



“Couching Elements Utilizing Scraps on Bags”

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Description: This pattern technique was designed to show that even the smallest scraps can be utilized for design elements on bags. Couching is a process of sewing items on a fabric surface with top stitching. It does not affect the stability or structure of the project as it is meant to add a unique quality to your finished product.



Finished Bag with Couching Element

Materials needed:

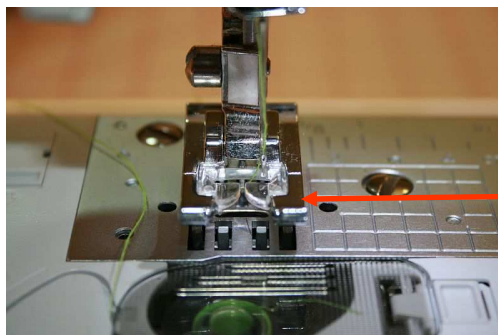
Any fabric remnant that is large enough to cut into strips

Matching Thread

Sewing machine

Sewing foot with a wide open toe. Example is a Brother Sewing foot “N” designed for monogramming or wide sewing patterns.

Straight edge, cutting mat and rotary cutter or scissors



Sewing foot with a wide open toe





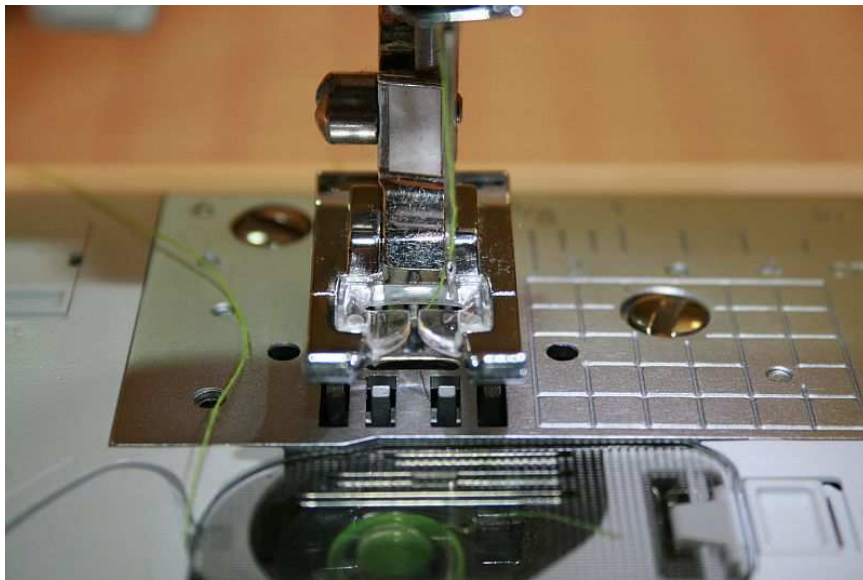
Couching with remnant scraps is a very easy way to use left over fabric with minimal waste. If you don't mind sitting at your machine with a little patience, it can actually be very relaxing and rewarding to create a fabric element that can be used in your current or future project. As you can see from the pictures, we used the fabrics from our outer and inner finished bag. We even utilized the stabilizer fabric that is a washable felt. When you are finished cutting out your pattern for your project, just keep all of your coordinating scraps together. They can be stored in a little plastic bag for later or if you know the sewing process for your project will require the element to be sewn on before the bag is put together, you can create your couching fabric first.



You will use your cutting mat or a cutting surface of your choice, a straight edge and rotary cutting wheel or scissors. We chose the rotary cutting wheel because it really makes the process faster. As you can see all of our pieces are **cut about the same width**. Approximately 1/2 inch. **Varying lengths are ok**. There are even some little points on the edges of the fabric but don't be concerned about them. Our finished element is meant to have a "Raggy" quality. Your main concern will be that the pieces are similar in width so the stitches on your sewing machine will capture most of the material once sewn.



Your sewing machine stitch setting will make the process easy. You want to have a ZigZag stitch that is very wide and the length really is personal preference depending on the type material you will be using. We used a 1.2 length and a 7.0 width which worked well for the cotton fabric and the felt we used. It was wide enough to capture both fabric widths and long enough that tangling of the thread was not a problem. As you start you may need to adjust the stitch settings for your fabric.



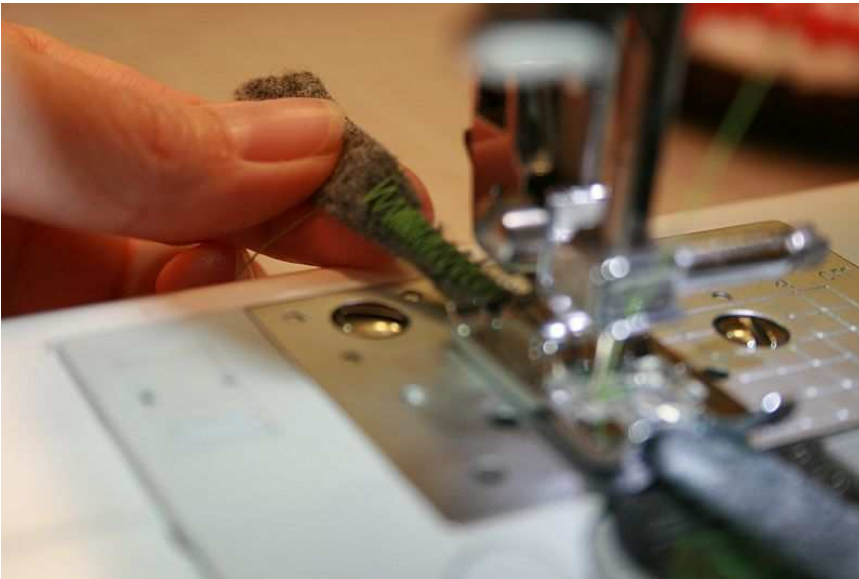
Your sewing foot will also assist in making the fabric design element. Your sewing machine may have come with several feet. Our example is a Brother Foot "N". It is used for monogramming or wide sewing patterns. As you can see from the picture the needle has a large area where it can move back and forth. There is also a larger "open" area where the fabric feeds. This will help you see the remnants as you pull them through and give you the room you need to twist the fabric. Compare this foot to your regular sewing foot and you will see it probably has a narrower "toe opening"

You are ready to begin sewing. Choose your first scrap piece and place it under the foot. From the picture you can see that we placed it far enough back that we could hold onto the material to get it started. You can also see that only one *feed dog* is under the fabric. It should still be able to move your project pieces along.



Exposed *feed dog*





Your stitch will look something like this. It may not capture all of the fabric width, but that will be just fine. The idea is to sew a continuous "rope" of fabric. Once you get close to the end, you will be ready to add your next piece. You may need to lift your presser foot to accomplish this so stop when the needle is in the down position.

Our next piece has been placed on top of the first.. Move your stitching along until they are attached and continue. You may also slightly twist the fabric as it sews. This will help ensure that most of the material edges are captured. If you look at the previously sewn piece there are edges that are not sewn but this will look very charming and unique once finished.



Before long you will begin to see progress. This is a relaxing way to sew without having to really think about what you are doing. Just be careful you pay attention to where your fingers are!





Custom made design element done! Now you just have to figure out how you will apply it to your project. The options are infinite.

So many uses other than bags also! Can you see this as a fabric necklace or bracelet?



One option might be to personalize your project with a letter.





Another idea would be to place the fabric in the shape of a flower.

How about a spiral? The possibilities are only up to your imagination!



We chose to use the design of our fabric when applying. Since it looked like a quilt with multiple stripes of color, placing the “Raggy” fabric along several of the lines made it look “Pieced” together.

We used our straight edge ruler to measure the width of our bag front and cut as many strip lengths that we could from our rope.





Once the pieces were cut, they were strategically placed along what would become our front cover making sure they were even

Use pins to temporarily hold the fabric to your project. You will use a regular seam and do a top stitch.



Your remnant couching is now complete!



ENJOY!