

Crocheted Market Bag

from Recycled Plastic Grocery Bags

Jodi Smith



This sturdy bag is the same size as an ordinary plastic grocery sack. It can hold much more, because you can pack it full. Even when this bag is filled with cans or glass jars, it can easily manage the weight.

Wide handles are easy on your hands, even when the bag is packed full. Sturdy handle construction distributes the weight of the bag and reduces strain at the handle joints.

The bag is easy to wash, and dries quickly.

This bag is convenient for many household uses. The pattern can easily be adjusted for any size.

Feel virtuous for giving your old plastic shopping bags a good longterm use.

The 2012 directions give a slightly larger bag than the original 2005 directions. Of course, you can adjust the size of your bag however you like.

1. Materials: Plastic Grocery Bags

Ordinary plastic grocery bags are an excellent construction material. A few bags in a contrasting color will allow you to decorate the top and bottom edges of your market bag.

Some other plastic bags also work well. I have had good luck with frozen vegetable bags, and some produce bags. If the plastic tends to break or tear, rather than stretch, it is probably too brittle and not suitable for crocheting.

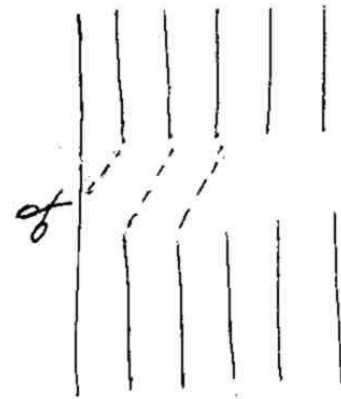
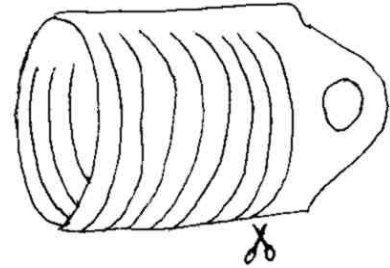
You will need 3 to 4 dozen plastic grocery sacks to make the market bag.

(This may sound like a lot, but start with what you have now. In my kitchen, bags collect faster than I can crochet.)

Cut each bag into one long spiral strip:

{steps for cutting the bags:}

- Cut off and discard the base of the bag, leaving a tube.
- Make a series of slices most of the way across the tube, and about ½-inch apart. Leave 1 – 2 inches uncut along the side of the tube. Flimsier bags can be cut in thicker strips; heavier bags in thinner strips.
- Start the spiral by snipping from the end of the bag to one end of the first cut.
- Snip diagonally from the other end of the first cut to the start of the second cut.
- Continue in this way until the entire bag is one long strip. If the strip gets broken, don't worry; you will just have to make more joins during crocheting.



Crochet hook size approximately size K

Gauge approx. 2 st/inch (if you are fussy about the size of your bag)

Always crochet with two strips of plastic together. If there is a weak spot in the plastic in one strip, the second strip will strengthen that stitch.

Add new strips by overlapping the new and old strip for about 2". (There will be three strips of plastic worked together at the join.) Tuck any loose ends into the work.

2. Base

Chain 20

(See the directions on page 4 for an easy way to pick up from a chain.)

Rows 1-40: Turn, ch 1, sc 20

Size when stretched: Width: 10", Length: 20"

3.Sides

(Optional: use contrast color for Rows 1-2)

*Row 1: ch 1, * sc around edge of the base*, join last st to first st of row (40 st each side, 20 st each end = 120 st) Notice that each corner stitch of the base gets two stitches here, because each corner belongs to both an "edge" and a "side".*

*Row 2: ch 1, * sc around *, join last st to first st of row*

These two rows give a sturdy, solid lip around the bottom of the bag.

*Rows 3 and all remaining odd-numbered rows: ch 2, * dc, ch 1, skip 1 *, join last st to first st of row (120 st)*

*Rows 4 and all remaining even-numbered rows: ch 2, *ch 1, skip 1, dc*, join last st to first st of row (120 st)*

Continue until the bag is a height you like. (A popular size is 10".)

Alternate versions: Replace any or all of Rows 5 and onward with these versions. You can make interesting openwork patterns on the sides of your bag. (I recommend, for a sturdy bag, using the ordinary dc versions, above, for Rows 3, 4, and the last two rows.)

Triple Crochet: (Each of these rows will be approximately twice as tall as an ordinary dc row.)

*Odd-numbered rows: ch 3, * tc, ch 1, skip 1 *, join last st to first st of row (120 st)*

*Even-numbered rows: ch 3, *ch 1, skip 1, tc*, join last st to first st of row (120 st)*

Double-Triple Crochet (dtr): I would have named this stitch “quadruple crochet”, but the book in front of me says it is called “double triple crochet.” Where a double crochet starts with one yarn-over, and triple crochet starts with two yarn-overs, this stitch starts with three yarn-overs. (Each of these rows will be approximately three times as tall as an ordinary dc row.)

*Odd-numbered rows: ch 4, * dtr, ch 1, skip 1 *, join last st to first st of row (120 st)*

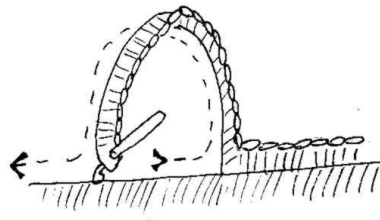
*Even-numbered rows: ch 4, *ch 1, skip 1, dtr*, join last st to first st of row (120 st)*

4. Handles

This is clever. The half-twist in the handle not only gives a flat hand-surface for carrying, but allows you to easily crochet both inside and outside of the handle in a single row.

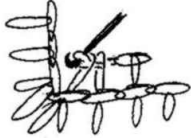
(Optional: use contrast color for Handles)

Row 1: ch 1, sc 14 along the side (not end) of the bag, [make handle: ch 40, turn work, skip 12, sc 10 along edge of basket toward start of handle, dec 1, dec 1 into back of chain, sc 36 in back of chain, dec 1], dec 1, sc 36 (along edge of basket), [make second handle], dec 1, sc 32, join last st to first of row



Row 2: ch 1; sc along entire edge of basket and handles (dec 2 at each corner between a handle and basket); join last st to first st of row

Spring-type clothespins make great stitch-markers for counting the placement of the handles.



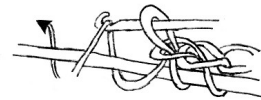
Decrease: 2 decreases make the mitered corner at the joint between a handle and the basket.

Making a Chain, and Picking Up from a Chain

I always found picking up stitched from a chain to be difficult, but I have discovered a trick that makes it much easier. (I can't be the only person in the universe who does this, but I've never seen it anywhere else.)

Making the Chain:

Use a thin rod, such as a knitting needle. A pencil or a chopstick will work. The diameter of the rod isn't really important. At each stitch of the chain, wrap the yarn around the rod. This holds those loops which you will be picking up, and keeps them from sliding into the chain and getting lost.



If you are using a single-point knitting needle, you need to plan ahead which end you will be removing the stitches from. For the base of the bag (and most back-and-forth ordinary crocheting), start at the closed end of the needle and chain toward the point. For the handles (where you will pick up the stitches in the same order you chained them), start at the point of the needle and chain inward toward the closed end.

Picking Up from the Chain.

Turn the chain upside down. You can now easily remove the stitches one at a time as you pick them up for the first row of crochet.

