

I have run across some great tips and tricks that might be second nature to most, but those of us that seem to forget the important things might appreciate!!

Since I will be making creative, individualized and thoughtful totebags for Christmas, I ran across an article from Martingale that reminded me of some great tips. When creating a totebag - **Consider the Stress Points.** Think about how your bag will be used. Will you be toting heavy loads? Will you be storing the bag by hanging it from a hook? Make sure that your stitching is strong enough to withstand the wear and tear of everyday use.

Here are some techniques to strengthen your tote:

1) Double stitch (stitch the first seam, then stitch again within the seam allowance, 1/16"-1/8" from the first seam line) and/or topstitch seams (catching the seam allowances in the stitching) to add strength. Try using a contrasting thread to make topstitching an eye-catching design element.

2) To attach exposed straps or handles, topstitch a square on the strap/handle, then topstitch an X shape through the middle of the square.

3) Bartack or use a short zigzag stitch at the top corners of patch pockets to reinforce the attachment. Remember that stitch you don't know what it's for?? It's a bartack! The stitch goes back and forth and does not move forward. How to do?? If your machine does not have a specific bartack (you most likely will find in the buttonhole stitches), it's easy...just drop your feeddogs and put your machine in a zigzag stitch and stitch about 10 times holding your fabric in one spot.

July 1 is the date that Thurston County will honor the one-time carry out bag ban. Which means, stores will have to charge you for using plastic sacks. So.. will make some great gifts to non-sewing friends and family.