

Crossword Handbag



The basic technique for this bag is to use a crossword grid as a knitting pattern. Knit a front and a back piece. Knit a gusset strip. (Or knit them in the round.) Sew them together, add a lining, and handles, and that's all there is to it! Well, maybe it's not quite that simple. I've written out my slightly 'hand-wavy' instructions

as well 😊

A Slightly Tricky Knit : experience with stranded knitting and sewing is needed.

Materials

- 2 x 50g balls of black 5 ply wool crepe
- 1 x 50g ball of white 5 ply wool crepe (I used Paton's Bluebell). It's a good idea to choose a yarn that can be washed easily.

Search

Categories

No categories

- 3 mm / US 2.5 needles; straights or circular
- Handles of your choice. I used white vinyl ones from [Tall Poppy Crafts](#).
- Darning needle
- For the lining :



American-style grid

Sturdy washable lining fabric (about 60 cm), sewing machine, snaps, strip of wide flat elastic, thread, hand sewing needle etc

Gauge: About 30 stitches : 10 cm / 4" – but it's not too critical

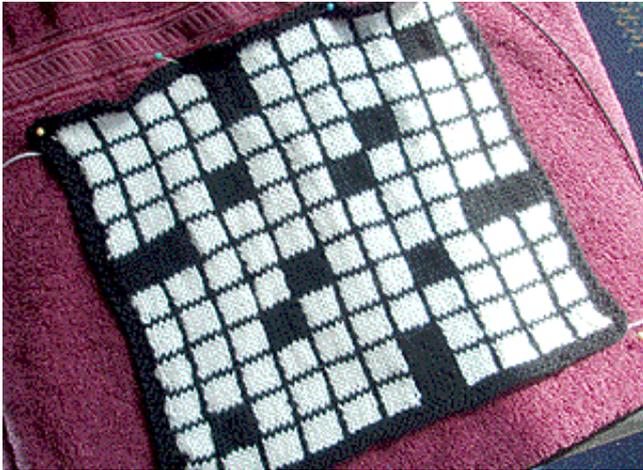
Size: About 24 cm wide x 24 cm high x 8 cm deep (9" x 9" x 3")

Method

- Read through the pattern, and the [pattern notes below](#) before casting on.
- Although I knit my bag in flat pieces, seamed together, it is probably easier to make in the round. I think the seams add some structural strength and form to the bag, but this could be replicated by stitching the inner lining to the bag in the places where a seam would be. To knit in the round, you'll want to have the stitches on

your circular needle as follows: Front grid stitches, side gusset stitches, back grid stitches, side gusset stitches.

- Choose one of the two grids ([crossword bag British or American Grids](#)). Knit the crossword pattern, and then knit the top black border as high as it needs to be to accommodate any tags for bag handles, if that's the sort of handles you've got.
- Knit the front piece from the grid of your choice. Then knit a second piece for the back of the bag, again choosing the grid of your choice (two the same, or two different, or a solid colour — it's up to you!). Make sure you add the extra rows at the top to accommodate the bag handle tabs.

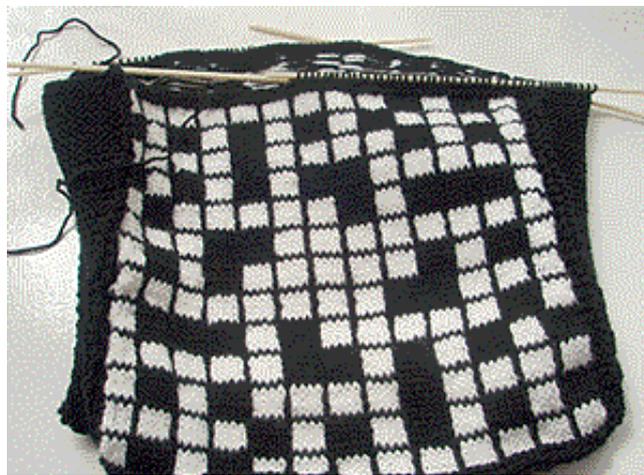


Wash and block your knitted crosswords, pinning out carefully. This will help ease out any lumps in the

stranded knitting.

- Knit the gusset piece — cast on 20 stitches, knit in garter stitch until piece fits around the side, base, and other side of your knitted crossword pieces (~ 62 cm / 24.5").
- Sew the gusset to the crossword front and back pieces, along the sides and bottom edges.
- If the top border of the bag isn't tall enough to cope with your chosen handles, you can pick up stitches along the top of the bag and knit upwards for another 15-20 rows, as required. This is handy if you purchase

your bag handles after knitting the crosswords, and need to adjust things after the fact (can you tell what mistake I made?!)



- Darn in all ends.

Sew the lining

- Using the bag as a guide, cut out a front, back and gusset pieces from the lining fabric of your choice. A darker fabric is probably better as it won't show the stranded side of your knitting through the fabric. Leave a good 3cm / 1" seam allowance, or more.

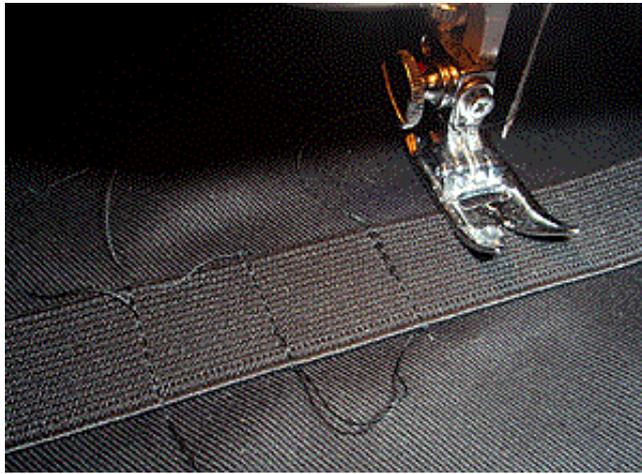


Sew inner pockets etc to the front and back pieces, stitching them onto the right side of the

fabric. A pocket can be made from a hemmed rectangle, with a snap closure if desired.

- I added a wide strap of elastic onto one piece of the lining, which was stitched down at intervals to make handy slots for holding pens / DPNs / sunglasses etc.

- Sew the fabric gusset to the front of the lining, and then sew it onto the back of the lining,



ensuring the seams are on the *outside* of the lining, and the inside of the bag looks right! Keep checking the fit all the time, keep trying the lining inside the knitted bag to check your measurements, then pin and sew accordingly.

- Fit the lining inside the bag and fold the top edge to the inside so it meets the top edge of the knitted bag, pin hem (just the cloth, not the knitted bag). Remove lining, iron hem down, stitch.
- If you wish to have some plastic or cardboard base or sides inside the bag, now's the time to decide. Cut the material you choose (I used the plastic base of a green shopping bag) to size, and fit in place



- Pin the lining into the bag, hand sew the top edge first. Then pin along the side seams (to affix the

knitted bag

and lining together, and hold the side/base pieces in place if used), and hand sew in place. Nearly done!



Sew on the handles firmly. Add a handbag clasp if so desired. You might like to add a little pencil button, or embroider letters into the grid, such as your name, or some message... there are lots of options, go crazy!

- Go and show off your bag to all and sundry!



PATTERN NOTES for knitting the crossword grids

You can convert any 13 x 13 or 11 x 11 crossword into a knitting pattern. For a 13 x 13 grid simply use 4 stitches & 4 rows per white box, and for a 11x11 grid use 5 stitches

& 5 rows per white box. The black lines are all single stitches and single rows.

CONSTRUCTION NOTE : Because the black lines are a single row, the white yarn will always be at the wrong end of the work when you come to knit the next row of white boxes. There are two ways around this :

-  Run the white yarn along the back of the work when you knit the black row,

catching it in every 4 or 5 stitches (< example of caught yarn in red)

- Knit alternate rows of white squares from 2 balls of white yarn, or use both ends from the one ball.
- Adapt the pattern to be knit in the round, including the side gussets, knit the base of the bag separately and stitch it on.

© Denise Sutherland. For personal use only.

[\(Edit\)](#)

