



# Earth Day Tote

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Just like Rumpelstiltskin could spin straw into gold, you can turn ugly plastic shopping bags into this beautiful and useful tote—without any magic! About 70-100 plastic bags are cut into strips and linked together to make the plastic yarn used for this project. This “plarn” is crocheted using simple single crochet stitches to create this structured-yet-lightweight bag. Let’s prevent those old plastic bags from ending up in a landfill and crochet them into an attractive, durable handbag that can be used again and again!



## Sizes

One size

## Finished Measurements

14" wide x 10" tall x 6" deep

## Materials

- Approximately 70-100 plastic bags (see notes). Amount varies depending on size and thickness of bags
- US I [mm] crochet hook or size needed to obtain gauge
- Large Yarn Needle
- Removeable stitch marker

## Gauge

12 sts and 11 rows = 4" over single crochet, worked in turned rows

## Abbreviations

**Ch** = chain  
**SC** = single crochet  
**Sl st** = slip stitch  
**St(s)** = stitch(es)  
**WS** = Wrong Side  
**YO** = yarn over

## Notes

Turning chains do not count as a stitch.

The bottom of the bag is worked in turned rows. After the bottom is complete, the sides of the bag are worked from the bottom up in un-joined rounds. Straps are made separately, edged with a round of slipstitches (which also forms the strap into a rounded-cord shape) and stitched to bag.



## Making Plarn

### Choosing bags

Many different kinds of bags can be used for this project. Common plastic shopping bags, long thin bags like the ones used for newspapers deliveries or plastic produce bags from the supermarket all work very well. Plastic bags from potatoes, apples, or bread will also work well, although they tend to be a bit thicker and may be more tiring for your hands to crochet.

“Plarn” or plastic yarn is made by cutting plastic bags into narrow strips, and linking the circular strips together to form an endless chain. Different types of bags come in different thicknesses and as a result will create plarn with different thicknesses as well. If you are using more than one type of bag you can cut your plastic bags into strips of different widths in order to accommodate the different thicknesses of the plastic you are using and help maintain gauge. See suggestions below.

Thin produce bags or newspaper bags: cut strips at 1.25-1.5”

Standard, small to medium size (thinner) shopping bags: cut strips at 1”

Large (slightly thicker) shopping bags: cut strips at .75”

Freezer bags, bags for frozen vegetables, bread bags, large plastic outer bag for toilet paper multipacks, etc. (the thickest category): cut strips at .5”

If you are using bags of different colors, you can decide whether you want to make distinct stripes of color or if you'd rather mix all of the colors together for a more variegated yarn look. If you intend to make stripes, sort all of your bags according to color, then make the plarn with only one color at a time. If you choose to mix the colors together, cut up all of the bags at once and mix the strips before linking them together.

For the sample pictured, several bags of each color were used at a time to create the striped pattern. A contrasting plarn was used to make the slip stitches along the edges of the handles.

### Cutting the bags

Smooth out each bag, folding sides of bag along pleats if applicable.



Make vertical folds in bag until it becomes a width that is easy to cut through with one snip of scissors.



Slice off the bottom edge of bag, then start slicing through bag at measurements listed above until reaching the top edge or the handles.



Recycle the pieces that do not make an intact circular strip (such as the top edge, including handles and the bottom seamed edge). Slice several bags into strips, then begin linking them together (see below), then repeat the process with the next group of bags.

### Linking the strips

Be sure to watch the live event (or the re-play of the live event) for tips on how to link the strips together.

Lay one circular strip over another strip.



Reach through the second strip and up from underneath to grab the second strip,



pulling it through the first strip, and then back out through the opening where your hand entered through the second strip.



Pull until ends link together in a small knot.



Repeat to add each circular strip, one at a time. Wind your plarn into a ball to prevent tangling.



## Instructions

### *Bottom of bag:*

Ch 15.

**Row 1:** Beginning with the 2nd ch from hook and working into the bottom of the chain, 1 SC into each ch. 14 sts.

**Rows 2-34:** Ch 1, turn, SC into each st across. 14 sts.

Do not fasten off. Bottom of bag measures approximately 5" x 12.5".

### *Sides of bag:*

**Set-up rnd:** Place a stitch marker at the half way point along each of the long sides of bottom of bag to divide each of the long sides into two equal sections. Rotate work 90 degrees in order to work along row-ends, ch 1, 17 SC into first section along side-edge, 1 SC at marked point, 17 SC into second section, rotate to work into foundation edge, 3 sc in first st, sc in each of next 12 sts, 3 sc in last st, rotate to work along next side-edge, 17 SC in first section, 1 SC at marked midway point, 17 SC along second section, rotate to work into row 34 of Bottom of Bag, 3 sc in first st, sc in each of next 12 sts, 3 sc in last st. Do not join. 106 sts.

Work 32 rnds of SC ending at side edge of bag, (or until bag reaches desired height). Sl st into next st to fasten off.

### *Handle (Make 2)*

Ch 61.

**Set-up row:** Beginning with second ch from hook, and working into the bottom of the chain, SC in each st. 60 sts.

**Round 1:** Rotate work 180 degrees in order to work into the opposite side of the foundation ch. Ch 1 (does not count as a stitch), 2 sc in each of the next 2 sts, SC in each of the next 56 sts, 2 SC in each of the next 2 sts, rotate work 180 degrees to continue (skip the ch-1 on end), 2 SC in each of next 2 sts, SC in each of next 56 sts, 2 SC in each of the next 2 sts. 128 SC around.

Sl st to fasten off leaving long tail for sewing. Place stitch marker in 8th st from end.

### **Slip Stitch Edging for Handle**

Pull up loop in marked stitch (8th st counted from end of last round). Keep stitch marker in place (8th st from end). Sl st in each of next 14 sts. Fold strap lengthwise with WS together so that long edges are right on top of each other. Begin by inserting hook through the next st in working edge and also through marked st held directly behind working st, yo and pull up loop, continue to pull loop through loop on hook to complete sl st. Continue across edge working through both thicknesses making 49 more slip stitches, separate the two layers and continue slip stitching around edge, just through the top layer for 14 more sts. Sl st to fasten off leaving long tail for sewing.

