This style of bag, one that slips onto a standard belt, has been showing up everywhere, including one we spotted at Nordstrom by Stella McCartney for a mere $675! Good news is: you can make your own custom Belt Bag. With our step-by-step instructions, it’s easy. You might even have the fabric you need in your stash. We used a classic Anna Maria Horner velveteen we’ve been hoarding for several years (note to Anna: wish you’d do velveteen again!). As you’ll see below, we put a number of Janome specialty presser feet to use to handle the thicker layers, piping application, and seam finishing. Using the right foot for the job always makes a project faster and easier – with a more professional result.
A heavier substrate is our recommendation for this project. As mentioned above, we used a beautiful animal print velveteen, originally from the *Field Study* collection by Anna Maria Horner for FreeSpirit Fabrics. Other good options would be lightweight canvas, linen blends, lightweight wool or even corduroy. As you’ll see in the supply list, it takes just a third of a yard each for the exterior and for the lining – and that’s figuring in a bit extra for fussy cutting.

To help insure the three-dimensional structure of this type of bag stays intact, we used two layers of stabilization: a mid-weight fusible interfacing plus a fusible fleece. Just follow the steps to trim the pattern pieces in order to keep those layers out of your seam allowances.
Speaking of pattern pieces, there’s a full set to download below for all the elements, insuring all of the bag’s curves come together perfectly. Our back belt loops are sized to fit a standard 1” wide belt. If you’d like to slip your Belt Bag onto a narrower or wider belt, simply adjust the size of this simple rectangular piece.

Are you new to working with zippers? It’s okay to admit to a little “zipperphobia,” but don’t let that dissuade you from the project. A center zipper like this is easier than you think… even with the lining. Our bag features a 12” zippered opening, which is perfect for easy-in/easy-out access.
Let's talk for just a minute about presser feet. I think we're all guilty sometimes of leaving the standard presser foot in place on our machines, figuring, "What the heck, I can make it work." And, yes, you probably can make it work, but will it work correctly, easily, and with the precision you want and need for the best finish?? Probably not! On our Janome studio machines, most of the presser feet snap on and off in seconds, so we are always changing feet. It's one of the top reasons our samples turn out so beautifully. For this Belt Bag, we used a Zipper foot for the piping application and the Overedge foot to finish all the interior seam allowances. Plus, we engaged our machine’s built-in fabric feeding system, the Janome AcuFeed Flex™ system, for the majority of construction to keep the thicker layers moving evenly. A Walking or Even Feed foot is another great option.
Crack open that bag of presser feet that came with your machine; there’s so much goodness to be found! If you’re in doubt about how/why/when to use a Janome presser foot, leave us a comment below and we’ll add it to our You Asked 4 It list.
Our Belt Bag finishes at approximately 5¼" high x 7¾" wide (excluding the piping) and 2" deep. The back loops are sized for a 1" wide purchased belt.

**Sewing Tools You Need**

- **Sewing machine** and standard presser foot
- **Zipper foot**
- **Overedge foot**: optional but a great foot to finish the interior seam allowances
- **Walking or Even Feed foot**: optional but best for thicker layers – or use your machine’s built-in fabric feeding system, such as the Janome AcuFeed Flex™ system

**Fabric and Other Supplies**
• ⅓ yard of 44”+ wide mid-weight velveteen or similar for the exterior pieces
  NOTE: The quantity shown above allows a bit extra for fussy cutting.
• ⅓ yard of 44”+ wide quilting weight cotton for the lining pieces
• ¼ yard of 45”+ wide mid-weight fusible interfacing; we used Pellon Décor Bond
• ¼ yard of 45”+ wide one-sided fusible fleece; we used Pellon Thermolam Plus
• 1½ yards of standard packaged piping
• ONE 12” zipper; we recommend a chunky metallic zipper
  NOTE: Longer zippers can be cut to fit, but finding a 12” zipper allows for the easiest construction.
• ¼ yard of thin leather thong or similar for the zipper pull; optional
• All purpose thread to match fabric
• See-through ruler
• Fabric pen or pencil
• Iron and ironing board
• Pressing cloth; optional but best if working with velveteen
• Scissors or rotary cutter and mat
• Tape measure
• Seam gauge
• Seam ripper
• Straight pins

Getting Started and Pattern Download

1. **DOWNLOAD AND PRINT:** the FOUR pattern pieces: Belt Bag Front/Back, Base Section (parts A and B), Zipper Section (parts A and B), and Belt Loop. These pattern pieces have been bundled into one PDF to make the download easier.
   **IMPORTANT:** Each of the three pages within the PDF is ONE 8½” x 11” sheet. You must print the PDF file at 100%. **DO NOT SCALE** to fit the page. There is a guide rule on each page so you can confirm your final printout is to scale.
2. Cut out each pattern along the solid line.
3. Match up the A and B parts of the Base Section and Zipper Section using the printed arrows as your guide. Butt together each pair and tape; do not overlap.
4. From the fabric for the exterior pieces (the velveteen in our sample), cut the following:
   Using the assembled Base Section pattern, cut ONE
   Using the assembled Zipper Section pattern, cut ONE
5. From the fabric for the lining (*the quilting cotton in our sample*), cut the following:
   Using the assembled Base Section pattern, cut ONE
   Using the assembled Zipper Section pattern, cut ONE
   Using the Front/Back pattern, cut TWO

6. Trim all the pattern pieces along the dotted seam allowance line. If you’d like to save your pattern pieces, print TWO copies of the PDF: one to use for the fabric cuts and the second to use for the interfacing and fleece.

7. From the mid-weight fusible interfacing, cut the following:
   Using the trimmed Base Section pattern, cut ONE
   Using the trimmed Zipper Section pattern, cut ONE
   Using the trimmed Front/Back pattern, cut TWO
   Using the trimmed Belt Loop pattern, cut ONE – then cut this one piece in half along the center horizontal line printed on the pattern piece (the line in red)

8. From the fusible fleece, cut the following:
   Using the trimmed Base Section pattern, cut ONE
   Using the trimmed Zipper Section pattern, cut ONE
   Using the trimmed Front/Back pattern, cut TWO
At Your Sewing Machine & Ironing Board

Fusing

1. Find the front and back exterior panels, the zipper panel, and the base panel along with the matching pieces of fusible interfacing and fleece.
2. Place a layer of fusible interfacing on the wrong side of each exterior fabric panel. The interfacing should be centered so there is ½” of fabric showing beyond the interfacing on all sides. Following manufacturer’s instructions, fuse in place.
3. Place a layer of fusible fleece on top of each layer of fusible interfacing. The fleece and interfacing layers should be flush with ½” of fabric showing beyond. Following manufacturer’s instructions, fuse in place.
4. Find the two belt loop pieces and the two belt loop interfacing halves (you should have sliced the one piece of interfacing cut from the pattern in half in the Getting Started section above).
5. Fold each fabric belt loop in half vertically, wrong sides together, and press lightly to set a center crease line. Unfold wrong side up so the crease line is visible.
6. Place a piece of interfacing on each fabric belt loop, aligning one long edge of the interfacing with the fabric's crease line and centering so there is ½” of fabric showing beyond the interfacing on the remaining three sides.
7. Following manufacturer’s instructions, fuse in place.

Create and place the belt loops

1. Re-fold each belt loop in half vertically along the original crease line, but this time you are folding right sides together. Pin in place along the long side and across one end.

2. Using a ½” seam allowance, stitch across the one end and down the long side, pivoting at the corner.
3. Trim the sewn corner and grade the seam allowance.

4. Press open the seam allowance and turn right side out through the open end. Press flat. If working with velveteen, use a pressing cloth.

5. Tuck in the raw edges of the open end ½", matching the sewn end. Pin closed. The loop should now measure 3" in length.
6. Find the back panel, which should have both the interfacing and fleece layers fused in place, and the original paper pattern.
   NOTE: The front and back panels are exactly the same size and shape. It's up to you which to designate as the back. If you have a nicer fussy cut on one panel, use that for the front.
7. Place the fused back panel right side up and flat on your work surface. Place the paper pattern over the back panel. Use the drawings on the pattern to mark the upper Box Stitched Square on each loop.
8. Transfer the markings to the fabric.
9. Using your transferred markings, pin each belt loop in place on the right side of the back panel.

10. The drawing below will help you see exactly where each loop is placed as well as the spacing of the Box Stitched Squares.

NOTE: Remember, our loops are sized for a 1” wide belt. The loops themselves should lay flat against the back panel with a 1½” opening between the upper and lower Box Stitched Squares for the belt to pass through. If your belt is substantially narrower or wider, you’ll need to reconfigure both the length of the loops as well as their exact position and the size of the box stitched squares that secure the loops in place.

11. With your placement marks confirmed, stitch a ¾” square to secure the top of each loop.
12. Repeat to stitch a matching ¾” square to secure the bottom of each loop.

NOTE: This securing stitch is similar to a standard X Box Stitch, just without the X through the center. For more about this technique, check out our full tutorial.

Layer the front and back panels and add the piping

1. With the belt loops in position, collect the back panel, the front panel, and the two main lining panels.
2. Layer a lining panel wrong sides together with each exterior panel. Pin together all around the perimeter of each panel.
3. Machine baste the layers together on each exterior panel.

4. Find the piping.
5. Cut a length to fit around each panel plus an extra 1” for overlapping to finish.
6. Pin the piping on the right side of each exterior panel, aligning the raw edges of the piping with the raw edge of the panel. We positioned our joining point at the center along the bottom edge of each panel.
7. If necessary, you can clip the piping to better allow it to curve around the corners.
8. When you are about 1” from your starting point, lay the piping against the fabric so it is flat and smooth at the joining point.
9. With a seam ripper, peel back the fabric on the 1” tail to expose the cording underneath. Trim the end of cording tail so it exactly butts together with the head of the cording.

10. Fold under the end of the loose fabric to create a clean edge. Trim away excess fabric if necessary. Overlap the folded end over the head of the piping to conceal the joint.
11. Pin in place so the overlap is as flat and smooth as the rest of the piping.
12. Using a Zipper foot, machine baste all the way around through all the layers.

NOTE: If you are brand new to working with piping, check out our full tutorial.
13. Set aside the front and back panels

Create the zipper panel

1. Find the exterior base section and zipper section. Both of which should already have the layers of interfacing and fleece fused in place.
2. Pair up each exterior piece with its corresponding lining piece, placing them wrong sides together.

3. Machine baste the base section layers together along their long outer sides, using a ¼" seam allowance.
4. Set aside the base section.
5. Cut the zipper section exactly in half lengthwise so you now have TWO strips.
6. Pull apart the zipper section exterior and lining layers and find the zipper. You should now have two exterior strips, two lining strips, and the zipper.

7. Place one exterior strip right side up and flat on your work surface. Place the zipper right side down on top to the exterior strip. The zipper should be centered side to side and the edge of the zipper tape should be flush with the raw edge of the strip. Pin along the top of the zipper tape through both layers. Open the zipper about half way.

8. Place a lining strip right side down on top of the exterior strip, sandwiching the zipper between the layers. All the raw edges of the exterior and lining strips should be flush. Pin through all three layers.
9. Using a Zipper foot, stitch the length of the strip, running the seam as close to the zipper teeth as possible.

NOTE: The zipper should be about half way open. Stitch to the middle, where you can start to feel you're approaching the zipper pull. Stop with your needle in the down position. Twist your fabric around slightly in order to access the zipper pull and carefully close the zipper, moving the pull out of the way. Re-position the fabric, drop the presser foot, and finish sewing to the end.

10. Press the strips away from the zipper teeth so they are now wrong sides together.
11. Still using a Zipper foot, edgestitch through all the layers, staying very close to the seam line.

12. Then, machine baste through both layers along the outer raw edges.

13. Another great Janome foot option for the edgestitching along the zipper is the Open Toe Satin Stitch foot. The wide opening makes it easy to see your seam in order to keep it nice and straight. The inner edge of the presser foot can
slide right along the zipper teeth.

14. Repeat to attach the remaining half of the exterior and lining strips to the opposite side of the zipper. First layering with the exterior strip...

15. ... then sandwiching the lining…
16. … and finally stitching across.

17. Don’t forget the edgestitching and basting.

**Complete the side loop**

1. Find the base section. Place the completed zipper section right sides together with the base section, aligning each end of the zipper section with the ends of the base section to create a loop. The zipper should be closed. Pin in place. Double check that the loop is not twisted anywhere along its length.
2. Using an approximate ½” seam allowance, stitch the two short seams through all the layers. We say “approximate” because your goal is to stitch just beyond the zipper stops at the top and bottom, which might be slightly narrower or wider than ½”.

3. Press both seam allowances towards the base section – away from the zipper. Edgestitch along the two short seams within the base section, flattening and securing the seam allowances in their down position.
4. You now have a finished side loop that is a complete circle.

**Insert the front and back panels into the side loop**

1. Find the back panel. Fold it in half and place a pin at each edge of the fold. Fold it in half in the opposite direction and place two additional pins. You now have pins at the quarter points of the panel, like the 12:00, 3:00, 6:00, and 9:00 points on the face of a clock.

2. Repeat this process with the front panel. And then repeat the process once more with the side loop to mark quarter points along each of its raw edges.

3. Flip the side loop wrong side out. Set the back exterior panel into the loop so the two pieces are right sides together.
4. Align the quarter point pins of the front panel with the matching pins of the loop. Pin through all the layers at these points first, then fill in around the circle.

5. Here's a look down inside with the back panel pinned in position.

6. Using a Zipper foot, stitch all the way around the circle, running your seam as close to the piping as possible. If your
machine allows you to set the needle position, move it all the way to the left.

7. Repeat to add the front panel. This side will be a bit more challenging to wrangle under the presser foot because you no longer have an open side. However, by making sure the zipper is all the way open and working to flatten the layers, you should be able to go all the way around without a problem. As with all things that may present an initial challenge, go slowly and stop – with your needle in the down position – to adjust the layers as needed.
NOTE: This technique is the same as any project where you are inserting a flat circle into a tube. In this case, we simply have a very narrow tube and our “circle” is more of a rounded square. If you are new to this process, check out our full, step-by-step tutorial.

Finishing the interior raw edges

1. This lining construction method creates interior seam allowances. Because of the structure of the bag, these seam allowances are tucked deep into the bag and it’s hard to even see them. However, we do always recommend some type of seam finish. The method is up to you. You can leave the interior seam allowances raw if you choose. Or, you could wrap them with bias binding or fold-over elastic. (If you’re interested in this technique, check out how we finished our Airstream Toiletry Bag).
2. We chose to use a machine sewn finish because we were having so much fun with all our Janome presser feet. We used the Overedge foot.
3. Carefully turn the bag wrong side out through the open zipper to reveal all the seam allowances. The Overedge foot has a guide to run along the raw edge. Set your stitch width and length to the tightness of wrap you’d like to see (test on scraps first to determine this). Then, simply run along each of the exposed seam allowances to finish.
4. Slip your favorite belt through the loops and you’re ready to roll.

Contributors

Project Design: Alicia Thommas
Sample Creation: Debbie Guild

Storage Solutions

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