Box Style Canvas Tote

Featuring Wide Webbing Straps and Handles to Carry, Store and More

An exclusive S4H project for Janome Canada

Design by Anne Adams, Instructions by Liz Johnson, Sample by Kathy Andrews

Petite pouches and itty-bitty bags are always fun and useful, but sometimes you simply need to be large and in charge. This project from our friends at Sew4Home works as a jumbo tote when you're out and about or fill it up with storables when you're home. With a tough canvas exterior and wide webbing straps and handles, it can take on whatever tasks you have in mind.

Designed and presented exclusively for Janome Canada users, the S4H Box Style Canvas Tote has techniques you'll use again and again for future bag making and storage solution projects. The detailed steps and photos take you through tips for sewing thick layers (there's a link below to the full S4H tutorial on this topic), how to create wide flat felled seams, topstitching, sewing an X Box to secure the straps and handles, finishing the interior seam allowances with bias binding, and insetting a flat base panel.

The natural canvas chosen by S4H is a #10 Duck Canvas. It's a tough substrate that works well as a single layer, but S4H also wanted it to be pliable enough to function as an easy-to-carry tote. To soften the fabric, they pre-washed the canvas twice with a fabric softener, tumble dried, and ironed it prior to cutting all the pieces. The look of washed canvas is a very fashionable finish. For more about pre-washing/ preshrinking, check out S4H's tutorial.

You can see from the "tote-in-action" beauty shots there are a myriad of uses for this generous bag. Fill it up on a shopping trip to the grocery store or farmer's market. Stash yarn, pre-cut bundles or fabric scraps in your sewing space; side handles make it easy to slide the tote around or use the long straps to carry it from room to room. It's even good looking enough to use in the living or family room to store books and magazines. Don't you love a project that can multi-task?!

Canvas and webbing can be sourced from a wide variety of in-store and on-line retailers. S4H found their canvas at a local US big box retailer. The sunny yellow 2" wide cotton webbing is from one of their favourite Etsy Shops.

The Box Style Canvas Tote finishes approximately 14" wide x 13" high x 10" deep.

Box Style Canvas Tote by Sew4Home

Sewing Tools Needed

- Sewing Machine; S4H used the Janome MC 15000
- Standard presser foot
- Overedge foot
- Zipper foot
- Blind Hem foot
- Jeans needle 90/14
- Topstitch needle 80/12

Fabric and Supplies Needed

Note: *Our cuts are figured based on the fabric we selected and recommend. However, the final fabric choice is always up to you. Keep in mind that canvas often comes in very wide widths. This means you may be able to get away with less than what is specified below at a 44" width. Drawing out your cuts on graph paper is a good way to figure out your best cut strategy. It's what we do! At the 44" width, the tote's top binding will need to be cut as two strips and joined, so if you can start with canvas that is 50"+, you can avoid that joining step.*

- 1¹/₃ yards of 44"+ wide heavy weight canvas; we used a #10 weight duck canvas in natural
- 3½ yards of 2" wide webbing; we used a cotton webbing in yellow; you could also use a lightweight polyester webbing
- 3 yards of packaged bias binding in a colour to match the exterior; we used Wright's Extra Wide Double Fold Bias Tape in Natural
- ONE 9" standard zipper; we used yellow to match our webbing

- All-purpose thread to match fabric for construction
- Heavy weight thread in a contrasting colour for all the topstitching; we used bronze
- See-through ruler
- Fabric pen or pencil
- Seam gauge
- Seam ripper
- Scissors or rotary cutter and mat
- Iron and ironing board
- Straight pins
- Sewing clips
- Small, clean hammer; we will elaborate below, but this is a handy optional tool to use for an upholstery trick for flattening thick seams prior to stitching

Getting Started

Note: *Dimensions are shown as width x height – as they will be assembled. If working with a solid colour canvas, remember you can cut any of the pieces as width x height or as height x width for the best fit on your fabric.*

Step 1: From the fabric, cut the following;
TWO 15" x 11" rectangles for the front/back top panels
TWO 15" x 4" rectangles for the front/back bottom panels
TWO 11" x 11" squares for the side top panels
TWO 11" x 4" rectangles for the side bottom panels
ONE 15" x 11" rectangle for the base panel
ONE 9" x 14" rectangle for the hanging pocket
ONE 50" x 2" strip for the top binding; if using a narrow width fabric, cut TWO 2" strips, each at least 25.5" – when joining strips, you can alway trim away the excess

Step 2: From the 2" webbing, cut the following:
TWO 49" lengths for the shoulder straps
TWO 12" lengths for the side handles

Step 3: Keep the packaged bias tape as one length. It will be cut to fit within the construction.

SEWING INSTRUCTIONS
Create the hanging pocket

> *Note: Throughout this project, we are staying very aware of the thicker layers, and you'll find explanations about best practices below. If you are just starting out on your sewing adventure, [S4H has a great tutorial on techniques](#) as well as favourite presser feet and accessories to make things easier.*

Step 1: Find the 9" x 14" pocket panel. Measure 3" down from the top raw edge and slice across horizontally, dividing the panel into two sections. The zipper will go between the two sections.
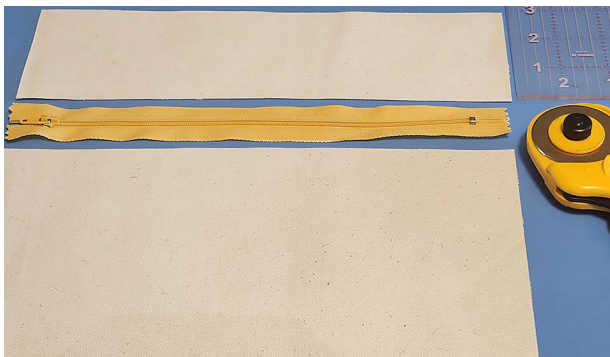
Step 2: Place the small top section right sides together with the top edge of the zipper tape. Pin in place through just these two layers.
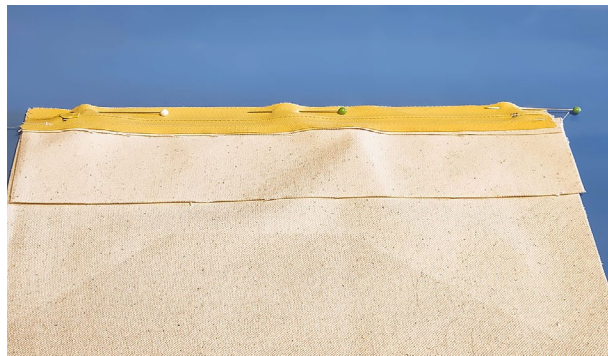

Step 3: Start with a Jeans needle and the matching construction thread in both the top and bobbin.

Step 4: Using a Zipper foot and a ¼" seam allowance, stitch across.
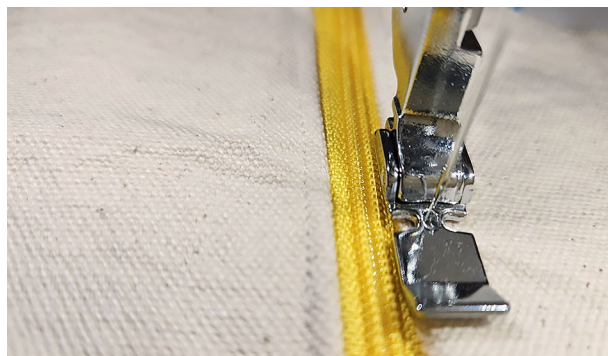
Step 5: Press the fabric up and away from the zipper. Edgestitch along the zipper through all the layers.

Step 6: Repeat to stitch the top edge of the large bottom section to the bottom edge of the zipper tape.

Step 7: And repeat the edgestitching.

Step 8: Finish the raw bottom edge of the pocket. We used the Overedge foot.

Note: *In order to keep the top of the hanging pocket as one layer under the final top binding, we did not bring the bottom edge all the way up to align with the top raw edge. Instead, we set it back ½", which means that edge will remain slightly free behind the pocket. This doesn't impact the functionality of the pocket, but it does mean that set-back raw edge should be finished.*
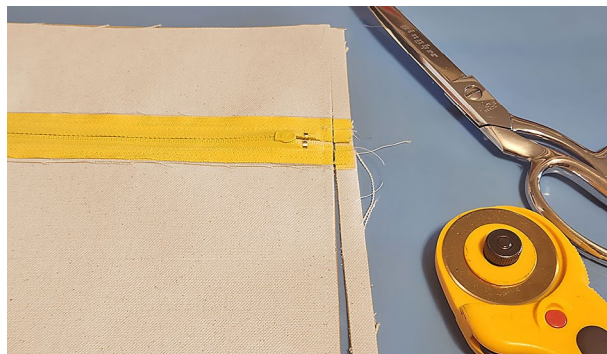
Step 9: Fold up the bottom edge of the pocket panel so it sits ½" from the top raw edge, sandwiching the zipper between the layers. Pin along both sides.

Step 10: Switch back to a standard presser foot,

Step 11: Using a ½" seam allowance, stitch the sides.

Step 12: Trim the seam allowances back to just under ¼".

Step 13: Turn the pocket right sides out through the open top and press.

Step 14: Using a ¼" seam allowance, topstitch along each side.

Step 15: This will enclose the unfinished edges of the pocket so there are no exposed side edges inside the pocket.

Assemble the front and back panels and topstitch

Step 1: When working on a project that is a single solid colour, it can help to pre-mark all the panels with sticky dots or similar to help you keep track of what is what.


**Step 2:** Find one main top panel (15" x 11") and one main bottom panel (15" x 4").

Step 3: Along the bottom cut edge of the top panel, draw a line ½" in from this edge.

Step 4: Along the top cut edge of the bottom panel, draw a matching line ½" in from this raw edge.

> *Note: Since we are using solid colour panels, there really isn't a defined top and bottom edge, but we are stating it here so you can keep track in case you use a print panel – especially a directional print.*
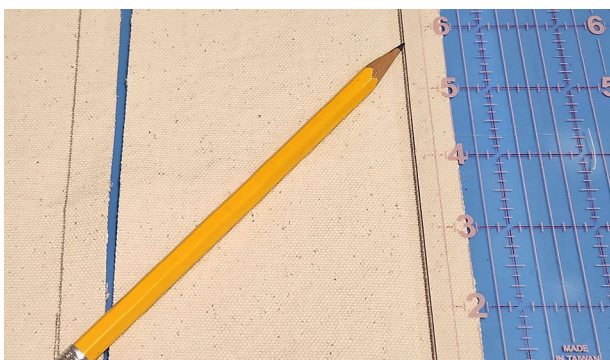

Step 5: Align the raw edge of the bottom panel (the raw edge just below the bottom panel's drawn line) along the drawn line of the top panel. Lightly pin in place.
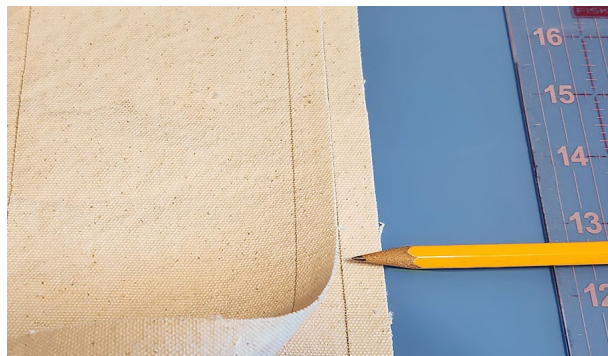
Step 6: Stitch together through both layers, following along the bottom panel's drawn line.


Step 7: Fold the extending raw edge of the top panel back over the two sewn layers. This raw edge should almost-but-not quite meet the stitch line. Press well.
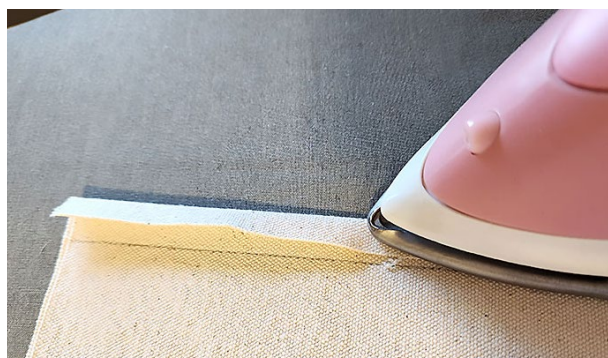
Step 8: Flip over the sewn panel. Fold down the bottom section into its final position, and press well. The interior seam allowance is now fully finished at the back (or will be as soon as we topstitch below). This is a version of a Flat Felled Seam. If you'd like to learn more about this technique, check out the full Flat Felled Seam Tutorial at S4H.
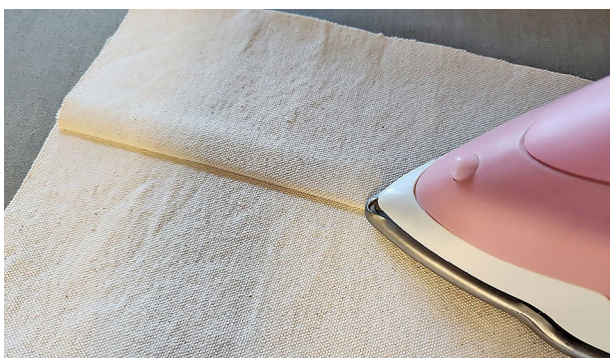
Step 9: Assemble the remaining main panel as well as both side panels in the same manner.

Step 10: Switch to a Topstitch needle and the contrasting heavy thread in the top needle. The bobbin remains as-is in the standard thread to match the main canvas.

Step 11: Across each panel seam, topstitch through all the layers. We used the edge of our standard presser foot as a guide, running it along the upper fold of the seam.


Step 12: We also used a slightly lengthened stitch for all our topstitching, setting the stitch length to 3.0.
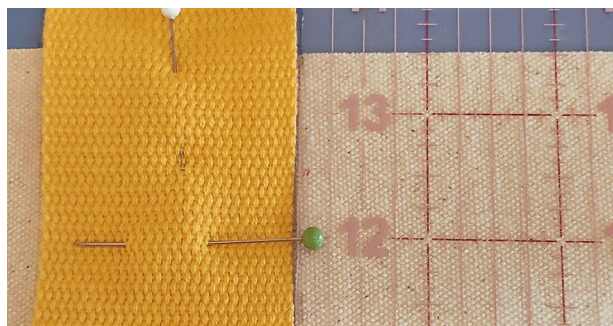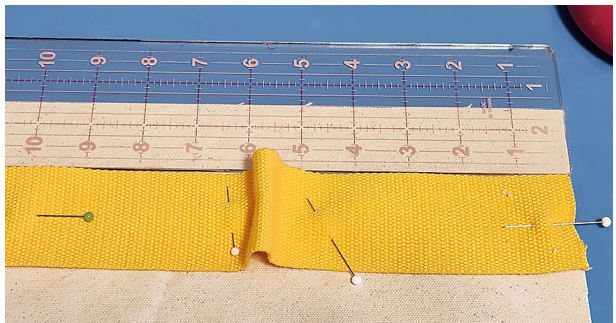
Attach the straps and handles

Step 1: Find all four lengths of webbing.

Step 2: On the front/back panels, pin the webbing into position as shown in the photo below. Each outer edge sits 3" in from the raw side edge of the panel. The bottom ends of the webbing are flush with the bottom raw edge of the panel. And the space between the two "legs" of the strap is 5". Also. make sure the loop extending beyond the panel is a smooth curve with no twists. Pin the webbing in place on both the front and back panels.
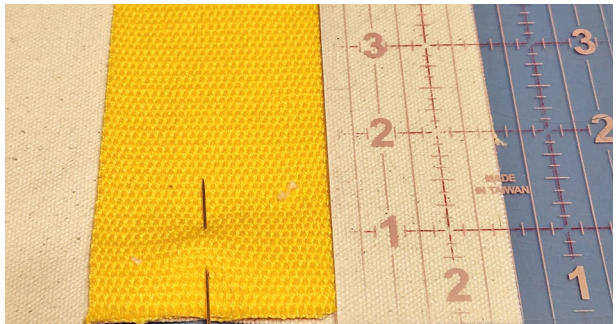
Step 3: At the top of both the front and back panel, on each leg of the webbing straps, place a horizontal pin 1½" down from the top raw edge. This is where the webbing's topstitching will stop and where the Box Stitch will be formed.

Step 4: On the side panels, the handles sit horizontally. The upper edge should be placed 1½" down from the top raw edge of the side panel.

Step 5: These are handles, which means they need to bow slightly at the centre to allow you to grasp them. When pinning, smooth the webbing towards the centre and pin that "bow" in position. This helps keep the edges of the handles nice and smooth for the remainder of the construction. These pins can be removed when construction is finished.

Step 6: With the machine still threaded with the contrasting heavy thread in the top and with standard thread to match the canvas in the bobbin, a topstitch needle in place, and the same slightly lengthened stitch length, you're ready for all the webbing topstitching.

Step 7: Start with the straps. Edgestitch from the bottom up to the horizontal marking pin 1½" from the panel's top raw edge.

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Step 8: Pivot and stitch across horizontally to the opposite side and stop.
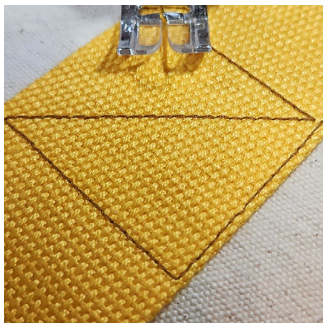
Step 9: Place another pin 2" below your stitched horizontal line.

Step 10: Pivot to a diagonal and stitch down to that 2" marking pin.
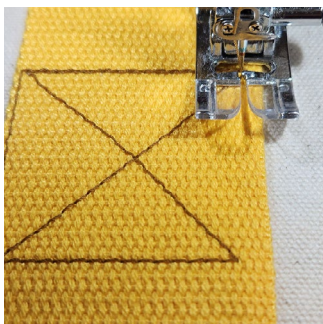

Step 11: Pivot and stitch across horizontally, forming the base of the X Box.

**Step 12:** Pivot again to the diagonal.

Step 13: Stitch on the diagonal back up to the top of the X Box. Pivot and stitch across directly on top of your first line of stitching, then make one final pivot to set up to edgestitch down the opposite leg of the strap.

Step 14: Repeat on the remaining three legs of the straps. As shown in the photo below, we do also recommend a horizontal stitch across the bottom ends of the webbing. This is to keep the ends of the cotton webbing from raveling during the remainder of the construction. If you are using a polyester webbing, this bottom step is not really necessary.

Step 15: On the side handles, you'll make the same size X Boxes in the same manner, starting each box 1½" in from each raw edge. When lined up side to side, all your X Boxes should align. There are quite a few detailed steps here on the X Box, but if you'd like even more information, S4H has a full tutorial on the X Box you can review prior to starting.
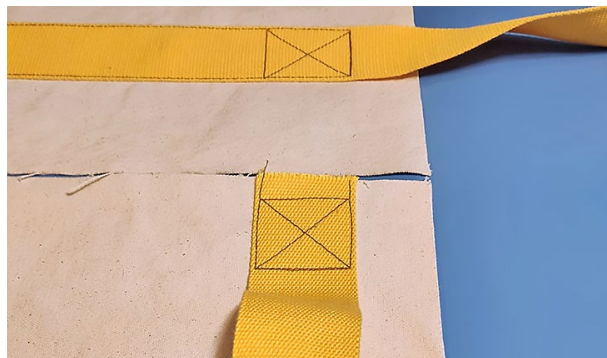
Assemble the front, back and sides

Step 1: Find the finished pocket. Place is right side up against the wrong side of what will become the main back panel. It should be centreed between the straps with the top raw edge of the pocket flush with the top raw edge of the panel. Pin in place and then machine baste in place.

Step 2: Place one side panel right sides together with the front panel. Carefully align the flat felled seams of both panels.

**Note:** This is one place where you can use a little furniture upholstery trick. When covering furniture, you are often working with a lot of very thick layers of leather or home décor weight fabric. To "tame" these layers, upholsterers sometimes use a small, clean hammer to pound the layers prior to stitching. This has a similar to affect to what you might do in the kitchen to pound a chicken breast. Several smooth, sharp whacks on the thickest stacks of layers helps flatten them so they feed better under your presser foot.

Step 3: Replace the Topstitching needle with the Jeans needle. Re-thread so there is all-purpose thread to best match the canvas in both the top and bobbin. Re-set for a standard stitch length.

Step 4: Set the thickest part of the seam under your presser foot. Lower the needle at this point. Sew slowly from this point to the bottom of the panels, using a ½" seam allowance. Stop and lock your seam.

Step 5: Check the alignment from the right side of the seam.

Step 6: With the alignment confirmed, rotate the panel, drop the needle into the thickest part of the overlapped flat felled seams (the same point as above), and stitch from that point up to the top of the panels, still using a ½" seam allowance.

Step 7: Repeat to sew the remaining three side/front/back vertical seams in the same manner.

Step 8: You've now formed a tube with visible interior seam allowances. We chose to bind these seam allowances with the packaged bias binding.

Step 9: Cut a length of bias binding to match the length of each seam.

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Step 10: Slip the binding over the seam allowance and stitch in place through all the layers. You are stitching only through the binding and the seam allowance; do not stitch onto the body of the bag.

Step 11: When all four side seams are covered in the packaged bias tape, clip the bottom of each seam open at a depth of ½". This will allow the corners to spread open to accept the inset base.

Inset the base, bind those seam allowances

Step 1: Find the base panel.

Step 2: Turn the main body of the tote wrong side out. Set it upside down on your work surface.

Step 3: Set the base panel into the "tube" of the tote so the base panel and the tote are right sides together. It's a bit like placing a lid upside down into a box.

Step 4: Pin the base panel in place. It should sit square and straight, which is why you made those snips at the bottom of each of the tube's side seams. These should align with the four corners of the base panel.

Step 5: Starting at one corner, drop the needle in ½" in from the actual corner of the fabric. Using a ½" seam allowance, stitch along the first side.

Step 6: Stop the seam at the opposite corner – also ½" in. In other words, your seam is starting and stopping ½" in from the edge of the fabric.

Step 7: Remove the project from the machine. Turn the corner and set up for the next side of the tote.

Step 8: Stitch each side in the same manner, starting and stopping at the same ½"-in point each time, which is what will result is the perfect corner.
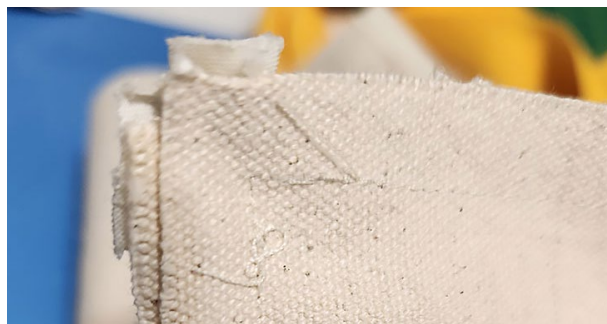
> **Note:** Yes, the steps are summarized here. If you are brand new, check out the full S4H tutorial: _How to Insert a Rectangular Base into a Tube._

Step 9: Cut lengths of bias binding to fit each of the four sides of the base panel and bind these four seam allowances in the same manner as the side seam allowances.

Step 10: Cut away the excess canvas at all four corners.

Step 11: There is your lovely inset base panel.

Step 12: Turn right side out. Use a long, blunt tool to firmly press out each corner. A knitting needle, chopstick or point turner are all good options.

Add the top binding to finish

Step 1: Find the 2" wide binding strip(s). If you cut more than one strip to equal the final 50" finished length, stitch these lengths end to end with a ¼" seam allowance. Press the seam allowance open and flat.

Step 2: Along one 50" edge, fold back and press ½".

**Step 3:** Once again turn the tote wrong side out.

Step 4: Pin the raw edge of the binding strip (the unfolded edge) to the top raw edge of the tote. The right side of the binding strip is against the wrong side (the inside) of the tote. The head and tail of our binding strip come together at the centre of one of the side panels. This will be a less visible "joint" than a start/stop point on the front or back of the bag.

Step 5: Bring the head and tail of the binding strip right sides together. Lay the strip back against the tote to make sure it lays flat and smooth, then securely pin together. This seam allowance may be slightly wider or narrower than a standard ½" seam. The goal is to seam it in such a way so the binding "cap" will be smooth all around. Pull the strip away from the tote – just enough so you can slip the strip under the presser foot to stitch the short seam. Trim back the top and bottom of the seam allowance and well as any excess width. Replace it back against the tote and make sure it is securely pinned all around.
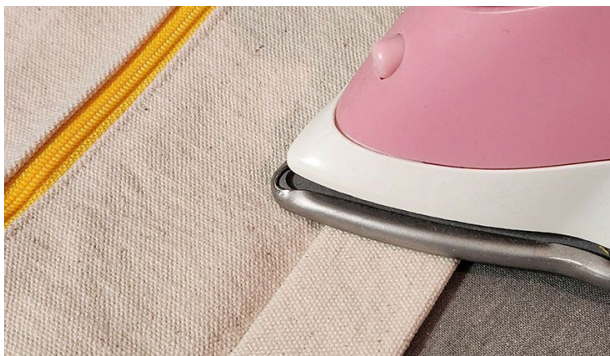

Step 6: Using a ½" seam allowance stitch through both layers all around the top of the tote.
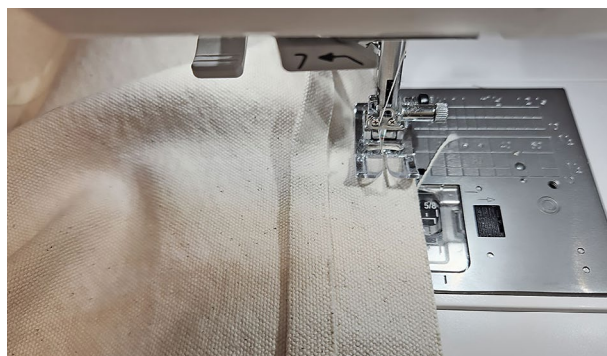
Box Style Canvas Tote by Sew4Home

Step 7: Press the binding strip up and away from the body of the tote.

Step 8: Bring the folded edge of the binding strip up and over to the right side of the tote. Press again with extra pressure and steam. This is another great time to use the upholstery trick mentioned above to hammer these bound upper layers all around, flattening them just like that proverbial chicken breast. It's also an excellent opportunity to get out all your frustration! Pin or clip all around.
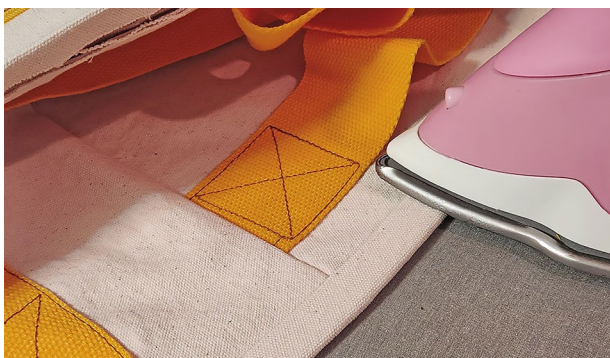
Project photos courtesy of S4H. Any unexpressed use of these images in whole or in part is strictly prohibited.

Step 9: Replace the Jeans needle with the Topstitch needle, re-thread the top with the heavy contrasting thread, keep the bobbin thread as-is, lengthen the stitch again to match your other topstitching. We used 3.0.

Step 10: We also chose to switch out to our Blind Hem foot to help us keep a straight topstitching line. Use this option or your favorite presser foot for topstitching/edgestitching.

Step 11: Sew slowly and carefully around the entire top of the bag. As with the "joint" of the binding strip, we recommend starting and stopping your topstitching on a side panel.

Memory Craft 9450 QCP

Skyline S9

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