

DESIGN TV MATTERS

The Accordion Bag - how to make it with Laura Kemshall

Drafting the Pattern

The accordion style bag can be adapted to suit many purse frames but it is necessary to draft a new pattern specific to every different purse frame you use.

You will need:

Metal purse frame (either the 'easy fix', or glue-in type in any size)
Paper
Pen/pencil
Pair of compasses
Ruler
Scissors
Pattern fabric (optional)

What to do:

Follow Step 1 for Easy-fix frames, Step 2 for Glue-in frames. Follow steps 3 onwards for both types!

1. (Easy-fix frame only) Place the frame on a sheet of paper and mark dots to indicate the length of the removable bar on the inside of the purse frame. Put the frame to one side and use your ruler to join the dots. On a 6" frame, this line will probably be about 5½" long. Mark the centre and draw a line downwards at 90°.
2. (Glue-in frame only) Place the frame on the paper and draw around the top edge of the frame on the outside. Put the frame to one side and draw in any gaps using a ruler. Find the centre and mark it. Draw a line downwards at 90°.
3. Using compasses, place the pin of the compass on the centre line and the pencil on the end of the line you've drawn around or along your purse frame. Draw a circle.
4. Cut out. This is Pattern piece 1 for the front and back of the bag.
5. Place this pattern piece onto a fresh sheet of paper and carefully draw around it transferring the marks to denote the centre line. Put Pattern piece 1 to the side. Now on the new sheet draw in the centre line. Place the compass in position to draw a smaller circle within the first.
6. As shown in the video, extend the lines from the top of the pattern piece to create a horse-shoe, or crescent type shape. Cut out. This is Pattern piece 2 for the accordion section of the bag.
7. Trace the pattern pieces onto pattern fabric if required.

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Making the bag

What you'll need:

Purse frame
Pattern pieces
Suitable outer fabrics (felt, quilted textile, embroidered fabric)
Lining fabric
Stabiliser
Strong sewing thread
Spray adhesive
Scissors
Glue (for the glue-in style frame)
Sewing machine

If you are binding your bag you will also need bias binding. I cut my own at 1½" wide from hand dyed fabrics. Cut plenty, you'll need more than you think!

Cutting out:

2 x Pattern piece 1 in outer fabric
2 x Pattern piece 1 in lining
2 x Pattern piece 1 in stabiliser

For the accordion section you will need to use Pattern Piece 2 to cut outer fabric, lining and stabiliser in multiples of 2. In the show, my felt bag had 6 of everything. I would say this is the minimum number for a successful bag.

Sewing sequence:

Layer every outer piece with its corresponding stabiliser and lining. Spray baste the layers together, place the pattern piece back on top and trim if necessary. Pin thoroughly before sewing each seam. Keep edges aligned. Take a scant ¼" seam and use a short stitch.

* Tip! Cut the stabiliser slightly undersized to avoid it peeping out at the edges of the sandwich.

For a Felt version with unfinished edges:

Sew the accordion segments together in pairs with outer fabric sides facing. Sew the short, inside curve seam.

Place pairs of segments together (lining fabrics will be facing) and sew the long, outer curve seam. Work in sections, then sew each section to the next until the accordion is complete.

Position the bag front onto the accordion. Sew the long outside seam. Repeat to attach the back to the other end of the accordion.

For a Quilt version with bound edges:

Bind the short ends of every accordion piece. Place accordion segments together in pairs and sew the short inner curve seam. Bind this curve. Place the pairs of segments together and sew the long, outer curve seam. Bind this edge. Repeat until the accordion is all joined and bound.

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Position the bag front onto the accordion section. Sew the long outer curve seam. Bind all edges of the bag front. Repeat for the back.

Attaching the frame

For the easy-fix frame:

Fold over the extra fabric at the top of the bag front. Pin in place and top stitch across to form a channel. Repeat on the back. Unscrew the front and back bars from the purse frame. Slide through the channels in the bag and screw back into the frame. Your bag is complete!

For the glue-in style frame:

I used Gutermann HT2 glue which is suitable for glueing fabrics to metal. Apply a line of glue within the slot of one side of the frame. Set aside. Apply a line of glue to the corresponding edge of the bag. Set aside for a moment. Carefully position the bag frame into place on the bag. Guide the bag fabric into the slot and ease into place. This is not always easy, just take your time. Use a kebab skewer to help encourage the fabric into the frame. Flip the bag over and check that the lining side is neatly in place. If not, just poke it into the frame carefully. Leave to dry completely. Repeat with the other side. Remove any excess glue using nail varnish remover on a cotton bud. Your bag is complete!