THE PONY EXPRESS

by Deborah Edwards

FREE PATTERN • **Messenger Bag 3½" x 12" x 8"** • by Elaine Theriault of Northcott

Pony Express Messenger Bag

Finished Size: 3 ½" W by 12" L by 8" H

wof = width of fabric

Fabric requirements	Yard	Cutting Instructions
(#21836-34) Medium brown Pony Express symbol (Outer bag)	⅓ yard	Outer bag: cut TWO pieces 11" (height) X 16" (width)
(#21830-36) Brown/beige images (Bag flap)	⅜ yard	Bag flap: cut TWO pieces 11" (height) by 13" (width) Pocket: cut TWO pieces 7 ½" by 12"
(#21831-34) Brown/beige stamps (Lining)	½ yard	Lining: cut TWO pieces 11" (height) X 16" (width) Bag bottom cover: cut TWO pieces 4 ½" by 15"
(#21836-36) Dark brown Pony Express symbol (Strap)	⅓ yard	Strap: cut ONE piece 6 ½" by WOF" Strap supports: cut FOUR pieces measuring 3 ½" by 4"
Fusible fleece	1 yard	For outer bag: cut TWO pieces 11" by 16" For flap: cut ONE piece measuring 11" by 13"
Décor Bond or Craft Fuse (stiff fusible interfacing)	1 yard (the width of this product varies from 20" to 45" so you may want to purchase a bit more if the width is only 20")	For lining: cut TWO pieces 11" by 16" For pocket: cut TWO pieces 7" by 5 ¾" For strap: cut ONE piece 6" by WOF" For strap supports: cut FOUR pieces measuring 3 ½" by 3 ¾"

Use ¼" Seam Allowance unless otherwise stated

Prepping the outer bag and lining pieces

- Fuse the fusible fleece to the wrong side of the outer bag pieces. Use a hot iron with steam. Depending on the fusible fleece, this step can take a bit of time. Make sure the edges are well fused. Give it a good press from both sides.
- Fuse the Décor Bond to the wrong side of the lining. Again, steam and a hot iron will help.
- If you would like to add some quilting or decorative stitching to the outer bag, now is the time.
- One at a time, trim all four bag pieces to the same size - 10 ½" (height) by 15 ½" (width).

Making the pockets

- Feel free to change the size of the pockets, make one pocket, or omit the pockets altogether. I made two pockets for my messenger bag.
- Fold the pocket in half right sides together and press along the fold (this fold is parallel to the SHORT side of the pocket piece. Alternatively you could use two separate pieces of fabric to make the pocket.
- Center the interfacing on the wrong side of the pocket with one edge of the interfacing aligned along the folded edge.
- Fuse the interfacing in place.
- Stitch around the three sides of the pocket, leaving an opening so you can turn the pocket right side out.
- Trim the corners of the seam allowance to reduce bulk when the pocket is turned right side out.

- Turn the pocket right side out. I like to (carefully) use a point turner to get a nice sharp point at the corners. Press well, tucking in the seam allowance in the opening. The pocket should measure approximately 7" wide by 5 ½" deep.
- Now it's time to close the opening. This can be hand stitched, but that takes time. You could leave it unstitched since you're going to top stitch the pocket to the bag lining, but I like to fuse the opening shut. I use fusible web that comes in ¼" wide format or you could cut a ¼" strip off a piece of fusible web and use that. Cut it to the length needed, insert in the opening and fuse shut.
- Place the pocket on the right side of the lining at least 2 ½" from the bottom and center it between the two sides.
- Top stitch around the sides and bottom edges of the pocket. Reinforce the top corners of the pocket so they don't easily rip from the lining.
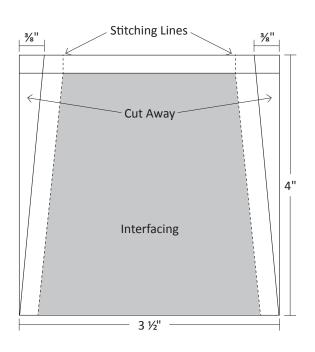
The outer bag and lining:
- Mark a 1¾" square using a pen and a ruler on the bottom two corners of each piece of lining and outer bag. Using SCISSORS, cut out the corner notch on the bottom of all four bag pieces.
- With right sides together, stitch the two outer bag pieces together along the sides and the bottom. DO NOT stitch in the corner notches.
- With right sides together, stitch the two lining pieces together along the sides and bottom, leaving an opening (about 4") in the bottom seam so you can turn the bag right side out. DO NOT stitch in the corner notches.
- In one of the corner notches, bring the side and bottom seams together and stitch across the opening to make the corner seam. Repeat on the remaining three corners.
- Turn the outer bag right side out.

Making the strap
- Line up one long edge of the interfacing to a long edge of the strap fabric. The interfacing is ½" narrower than the strap fabric. Fuse the interfacing to the wrong side of the strap fabric. If using two shorter pieces of interfacing, overlap the short edges slightly in the middle of the strap fabric.
- Fold over the long edge of the strap fabric that's not covered by the interfacing and press.
- Fold the strap in thirds lengthwise, keeping the folded edge on top and tucking the long raw edge of the strap inside. The strap should be approximately 2" wide.
- Press and secure with binding clips. Using a matching or decorative thread, top stitch the folded edge in place through all layers. Stitch a matching line of stitching on the opposite edge of the strap. Add additional lines of stitching if you wish.
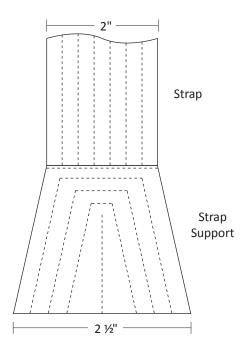- Once the top stitching is complete, trim off the selvedges from both ends.

Making the strap supports
- Fuse a piece of interfacing to the wrong side of each of the strap supports. The interfacing is ¼" shorter than the strap support. This will help when you fold in the top hem after you've turned this piece inside out.
- Place two strap supports right sides together (making sure the edge without the interfacing is in the same orientation for both).
- Measure in ⅜" from each corner on the top edge. Draw a line from this mark to the bottom corner for the left and right hand sides respectively. Trim this excess away.
- Stitch the two sides, leaving the top and bottom open. When stitching, stitch a straight line through the seam allowance where there is no interfacing, then pivot slightly and follow the angle of the side.
- Turn inside out and press well. Repeat for the other strap support.
- Turn in the top edge using the edge of the interfacing as a guide. Press.

⅜"   Stitching Lines   ⅜"

Cut Away

Interfacing

4"

3 ½"

Assembling the strap

- Insert at least one inch of the end of the strap into the narrow end of the strap support. The strap should fill that opening. Pin in place. Pin the strap supports to the sides of the bag so you can test the length of the strap. If you need to shorten the strap, it's easy to cut the strap. If you want the strap longer, you may have to cut longer strap supports.

- Top stitch the top edge of the strap supporting securing the strap in place. You may want to do some decorative stitching on the rest of the strap support.

- Being careful to NOT twist the strap, baste one end of the strap support to each side of the bag. Be sure to center the strap support over the side seam. I like to position a little extra length of handle inside the bag to ensure that the handle will be caught in the seams and will not pull out. To do this, position the strap support so approximately ½" sticks up beyond the top edge of the bag.

2"

Strap

Strap Support

2 ½"

Making the bag flap:

- Fuse the fusible fleece to the wrong side of the outer bag flap.

- Round the bottom two corners of both pieces of the outer flap. You can use a small plate to do this. I used a template for a 3 ½" Drunkard's Path block to round my corners. A note if you are using directional fabric, I rounded the bottom of the outer piece (with the fusible fleece). I rounded the corners of the lining piece in the opposite orientation. Then when the flap of my bag is raised, the fabric shows in the correct orientation.

- With right sides together, stitch the sides and the rounded bottom edge of the outer flap pieces together, leaving the top open.

- Turn inside out and press well.

- If you wish to do some quilting on the outer flap, now is the time.

- Square up the open edge so it's parallel to the bottom edge of the flap.

- Place the right side of the bag flap on the right side of the outer bag, centering the flap between the handles. The flap should just fit between the handles. Baste in place.

Final Assembly

- Insert the outer bag inside the lining so right sides are together. Match up the side seams. There will be a lot happening inside the bag with the outer flap and the handles as well so take care.

- Pin well and carefully stitch through all thicknesses. You may want to use a topstitch needle or a denim needle for this as those needles are stronger.

- Turn the bag inside out through the opening in the lining.

- Stitch the opening closed in the lining or use a small piece of fusible web. Push the lining inside the bag and push out the corners.

- Press the top edge well and top stitch the upper edge of the bag about ¼" from the top.

Making the bag bottom insert

- I like to put a bottom insert in my bags. It gives the bottom a firm support and looks more professional. I use plasticore. (see note about plasticore below)

- Stitch the two pieces of the bag bottom cover together leaving one narrow end open. If you want, you can hem this narrow opening. Turn right side out, insert a piece of plasticore into the bag bottom cover, tuck in the open end and place the insert into the bag.

Enjoy!

Note about plasticore:

- I've seen all kinds of material used for the bottom of bags. However the best solution I've come up with is plasticore. It's lightweight and it's strong (no saggy bottoms). The only downfall is that it can be costly. So I've been known to recycle election signs and real estate signs which are often made from plasticore.

- Use a craft knife and a metal ruler to cut the plasticore.

- Once the tote bag is complete, use a ruler to measure the bottom – the bottom of this bag should be approximately 3 ½" by 11 ½". I would cut the plasticore 3" by 11", leaving a bit of space so it is easy to get the bottom insert into the bottom of the bag.

- Round the corners of the plasticore with scissors to remove the sharp edges and cover all edges with some kind of tape like painter's tape to prevent the plastic from cutting through your bag insert. Put the plasticore inside the bag insert and put into your bag.

NOTE: It is best to NOT prewash preprinted fabrics such as panels and border prints. Fabrics go through many manufacturing processes and there may be some size variations. If you are using a border print or a panel and are unable to cut the strips to the size mentioned above, cut the pieces to a size that works for your fabrics and adjust any other measurements accordingly.