Rotary Cutter Bag

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Smock - a - Long Series

Smocking Arts Guild of America
Rotary Cutter Bag
Introduction and Supply List

Welcome to this SAGA Smock-a-Long! This project is a Rotary Cutter Bag. With a little smocking and a little construction, you will have a lined, zippered bag to carry your rotary cutter, a used blade cannister, and it even has a pocket to hold spare blades!

The smocking for this project includes some smocking stitches that are not used in most smocking plates. They are not difficult, and I will give you tips on how to stitch them so that the result is even, full, untwisted stitches. The Turret Stitch, a crossover Trellis Stitch, and Bars are the 3 stitches that we will be working on this design.

Supplies:
- Outer fabric - 2 pieces of fabric, 10” wide by 9” high
- Lining fabric - 2 pieces of fabric, 10” wide by 9” high
- Pocket fabric - 1 piece of fabric that is 10” wide by 4” high
- Petite Piping - 4 pieces that are 12” long
- Zipper - 9”
- Interfacing - 2 pieces of Pellon 987, Fusible interfacing
- 1 snap
- 2 colors of Coton a broder #25 or stranded floss to coordinate with fabric
- 2 or 3 - 7 Darner needles (can use for smocking, but will use 2 for Bars)
- 10 Sharp needle - to finish bag lining.
- Sewing machine thread to match fabric
- Thread that is a contrasting color to mini-piping
- *Pleated fabric insert with 8 rows pleated

Smocking design has 4 Rows. In my construction, I attach the piping on the row ABOVE and BELOW the smocking rows, so pleated 8 rows.

Very helpful to have the following sewing machine feet:
Zipper foot, 5 Groove pintuck foot, Basic Sewing foot (straight/zzag)

Notes
- One of the outer fabric pieces will be cut in 2 for the smocking insert, and will have piping attached to both sides of the insert.
- If you don’t have mini-piping, you can make your own piping
- Inside pocket is finished on top and bottom with mini-piping

So gather your fabric, choose your smocking colors, pleat your fabric and until next time, Happy Stitching!

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Now that you have your supplies together and your fabric pleated, we will jump right in with the smocking design. I asked you to pleat 8 rows, even though you can see on the graph that there are only 4 Pleating Rows for smocking. The extra 2 rows on top and bottom are for the space between the Row 1 and the piping, and Row 4 and the piping. There is also a holding row on the top and the bottom.

**Blocking:**
Leave a 3/8” seam allowance on each side of the smocking insert, and block the pleated fabric to 9 1/4”. Depending on your fabric, you may want to take out some pleats if the pleats are packed too tight. My sample has 160 pleats.

I block my pleated fabric to the exact measurement of the piece that I am attaching to. That way, my smocking is not stretched when I attach it. If you block your fabric to a measurement that is smaller than the piece it is being attached to, then you have to stretch your smocked piece to fit, and the smocking is distorted.
Rotary Cutter Bag  Lesson 1

Fabrics and Threads:

There are many fabric and thread choices for this bag! I used a grey and yellow floral poplin from Liberty of London for the outside of the bag and the inside pocket. For the lining, I used a yellow Fat Quarter that I had in my stash, along with yellow 1/16” gingham Petite Piping. I used white Kona Cotton for my pleated insert (this also from my stash). My outer fabric consists of 3 colors: yellow flowers, white dots, and a grey background.

For the threads, I used coton a broder #25. I looked at floche, but Kona cotton is a medium weight cotton, and I think floche is a little too soft. Stranded floss was an option as well, but I like working with CaB #25 and the colors that I needed (grey and yellow) were a good match.

Tips for Smocking:

Needles:

While the 8 Embroidery or Crewel needles seems to be the basic smocking needle, there are other options as well. The goal of the needle is to get the thread through the fabric without leaving a large hole (needle is too big) or stressed fabric and thread (needle is too small). Can anyone say Goldilocks?

Depending on the thread that I selected and the pleated fabric that I am using, some of the needles that are in my smocking choices are: 8 Embroidery, 7 Embroidery, 7 Sharp, and 7 Damer.

Stitches: Even tension and smooth threads are key to perfect stitches!

Tension:

The stitches should lay on the pleats and have enough tension so the stitch can not flop around, but loose enough that the pleats don’t pinch and form little V’s at the top and bottom of the stitch.

Smooth threads:

Typically, smocking is done with 2 or 3 threads. Each stitch should have the threads lie side by side, not crossed over and/or twisted. This enables the smocking stitches to have full and consistent coverage. This is especially noticable on cable rows.
Smooth Threads (cont.)

Start with a length of thread that is 18 - 20 inches, no more! Each time you pass the thread through the fabric, the thread is wearing. When a thread is worn, the stitches are not as full. Have you ever noticed that when you start smocking with a new thread, the stitches are nice and full, but as you stitch, the stitches become thinner, even though you are keeping the threads untwisted? This is because your thread is wearing. Thread can wear faster if you are smocking on a thick or rough fabric. It can also wear faster if you are using a softer thread. If you are ‘unsmocking’, it will also wear faster. These are all in addition to the natural wearing by just smocking.

If you notice that your thread is wearing, tie off and start a new thread. In the big picture, thread is cheap!

Straight stitches:

When taking a stitch, the needle should always be parallel to the pleating threads. This is for cable stitches as well as trellis stitches. This helps to keep your stitches nice and straight. The threads follow the needle!

I like to hold my pleated fabric ‘sideways’ so the pleats are horizontal as I stitch.

As you can see in the picture on the far right, it is easy to see exactly where my needle is going in to the pleat and exactly where it is coming out of the pleat, keeping my needle straight.

Tutorials:

Here are 2 tutorials that I did for SAGA for smocking the basic cable and Trellis stitch. The links are below, and you can also find them on the SAGA Home page and on youtube.

CABLE stitch          TRELLIS stitch
Row 1: Start on the center 2 pleats with a DOWN cable. Work to the end of the row. Turn fabric around and cable the rest of the row.
Row 2 is the SAME as Row 1.
Row 3 is the MIRROR IMAGE of Row 1 and Row 2.
Row 4 is the SAME as Row 3

Crossover Trellis - This is a 5 step, 1 space trellis, traveling from Row 2 to Row 3 and Row 3 to Row 2. The middle trellis on each diagonal will cross over each other.

**As you get close to the end of each row, keep track of how many stitches to complete a trellis. It gives the pattern a nice look if you end the trellis with the up or down cable, and if there are pleats left over, finish those with a cable. This will prevent the smocking design to have a partially finished trellis at the end of each row.

-Row 2 - 3: Start at the center 2 pleats of Row 2 with an UP cable.
-Stitch a 5 step cable down to Row 3, then stitch a DOWN cable.
-Continue to the end of the row**
-Complete the beginning of the row.

Row 3 - 2: MIRROR IMAGE of Row 2 - 3.

See you next week, and Happy Stitching!

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Hello everyone! I hope you have had a fun time stitching so far. In Lesson 1, the stitches were the cable stitch and a trellis stitch. Both of these are basic smocking stitches, and a good way to start this project and get warmed up! In Lesson 2, I am going to focus on the Turret Stitch and Bars. I have a few pointers that will help your stitches look top notch!

**Turret Stitch**

The Turret Stitch is a stitch that you don’t see that often. It is created by stitching a cable row on 2 adjacent rows, and then stitching a surface honeycomb between the two rows.

In lesson 1, you stitched a cable row on Rows 1, 2, 3, and 4 (see graph for placement). For the Turret Stitch, you will stitch a Surface Honeycomb Stitch between Rows 1 - 2, and Rows 3 - 4.

*****

Typically, most smocking stitches are created by stitching over 2 pleats, an OLD pleat (the needle is coming out of this pleat), and a NEW pleat (the needle is going into this pleat).

The Surface Honeycomb Stitch is one of the exceptions to this rule. When traveling up or down, the traveling stitch is going to go in the SAME pleat that the needle just came out of. The 2nd stitch of the cable will be the NEW pleat.

A good checkpoint for this is to look at the 2 cable rows that border the surface honeycomb stitch. You can see in the graph that EVERY cable stitch has a Surface Honeycomb stitch that butts up against it. If you have a cable stitch that is not being ‘hugged’, then you have missed a stitch!

For full, straight stitches, remember to keep your needle parallel to the pleating threads on every stitch, and keep your threads untwisted. I untwist my threads every stitch or 2.
Bars

Bars are used to create a satin stitch look over the pleats. A Bar is 3 or more satin stitches, stitched over 2 pleats. (Spools are 3 or more satin stitches that are stitched over 3 or more pleats).

When stitching Bars (or spools), you have to take care not to pull the stitches too tight, otherwise the pleats will pinch together. You want the pleats to be full and straight, not piched into a V at the top and bottom.

**** Taut, not Tight is what you are striving for. ****

A great way to achieve this is with some help from some 7 Damer needles.

Insert the 7 Damers under the Bar pleats. Enter the pleats below and exit above where the Bar will be stitched. (No thread in the needles).

The needle should sit up in the top of the pleat. Having the needles vertically in the pleats will give the pleats stability as you stitch over them, helping to keep the tension ‘taut, not tight’.

The 2nd thing I do when I am stitching Bars (and Spools) is to stitch with only ONE strand of thread. Whether you are using stranded floss, Coton a Broder #25, Floche, etc., use only 1 strand at a time.

When you use 2-3 strands in the needle, the threads fan out as they come out of the fabric. This causes twisting and hinders the stitches from laying flat against the pleats. Using 1 strand (just as when you satin stitch on flat fabric), the threads can lie right next to each other, giving you a smooth finish on the top and and even stitches along the sides.
**Turret Stitch**

Surface Honeycomb Stitch worked between Row 1 and Row 2

- Start on the center 2 pleats just below Row 1 with an UP cable.
- Travel to down to just above Row 2 with 1 stitch, staying on the SAME pleat.
- Enter on the same pleat, and stitch a down cable (first pleat of the down cable is the same as the 2nd pleat of the up cable that you just pleated).
- Travel back to just below Row 1, staying on the SAME pleat, and stitch an up cable.
- Continue to the end of the row. Turn fabric and complete the row on the opposite side.

Surface Honeycomb Stitch worked between Row 3 and Row 4

- Mirror image of Surface Honeycomb Stitch between Row 1 and Row 2.

Bars: Work bars on the center 2 pleats, between Row 2 and Row 3. Fill space inside of diamond. Working to the left and to the right, stitch a bar in every 5th diamond.
Rotary Cutter Bag Lesson 2 (cont.)

Remember, Artisan Points are being offered for this!

I can’t wait to see your bags! So many fabric choices out there and a lovely way to use some of the fabric you have in your stash.

If you have questions, post them on the Smock-A-Long Facebook page and I will answer them or you can always email me.

In the next lesson, I will start on the construction. It will help immensely if you have a zipper foot for your sewing machine.

See you next week, and Happy Stitching!

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All Seam Allowances (other than zipper) are 3/8”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RS - Right side</th>
<th>RSs - Right sides</th>
<th>SA - Seam Allowance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WS - Wrong side</td>
<td>WSs - Wrong sides</td>
<td>SAs - Seam Allowances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clip refers to the pinch clip (like a Wonder Clip), NOT cutting.

Now that the smocking is finished, it is time to move on to the construction. The bag is not only lined, but also has an interfacing that gives it some body. I will have you prep everything first and then start sewing!!!

Pocket: The pocket (10” wide by 4” high) has Petite Piping on the top and the bottom.

*** TIP ***

When attaching piping, it is going to be sewn 3 times:
1st, when it is made
2nd, when it is sewn to a garment piece
3rd, when sewn between 1st and 2nd garment piece.
The first 2 times it is sewn, you want to place the needle close to the enclosed piping cord. I usually place my cord in the 2nd groove from the left and move my needle position 2 spaces to the left of center (in my machine I have the option of 5 to the right and 5 to the left).
The 3rd (and last) time it is sewn, place the needle RE-ALLY close to the cord. I keep the piping cord in the same groove and move my needle position 4 to the left of center.

1) Attach Petite Piping to the top edge of the pocket on the RS.
To have a finished seam, trim the INNER piping seam allowance and the pocket fabric to 1/8”.

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Turn the seam allowance (SA) to the wrong side so that the piping is at the top of the pocket.

With the pocket WS up and the piping at the top, turn under the long edge of the SA and pin in place.

Stitch down, close to the edge. I used an edge foot or stitch-in-the-ditch foot. This will finish the top edge of the pocket.

Sew petite piping on the bottom of the pocket.

Turn under and press, so that the cord is at the bottom and the SA is on the wrong side.
Attach pocket to Lining rectangle

Measure 6” down from the top of the Lining rectangle and mark.

Lay the pocket (RS together) on Lining Fabric. 3” of Lining rectangle will be under the Pocket, and the finished piping edge is at the bottom. Pin in place.

Using your 5 groove pintuck or grooved foot, sew to Lining. This will be the 3rd pass, so needle should be REALLY close to piping.

Fold pocket up so the WS of pocket is on top of RS of Lining fabric. Press.

Top stitch along piping at bottom.

Baste pocket to Lining along each side.

Sew snap on inside of Pocket and match on Lining at top center of pocket.
Insert the smocked insert into the one side of the outer fabric.

There are 2 outer fabric rectangles (10” wide by 9” high). One of these will have the smocked piece inserted. After it is inserted, you will trim to the original 10” wide by 9” high. (It is easier and more forgiving to trim afterward than to cut to the exact size and be a bit off).

Start by cutting the rectangle in half, horizontally (you will have 2 new rectangles that are 10” wide by 4.5” high).

Attach piping to one long side of each of the 10” by 4.5” rectangles.

Fold the piping SA to the WS so that the piping cord is at the edge.

***The directions asked for 8 rows of pleating.

There are 4 rows of smocking and I attached my piping/fabric on the row ABOVE and BELOW the smocking so there is a ‘space’ row between the smocking and piping (see picture), using a total of 6 rows. Add in another row on the top and bottom (holding rows) for a total of 8 rows.

***

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Lay the piped piece of fabric on top of the pleated fabric, matching the center of the fabric to the center 2 pleats.

Line up the piping so that it is even with the pleating thread on the row above the smocking.

Pin piping/fabric to center of the pleated fabric, then pin the at each side. Smooth out the pleats so they are evenly distributed and pin to secure the piping/fabric across the pleated insert.

HAND BASTE the piping to the pleated fabric. **DO NOT stitch through the outside fabric (the fabric the piping is attached to). Only stitch through the PIPING and the PLEATS.** You can see the dark pink basting thread in the picture above.

Start in the center and work to one side. Then return to the center and baste to the other side. Pick up the very top of the pleat and baste to the piping. I usually pick up about every other pleat. Once the basting is complete, look at the insert. Are the pleats spread uniformly across the width? Are the pleats standing up straight?
Once you are satisfied with the way the pleats look, fold the Outer fabric down so that the RS of the Outer fabric is next to the RS of the insert, with the piping sandwiched between. When looking at it, you will see the WS of the Outer fabric on 1 side and the WS of the smocked insert on the other.

You can see in the picture above where I have folded the Outer fabric down, and you are looking at the WS of the fabric.

Using a 5 groove pintuck foot (or other grooved foot), sew the Outer fabric to the insert, using the piping as a guide.

*** This will be the 3rd and final time this piping is sewn, so on this pass, you want the stitching to be REALLY close to the piping cord. On my machine, (Bemina, using the #31 foot), I put the put the piping in the 2nd groove from the left and move my needle position 4 clicks to the left. ***

After you finish the seam, carefully remove the basting stitches.

Repeat for the bottom of the smocked insert.
The 2 Outer fabric rectangle need to be fused with the Pellon 987 interfacing. I fused the Outside with the smocked insert AFTER the insert was added. I did not want the bulk of the interfacing in the seam allowance.

*** Tips for Fusing ***

I use a teflon sheet when fusing to keep my ironing board safe! No matter how many times I check, accidents do happen, and I hate a gunky iron or ironing board!

The heat of the iron passes through fabric more easily than through thick interfacing, so when fusing together, have the fabric on top of the interfacing, with the teflon pressing sheet on top of the fabric:
Bottom - interfacing with glue side up
Middle - Fabric - RS up, WS next to the glue side of the interfacing
Top - Teflon pressing sheet

Speed along the process by ironing the fabric first, to heat up the fabric before laying it on top of the interfacing.

It can be easier to start fusing with a piece that is a larger dimension that is required and then trim down to size.

***

Fuse the 2 Outer fabric rectangles. Check for finished size of 10” wide by 9” high.
***Remember to orient the fabric so that it is 10” wide and 9” high.***

Mark a 1.5” square on the bottom right and bottom left corners of BOTH Lining fabrics and BOTH Outer fabrics.

Lay the zipper across the top of 1 Lining fabric, with the top edge of the zipper even with the top edge of the Lining fabric.

With RS together, lay one of the Outer fabrics on top of the Lining fabric with the zipper sandwiched between the 2 fabrics. Make sure that raw edges and the zipper edge are aligned at the top.
Apply Zippers

Clip together.

*** Clips work well when working with multiple layers and thicknesses. No bent pins! ***

Use your zipper foot and sew, using the TOP edge of the zipper teeth as a guide.

When sewing, you may find it easier to complete the stitch line in 2 steps.
- Open the Zipper pull part way.
- Starting from the opposite end of the zipper pull, start sewing, with the zipper foot running along the edge of the teeth as a guide.
- When you get to the the zipper pull (you will feel it with the zipper foot), stop sewing. Take the fabric away from the machine, and pull the zipper to the end, in the direction that you just sewed.
- Start sewing again, sewing a few stitches over the previous ending stitches, and finish the seam. This will give you a smooth seam line with no bump where the zipper pull was.

Open the fabrics, and press the Outer fabric away from the zipper.
Fold the Lining fabric away from the zipper (WS of both Outer fabric and Lining fabric will be together), with the remaining half of the zipper by itself. Press. Top stitch.
Apply Zippers

The same process will be repeated for the 2nd set of Outer/Lining fabrics and the 2nd side of the zipper.

Since we have already added the zipper to one set of Outer/Lining fabric, when the zipper is sewn to the 2nd set of Outer/Lining fabric, the 1st set will be sandwiched between the 2nd set. Look at the picture above. The 2nd Lining fabric is on the bottom. The zipper comes next, but the zipper has the 1st set of Outer/Lining fabric attached.

- Lay the 2nd Lining fabric on the bottom.
- Next, lay the zipper on the 2nd Lining fabric, matching the top edge of the Lining fabric with the outer edge of the zipper.

*** RSs if Lining will be together. ***

- Lay the 2nd Outer fabric face down on top of the 1st Outer fabric, matching the top edges and outer edge of zipper. Clip in place.

- Sew, using the top row of teeth as your guide. Press fabric away from zipper. Top stitch.

*** Be careful to keep the 1st Outer/Lining fabric OUT of the new seam. ***
- Cut the 1.5” squares out of each bottom corner of Outer and Lining fabric.
*** 8 squares will be cut: 2 squares on 2 Linings, 2 squares on 2 Outer fabrics ***

- Open out the Outer and Lining pieces so that all RSs are together. Zipper will be in the center.
- Clip or pin both sides.
- Sew along each side. Zipper ends will be enclosed.
*** Do NOT sew into squares cutouts. ***
- Open seams and press.
- Clip or pin the short edge of the Outline Fabric, RSs together. Sew. Press open.

*** Short edge of Lining is NOT finished in the same way as the Outer Fabric.

The bag needs to be pulled through an opening in the short edge of Lining fabric.
- Stitch from A to B and C to D on the short edge of the Lining Fabric. Back stitch to secure stitching.
Press open, even along the unstitched section. The pressed fold will give you a stitch line.
Rotary Cutter Bag Lesson 3

Box the Corners
To make the bag stand, instead of sewing down the side, making a 90° turn and then sewing across the bottom, a square has been cut in each bottom corner. When sewn correctly, the bag will stand up.

- Open the seams of the Outer fabric at A and B and match them, RS together.
- The two corners (C) are pulled apart opposite of each other.
- Sew across from C1 to C2 Press.
- Repeat on Lining fabric.

FINISHING UP!
- Carefully pull Outer bag through the opening in the Lining.
- Stitch opening closed. A slip stitch works well for this.
- Fold the Lining into the Outer bag, matching the corners on the inside.

I hope you have enjoyed making this Smock-A-Long project as much as I have! Smocking is something that I have loved since I took my first stitch, and sometimes I forget to take the time to make something for myself!

Remember: Artisan points are awarded for finished projects - just post a picture on the FB Smock-A-Long page and email to confirm that I have seen it, or send me a picture.

Happy Stitching,

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