

Plastic Fantastic

BY JO CALVERT

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- Suggested story concept
- Designed and produced round bag for photography
- Researched and wrote story and instructions

➤ Just when we were looking for a clever way to recycle plastic shopping bags, *Canadian Living* reader Melita Poley-Ruston of Hudson Bay, Sask., stitched up a great idea and shared it with us. Her crocheted carryalls work up quickly – especially with Melita’s easy handle shaping – and make the perfect totes for everything from books to bathing suits. ▶

GENERAL NOTES:

- Sort plastic grocery and shopping bags into two lots: thick and thin.
- Printed bags crochet into great patterns, and the more colour the better (you can organize into stripes or add and switch colours randomly for a variegated overall pattern).
- For square bag and smaller hook, cut thin bags into 4 to 5 cm (1½- to 2-in) wide strips.
- For round bag and larger hook, cut thin bags into 5 to 6.5 cm (2- to 2½-in) strips and thick bags into 2.5 to 4 cm (1- to 1½-in) strips.
- You can cut strips in two ways: Trim off top and bottom of bag, then, starting at top edge, cut strip in spiral, across and around bag, to bottom edge. OR trim off top of bag and lay bag flat on work surface, then, starting at top edge, cut strips straight down to fold at bottom edge, cutting through both layers.
- Tie strips together, end to end, with overhand knot; enclose strip ends as you crochet to avoid weaving in later.
- Get creative – customize the shape and size to suit yourself!
- To make longer handles for shoulder bag, work more chain stitches in first round of handle shaping for either pattern, then work 1 stitch into each chain stitch in next round. Or, make a round bag without handles, then thread a drawstring in and out around the top.



Melita's Square Bag

With 6 mm crochet hook, ch 40, *turn*.

Row 1: Skip 2 ch (counts as first dc), [1 dc in next ch] to end of row, ch 1, *turn*.

Row 2: Working across *bottom* of first row, [1 dc in next ch] to end of row, ch 1, sl st to top of first dc in Row 1 to join in rnd.

Rnd 1: Ch 2 (counts as first dc), [1 dc in next dc] to end of rnd, sl st to top of first dc in rnd. 76 sts now in rnd.

Continue in same manner as for Rnd 1 until bag from bottom measures 30 cm/11¾ ins or desired depth.



TO SHAPE HANDLES:

Rnd 1: Ch 2, 1 dc each in next 13 dc, ch 10, skip next 10 dc, 1 dc each in next 28 dc, ch 10, skip next 10 dc, [1 dc in next dc] to end of rnd, sl st to top of first dc in rnd.

Rnd 2: Ch 2, 1 dc each in next 13 dc, 1 dc each in next 10 ch, 1 dc each in next 28 dc, 1 dc each in next 10 ch, [1 dc in next dc] to end of rnd, sl st to top of first dc in rnd.

Rnd 3: Ch 2, [1 dc in next dc] to end of rnd, sl st to top of first dc in rnd, fasten off.



Round Bag

Note: Rnds of sc are worked in spiral. With 10 mm crochet hook, ch 2, join with sl st to form ring.

Rnd 1: Work 10 sc in ring; place st marker (move up in successive rnds).

Rnd 2: [2 sc in next sc] to end of rnd.

Rnd 3: [1 sc in next sc, 2 sc in next sc] to end of rnd.

Rnd 4: [1 sc in next 2 sc, 2 sc in next sc] to end of rnd.

Rnd 5: [1 sc in next 3 sc, 2 sc in next sc] to end of rnd.

Rnd 6: [1 sc in next 4 sc, 2 sc in next sc] to end of rnd.

Rnd 7: [1 sc in next 5 sc, 2 sc in next sc] to end of rnd. 70 sc now in rnd.

Rnd 8: [1 sc in next sc] to end of rnd.

Continue in same manner as for Rnd 8 until bag from bottom measures 24 cm/9½ ins or desired depth.

Next: [1 sc in next 6 sc, skip next sc] to end of rnd. 60 sts now in rnd.

Next: [1 sc in next sc] to end of rnd.

TO SHAPE HANDLES:

Rnd 1: 1 sc each in next 19 sc, ch 20, skip next 10 sc, 1 sc each in next 20 sc, ch 20, skip next 10 sc, 1 sc each in next sc.

Rnd 2: 1 sc each in next 19 sc, 1 sc each in next 20 ch, 1 sc each in next 20 sc, 1 sc each in next 20 ch, 1 sc in next sc.

Next: 1 sc each in next 2 sc, fasten off. ●