

---

# EMBROIDERY CANADA

---

VOLUME XIX No. 1

FALL 1991

---



## *Christmas Gift Bags*

*by Barbara Gilbert*





# Christmas Gift Bags

by Barbara Gilbert



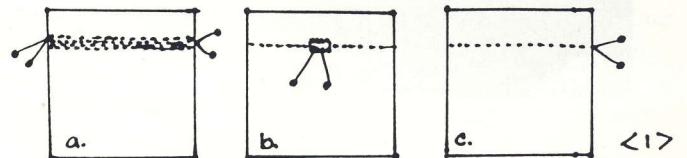
I made my first Christmas gift bag over ten years ago when my daughter, Kathleen, was just three. I had hand quilted a preprinted panel of a snowman, but I didn't want to frame the quilted picture. Instead, I used the panel for the front of a corduroy bag that held all of her Christmas gifts from Mom and Dad—rather like opening an extra stocking! The next year, I forgot about the bag, as it was packed at the bottom of the Christmas paraphernalia. As Christmas Day got closer and closer, and no gift appeared under the tree for her, Kathleen asked, "Where is my snowman bag?" And a tradition was started. Over the years, I have made one or two such bags each year. These bags have gone to special family members who always return the bags. This summer I had a real blitz of "bag making" and with it, the thoughts of my family members, the past Christmases we have shared, and of this new family tradition that I was encouraging surrounded me.

I try to use up scraps of fabrics that I have on hand. I like to use corduroy, a heavy rayon moire taffeta, quilted plaid fabric, or a duck or poplin weight fabric for the outside of the bag. The finished dimensions of the bag will often depend upon the size of the leftover fabric remnants and/or the size of the "decoration" I want to use. The "decorations" can include preprinted panels, embroidery or needlework pieces (especially kits that you enjoyed stitching, but now don't want to frame), appliqué designs, quilt designs, or just rows of ribbons and laces. I line the bag for several reasons: one, to give a finished appearance to the bag (I enjoy choosing a Christmas print to coordinate with the "decoration" that I have made on the outside of the bag); and, two, to give some additional protection for fragile gifts and to help disguise the feel or appearance of the gifts. Lining the bag to the top edge also makes it relatively easy to make the channel for the drawstring without having to remember how much fabric to add for the turn under. I use rat tail cording for the drawstrings as the rat tail is very slip-

pery and slides through the drawstring channel easily and is sturdy enough to stand up to repeated closings of the bag.

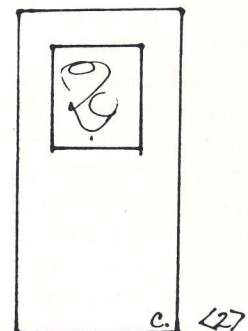
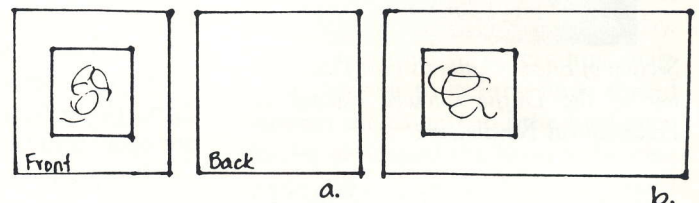
To begin, you must decide upon four things:

1. Which way the bag will close—(1)
  - a. with a double drawstring through side openings (either through holes in the side seams of the bag, or through a buttonhole in the side seam area).
  - b. with a single drawstring through a buttonhole in the very centre front.
  - c. with a single drawstring through a side opening.



2. How to make the front and back unit—(2)

- a. cut separate front and back pieces exactly the same size.
- b. cut the front and back as one unit eliminating one side seam (and thus the possible need for a buttonhole in a side seam area for a double drawstring).
- c. cut the front and back as one unit eliminating the bottom seam.





## Gift Bags

cont'd from page 8

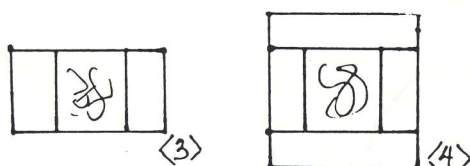
3. The type of "decoration" you have to work with—is it a vertical or horizontal design?

4. The finished size you want the bag to be.

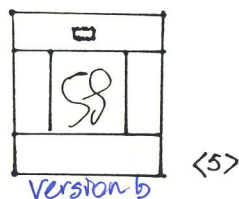
Perhaps, the easiest bag to begin with is one with the front and back cut separately. I will walk you through making a bag with a needlework piece for the front. I will use corduroy for the bag outside and a cotton Christmas print fabric for the lining. On to step 1...

1. For the FRONT: make a corduroy "frame" for the needlework piece by cutting strips of corduroy the length of the sides of the needlework piece and the width you desire to give you the finished width of the bag. Sew these onto the sides of the needlework piece. (3) (I usually use 1/4 inch seams, but this can vary as you are designing the piece!) Press the seams to one side. Now, cut strips of corduroy for the top and bottom of the "frame", remembering to make these strips a little wider than the side pieces as part of each will "disappear" into the drawstring area at the top and into the bottom edge. Sew the top and bottom pieces of corduroy onto the needlework and press the seams to one side. (4)

*Version B:* (\*Stitch a buttonhole in the centre front of your bag. Use a small scrap of interfacing under the buttonhole and cut the buttonhole open after you have finished sewing it.) (5)



*Version a*

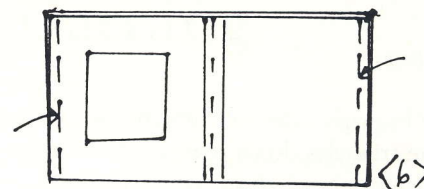


*Version b*

2. Measure carefully, and cut a corduroy BACK exactly the same size as the finished front. Cut two LINING pieces exactly the same size as the front.

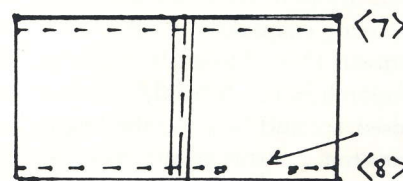
3. Sew the front and back corduroy pieces right sides together across the bottom. Press the seam open. Sew the front and back lining pieces right sides together across the bottom. Press the seam open.

4. Lay the front/back unit open, flat on the table with the "good" side facing up. Place the opened lining unit on top of the corduroy unit, right sides together, matching all raw edges. Sew across the two "top" edges (6). Press the seams open. The pressing here makes it much easier to get a nice clean pressed edge when you turn the lining inside the bag later on. You should now have a tube or doughnut of fabric!



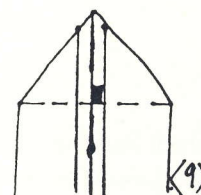
cord lining cord lining

5. Refold the large tube of fabric so that you have the corduroy pieces right sides together and the lining pieces right sides together, carefully matching the opened seam allowances of the "top" edges. Sew along **one** side completely, from the lining layer through to the end of the corduroy layer. (7) Now, sew the second side the same way. BUT, leave a three or four inch opening in the middle of the lining area. (8) Press the seams open as best you can.



cord lining cord lining

6. Sewing the corner triangles at the bottom of the corduroy and the lining to give the bag some shape or depth: refold the bottom seam of the corduroy so that it is aligned with one of the side seams. Pin the seams together, keeping the seam allowances open. Draw a line with a fabric marker of some sort, perpendicular to the seam, and 1" to 4" from the point of the triangle. (9) Sew on this line. Repeat for the other corner of the corduroy and for both corners of the lining. The amount you measure out from the point will depend upon the size of the bag and how much depth you want to give the bag.



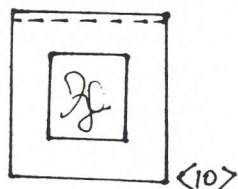


## Gift Bags

cont'd from page 9

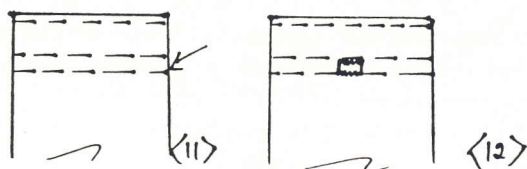
7. Pull the bag right side out through the opening in the lining. Fold the triangles down towards the bottom seams. Slip stitch the opening closed. (If you don't do it now, you will probably forget to ever do it!) Tuck the lining into the bag, and press the top edge.

8. Topstitch the top edge— $\frac{1}{8}$ " –  $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the top edge if desired. (10)



### 9. Drawstring channel:

Measure down 1" – 3" from the top edge. The measurement depends upon how much "ruffle" you want to have when the bag is closed up, and how big the bag is. Stitch around the top circumference at this measurement, starting and stopping at a side seam. I often backstitch at **each** side seam as I'm sewing this row. Now move down  $\frac{3}{8}$ " –  $\frac{1}{2}$ ", and sew around the circumference again. (11) These two rows of stitching provide the channel for the drawstring. It is important to keep the side seams of the corduroy and the lining open and lying flat here. Using a seam ripper, carefully, unpick the few stitches of the corduroy side seams between these last two rows of stitching. \*If you are making a single drawstring opening at the centre front, these two rows of stitching must be done on either side of the buttonhole you made in step one. (12) Use a safety pin to insert the drawstring into the channel in the manner you have chosen. Tie the ends of the rat tail in knots to prevent it from being pulled back into the drawstring channel.



Your bag is now finished! Pull the drawstrings up and loop them around the ruffle if they are too long for a bow. Tie the strings in double knots for those anxious recipients with "peekitis". I sometimes pad the gift with tissue paper or newsprint.

Extra details can be added to the bag fronts. Piping or cording can be stitched around an embroidery to provide an additional frame. Laces and ribbons can be combined on a moire fabric, or using a taffeta with a metallic yarn can give a touch

of elegance. Quilted fabrics provide their own padding for fragile gifts. Appliques outlined and decorated with fabric paints have an appeal all of their own. The fabrics and decorations need not be limited to Christmas ones. Family birthday bags would make a wonderful tradition, too.

After trying a basic bag, as I have described, you will be ready to experiment with different shapes and sizes. Eliminating a seam in the front and back unit simply shortens the steps slightly. Eliminating a side seam allows you to sew the ribbons or trims all around the bag in a horizontal manner, so you have no front and back to the bag. (Draw a line with a fabric marker across the width of the fabric to keep your lines of trims straight!) You will need to add a buttonhole to the corduroy layer where the side seam would have been if you plan to have a double drawstring.

Happy "bagging"!

## Book Review

by Eleanor Thomas

**Thread Painting** by Liz Hubbard in association with Guterman, ISBN 0-7153-9000-7, published by David and Charles Publishers in the U.K., available through Sterling Publishing, c/o Manda Group, P.O. Box 920, Station U, Toronto, Ontario, M8Z 5P9 for \$19.95 U.S.

This 149 page book has 38 completed projects in full colour with the sketches and diagrams in black and white. "Thread Painting" a registered trademark of Gutermann is what this book is all about. Using a simple sewing machine that has only straight stitch and zig-zag options and some practice of the exercises diagrammed, you too can produce lovely pictures. Although Liz encourages you to use the new models to the utmost, Hubbard writes about equipment, materials and colour, and textures, compositions, making the most of thread painting, and mounting. Also there are several pages on questions and answers.

Gutermann threads come on a good colour gradation, ideal for this medium, and can be obtained in a box of 10 shades in one colour. They also have a video tape on the same topic but this British tape is not compatible to the Canadian video machines. Gutermann may consider converting it, if they get enough requests.

When vacationing in England, visit the Percivale-Gutermann Stitch Studio, which has a collection of Liz Hubbard's pictures. They would be delighted to show them to you. For an appointment to view contact Mr. Peter Vogel, Managing Director, Percivale-Gutermann, Wadsworth Road, Greenford Middx, Great Britain, UB6 7JS, Telephone 01-998-5000.