remove the step of sewing a hem across the top if you don't mind a zig-zag as the finished edge.
- **Sewing Machine:** My girls got a heavy duty sewing machine for Christmas last year and they've used it a lot. There are some less expensive options out there, but this one had great reviews and a good warranty. I also like that it is heavy duty enough to sew through denim, which has come in handy for some other projects.

What to Do:

1. Figure out the desired size for the bag. Remember to make them taller than you think you'll need so there is room to tie at the top. My girls made a bunch of them in varying sizes.
2. Cut the edges with the pinking shears once you know the desired size.
3. Put right sides together and pin the edges. It is important to put right sides together so that the finished product doesn't show any seams. The girls learned this the hard way with one of their first projects and asked me to include the reminder!
4. Sew a 5/8 inch seam around three sides of the bag, leaving the top side open. You can actually sew any size seam since it won't be seen.
5. If you plan to hem the top, fold it down, iron it, and pin it. Sew the seam and turn the bag inside out. The other option is to leave the zig-zag cut at the top.
6. Place a gift in the bag.
7. Use a decorative ribbon to tie the bag closed.

Cloth Gift Bags You Don't Have to Make

If sewing isn't your thing or you don't have the time (or sewing machine) to make these, there are some decent cloth bags available pre-made now. I love [these large printed bags](#) that look like they were shipped from the north pole. (They come in other colors too!)

Whatever you use, please consider using reusable options for wrapping gifts! Our over-crowded landfills will thank you.

P.S. My daughters also asked me to say "thank you" for reading their post and making their project!

What do you use to wrap gifts? Ever made a DIY wrapping like this?