



## The Taxi Tote

by Eleanor Levie

*No paper or plastic! Do right by the planet and carry your own quilted tote bag for all your shopping and shlepping. This design was inspired by Karen Eckmeier's What's for Dinner? Bag, as featured in Eleanor's recent book: Unforgettable TOTE BAGS: 20 Designs Too Cool to Leave in the Car. (Ask your local quilt shop for the book, or visit the designer/publisher at Visit <http://eleanorlevie.com/books-details.php?ID=47>.) You can adapt the easy how-to's provided here to your own mix of fabrics, and make a bag that reflects your personality and style. Make one for yourself, another for a gift -- no gift-wrap necessary!*



**Size:** 17" wide x 16" high (19" high with flap up) x 5" deep, not including handles

## What you'll need

### Materials

1/4 yard of print you absolutely love, for your "focal fabric" (here, a swirly yellow, black, white print)

1- 2 fat quarters in a variety of coordinating prints (sharing at least one of the colors of the focal fabric, but with a different type of pattern and scale; here, bubbly print)

1/2 yard dark-colored fabric to coordinate (here, black with confetti print)

1/4 yard OR fat quarter of light-colored fabric to coordinate (here, mottled yellow solid)

1/8 yard light & dark geometric in colors to coordinate (here, black and white diagonal stripe)

1/2 yard canvas fabric, 36" wide

18" x 36" piece of Fusiboo batting from Fairfield Processing Corp.

1 yard cotton or polyester webbing, 1" wide, for handles (here, black)

Optional: iron-on letters for monogram; 3 buttons, 1" in diameter; 6" length of narrow elastic cord

### **Basic Supplies:**

Rotary cutter with new, sharp, 45mm blade, large mat, and large (i.e., 6" x 24") acrylic rulers

OR strong, good quality fabric-cutting shears, fabric marking pen, and ruler

50-weight sewing thread (neutral or colors to match fabrics)

Straight pins and pin cushion

Thread snips or small scissors

Sewing machine in good working condition, with 80/12 machine needle for piecing and 90/14 machine needle for bag assembly

### **Cutting**

#### ***From focal fabric print, cut:***

2 rectangles 6" x 27"

2 rectangles 6" x 9"

#### ***From coordinating print, cut:***

1 rectangle, 4 3/4" x 33"

#### ***From dark fabric, cut:***

2 strips 2 1/2", selvage to selvage

1 strip 4" x 33"

4 strips 2" x 18 1/2"

2 strips 2" x 32"

#### ***From light fabric, cut:***

1 rectangle, 6" x 6 1/2"

2 strips 2 1/2", selvage to selvage

***From geometric print, cut:***

2 strips 3 1/2 " x 18 1/2"

**Checkerboard**

- 1 Cut the dark 2 1/2" strips into 16 squares. Cut the light 2 1/2" strips into 16 squares.
- 2 Arrange 8 squares in a long row, starting with a light square and alternating with a dark. Stitch together. Repeat to make a second unit.



- 3 Turn one row around, so dark square is at the starting end. Stitch the two rows together, nesting the seam allowances to create a checkerboard pattern.

**Arrange Pieces**

- 1 Stitch light 6" x 7" square to focal fabric strip along 6" edges.
- 2 Make pockets: Fold each 6" x 9" focal fabric in half, with right side in. Stitch across the 6" edges, creating a tube. Turn tube right side out and press seam. Position one pocket at one end of focal fabric strip, 2" from short end. Leave a gap of 3/4", then position second pocket. Topstitch along folded edge of each pocket; this will be the bottom of each pocket. The raw edges along the sides will later be encased in joining seams.

**Stitch & Flip**

- 1 Lay canvas out on a flat work surface. Center Fusiboo, cut to same width but 2" shorter, on top. Place Teflon presser sheet on top, and following directions on the package, press to fuse.

2 Referring to photo below, lay pieces lengthwise along the center of the batting/canvas. Place checkerboard strip over on top of focal fabric, with right sides facing and left edges even. Stitch along this edge, from one end to the other, through all layers, to piece and quilt simultaneously. Fold back the checkerboard strip and press the new seam.

3 Next, place the dark 4" x 33" strip onto the focal fabric, with right sides facing and right edges even. Stitch, flip, and press.



4 Stitch one 2" x 18 1/2" dark strip to each side of the 3 1/2" x 18 1/2" geometric print strip. Repeat, to make 2 units. Press seam allowances toward the dark strips. Lay this pieced unit at one end of canvas, right sides together. Stitch, flip, and press. Add the second pieced unit at the other end in the same way.



5 Beginning at the center and working outward, stitch in the ditch (right over the seams) between units that do not have the flip-and-stitch quilting.

6 If you like, add an iron-on monogram to 6" x 7" light fabric square.

7 Add additional quilting if desired:

- Using dark-color thread, stitch a square spiral on 6" x 7" light fabric square.
- Stitch diagonally through the checkerboard squares.

### **Assemble Bag**

1 Fold the bag crosswise in half, with right sides in. Mark the bottom fold, along each side edge, with a pin. Measure 2 1/2" from either side of the pin, and mark these locations with a pin; you should have three pins on each side at the bottom. Make an inverted pleat at the bottom that brings the three pins together.



2 Using a #14 or #16 machine needle and heavy thread such as Jeans thread or topstitching thread, sew along each side, 1/4" from the edges; leave top dark strip free of stitching. Then, stitch again 1/8" from edges to reinforce the seam. Clean-finish the seam allowances with zigzag stitching. Press, turn bag to right side, and press again.



## Finishing

1 Fold dark strip 1/4" to the wrong side, then over the edge of the canvas; pin. Topstitch to secure.

2 To create a flap, fold half of the top border of the bag to the inside of the bag, leaving only half of the geometric print showing along the top edge of the bag.

3 Cut webbing into two halves, for handles. Turn raw ends under 1/2". Position the ends of one handle on the inside dark border strip, centered on the front of the bag and 4 1/2" apart. Pin in place without catching the flap. Unfold the flap and stitch handles securely in place.

4 Stitch a button over ends of both handles.

5 To prevent goodies from spilling out of your bag, stitch a loop of elastic to the center of one top edge, and a dome button to the other top edge, to correspond.

Want more fabulous tote bag designs by celebrity quilters? Ask your local quilt shop for the book, Unforgettable TOTE BAGS: 20 Designs Too Cool to Leave in the Car, or check out <http://eleanorlevie.com/books-details.php?ID=47>.