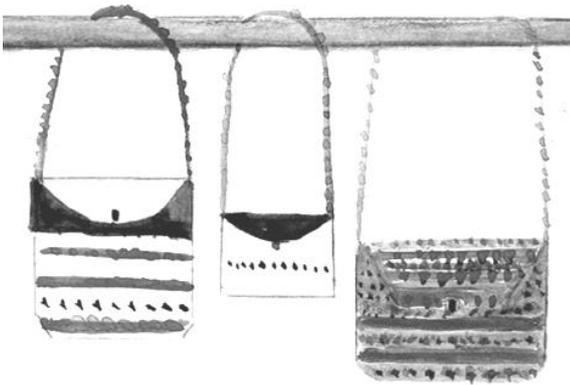


Making Waste Work: A Toolkit

How to crochet film plastic into bags and mats

A step-by-step guide



How-to guide 10

Part of
Making Waste Work: A Toolkit
for community waste
management in low and middle
income countries

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wasteaid.org.uk/toolkit





WasteAid UK is a charity working to make an impact on the global waste emergency by:

- Partnering with local organisations to improve the health, environment and livelihoods of people without waste services.
- Building the skills of local people to deliver practical solutions to the waste management crisis in their own communities.
- Raising awareness of the benefits of proper waste management and campaigning for greater change.

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The objectives of the CIWM are to advance the scientific, technical and practical aspects of wastes and resource management worldwide for the safeguarding of the natural environment, to promote education, training, and research in wastes and resource management, and the dissemination of knowledge of the topic; and to strive to achieve and maintain the highest standards of best practice, technical competence and conduct by all its members.

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10 How to crochet film plastic into bags and mats

You can make long-lasting reusable plastic bags, baskets and mats from strips of water sachets, single-use plastic bags and other film plastic.

Summary: Wash and dry the plastic, cut into long thin strips and crochet into a variety of products.

Waste materials: Water sachets, plastic bags, plastic film wrap. Try and find materials that are clean and dry.

Product: Bags, baskets and mats.

Benefits: The products are easy and cheap to make. The plastic material is often freely available and you can make quite high value products with it. This also finds a use for the plastic rather than dumping and burning.

DO:

- Try and find a reliable and clean source of plastic. See if you can get the producers to bring the plastic to you so you don't have to pay transport costs.
- Try out lots of different products to find out what sells well. Visit different markets and see what people want and what you can sell.

DON'T:

- Make too much of a product without being confident it will sell.
- Use dirty plastic.



Make sure you clean the plastic before you work with it and wash your hands after handling dirty plastic.

Be careful if you are picking the plastic from a waste dump – there could be sharp objects hidden among the waste.

You will need:

- Water and soap to wash the plastic
- Large sharp scissors to cut the plastic
- Crochet needle.

You might also like to make a pattern using:

- Textile or weaving straw
- Different colour plastic.

You can use different types of plastic film, such as shopping bags, wrapping film and water sachets. If they are not already clean, wash and dry them.

The best bags for this are thin plastic; thicker plastic is more difficult to work with.

You need to transform the plastic bag into a long, thin strip that you can crochet. To avoid needing lots of joins between short strips, follow these steps to cut the bag into one long ribbon.

1. Wash and dry the plastic bag.

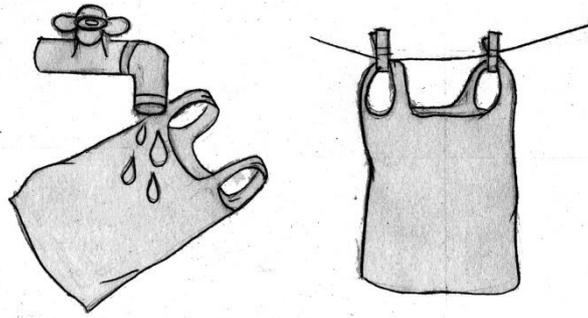


Figure 1: It is important to only work with clean plastic.

2. Lay the plastic bag out flat on a table and roll it neatly so the top and bottom of the bag are at the top and bottom of the roll. Then cut off the top (where the handle usually is) and the bottom seam to make a wide tube.

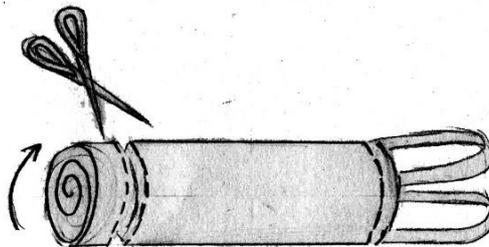


Figure 2: Cut the top and bottom from the bag. Save the off-cuts for other projects, such as stuffing small toys or ecobricks (How-to guide 9).

3. Open it out and check all the seams have been cut correctly. Then roll the bag again, but this time leaving an extra lip along one edge.

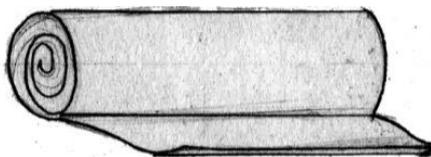


Figure 3: Roll the bag, leaving a lip on one edge.

- Place your thumb at the side of the roll and using sharp scissors, cut the folded part of the bag into a strip as wide as from the tip of your thumb to the first knuckle. Stop cutting when the scissors reach the edge of the roll and the start of the lip. Repeat all the way along the bag, making sure each cut is as wide as from the tip of your thumb to the knuckle.

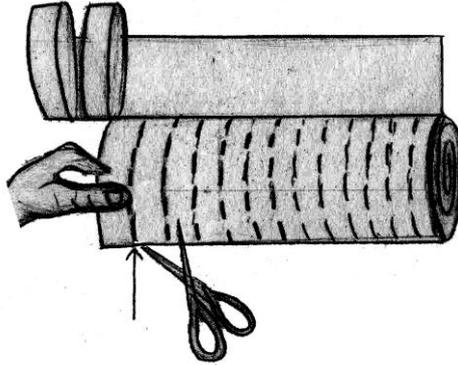


Figure 4: Leaving the lip intact, cut thumb-width strips all the way along.

- Then unfold the bag. Lie the bag on the table so the lip section is unfolded, and at the top.



Figure 5: Unfold the bag and lie it on the table with the lip section at the top.

- Starting at one end of the lip, cut diagonally from the first strip off to the side, to create an end to the plastic ribbon.

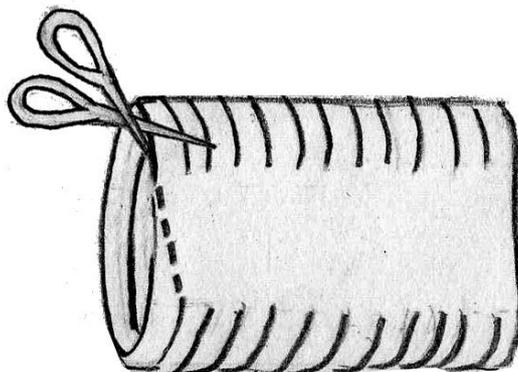


Figure 6: Make a snip from the top of one loop to the side of the lip. This will create an end to the ribbon.

- Then holding the plastic bag in your left hand, cut diagonally across to the next loop. You should start to see a long ribbon appear. Keep going until you reach the end, then cut diagonally to the edge of the plastic to finish the ribbon.

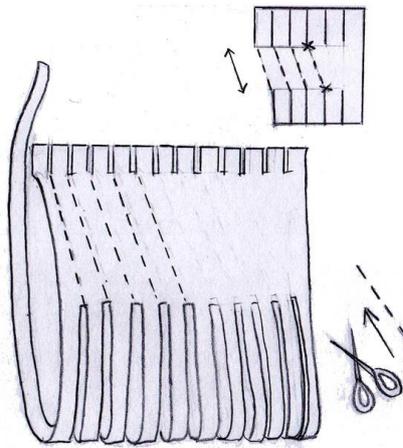


Figure 7: After the final loop has been cut, snip to the edge of the lip to finish the ribbon.

- Roll the long ribbon around your hand and tuck in one end, so you have a ball with a loose end to work with.

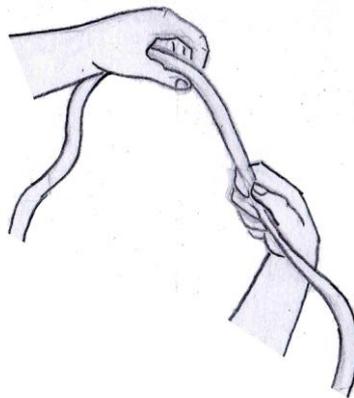


Figure 8: Roll the long ribbon like a ball of wool, with one end tucked in and the other loose.

- Now you are ready to crochet. The plastic yarn is best crocheted with a size K crochet hook (or larger). You can crochet shopping bags, purses, baskets and mats. Your creations are limited only by your imagination!

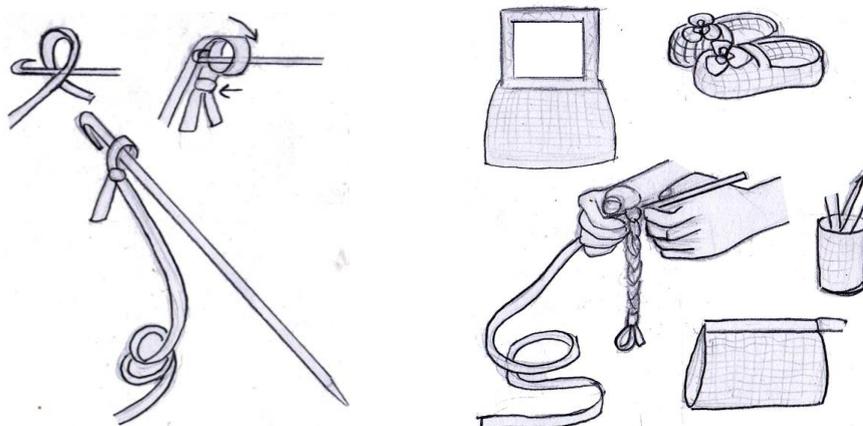


Figure 9: Crochet (or weave) a range of products using the plastic yarn. Create stripes and other patterns using different coloured plastic.

Market

Work out what sells best – make samples and see whether larger bags, smaller phone covers or purses or wallets sell better.

EXAMPLE: In The Gambia, 1 laptop bag can sell for D800 (around USD\$12) and takes one week to make.

There are detailed instructions for this technique on YouTube: *“How to Recycle Plastic Bags into Purses: Isatou Ceesay - Njau, Gambia.”*



Figure 10: Working as a cooperative, you can make and sell many different products from waste.