Can interfacing and foundation fabric be considered as part of the creative process? That was the question that I posed to myself before deciding to write this blog. The answer to my own question—unfortunately I do talk to myself—was a definite yes. My rationale was that if a handbag (or any other project for that matter) doesn’t have the needed interfacing and/or stabilizers, creative efforts are wasted.

In my initial days of creating handbags, I only added fusible interfacing to the back of the fabric. The result—a lackluster bag. My new mantra is “more is better” when it comes to what’s inside the bag.

Cotton fabrics are the most common fabrics available for bag making. The selection is almost endless, yet the weight of the fabric—lightweight—is a drawback for bags if not properly stabilized. I take a 3-step process to shaping a handbag or tote. Here are my recommendations for giving handbag fabric support and stability, which will enhance the creative process.

Step One:
Fuse an interfacing such as Sof-Shape® from Pellon to the wrong side of all cotton fabrics. Cut interfacing the same size as the bag pieces and fuse to wrong sides. I generally fuse a large section of fabric, then cut out the fabric. Here I’m using the Trace ‘n Create Bag Templates—The Florida Tote Collection to trace the shape on
the wrong side and then cut out the bag shape.

Step Two:
Plus, back the main pieces of the bag with a firm foundation fabric. Cut foundation fabric the same size as the main bag pieces—the front and the back. Choose one of three options:
• Cotton Canvas/Polyester Fleece combo: Both fabrics are easy to find. Used together, the duo provides stability and enhances the shaping of the bag.
• Headliner Fabric: Available in the upholstery section of many chain stores, this foam-type fabric generally lines the inside of your car! Use as a foundation for a Designer Bag; it’s easy-to-sew.

• Peltex Ultra Firm—Sew In: Recommended as a heavyweight stabilizer for accessories and crafts, it’s one
of my favorite bag foundation fabrics. Available in white or black, it’s an ideal choice to give your bag support.

Step Three:
I recommend sewing a bag from the bottom up, first stitching the lower seam so that the bag pieces lies flat. Then, the inner toning or shaping can easily be added. Here’s how:

• Stitch lower seam; press seam open.

• Zigzag over seam allowances, using widest zigzag stitch on your machine. This stitching will keep seam allowances perfectly flat.

• Cut a plastic stabilizer, such as Shape ‘n Create the width X the finished length of the bag bottom, minus seam allowances.
• Position Shape ‘n Create to wrong side of bag with double-sided basting tape. It's easy to stitch through the plastic, but difficult to pin without bending pins.

• Edgestitch the Shape ‘n Create along all sides. If it is difficult to sew through all layers, use a larger sized needle, 90 or 100 and lengthen the stitches.
Theses three shaping details will be neatly tucked inside your bag or tote, giving you shape and detail. It’s what’s inside that counts!

An InLinkz Link-up

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