How to make your recycled newspaper bag

Note that all measurements are approximate – I judge every fold “by eye”, never with a ruler. I use a tabloid sized newspaper because, although broadsheets produce a larger bag, they need at least 3 sheets of paper to provide the same carrying strength. The string I use is called ‘sisal twine’, available from hardware stores and garden centres. It’s stronger than necessary but I use a lot in the veg patch so it just happens to be at hand.

You will need:
- 2 sheets of newspaper, identical size
- Craft glue suitable for sticking paper
- Two lengths of string, each 25cm (10 inches) long
- A flat surface at least as large as the paper sheet

Step 1:

Lay the 2 sheets of newspaper flat on top of one another and glue them together. Just a quick dab of glue along one long edge is enough.

Step 2:

Fold over this glued edge about 4cm (1½ inches) from the top and stick it in place. This makes the strengthened top rim of the bag.
Step 3:

Fold in edge A approximately \(\frac{1}{3}\) of the way across the sheet of paper. Fold in edge B so that it overlaps edge A by about 3cm (1 inch).

Step 4:

Now glue edge A between the double layer of edge B. This is easily done by first lifting the top layer of B and putting a length of glue on B’s bottom layer. Press the whole of edge A down, then put glue along the top of A. Press down the top layer of B and the join should then be secure. Take care not to accidentally spread glue outside of the overlapping area. Press the whole thing flat and make the two side creases sharp – this will make the next step easier.

Step 5:

Open the bag out and make another sharp fold about 8cm (3½ inches) from, and parallel to, the existing fold. Pressing the whole thing flat again will make another fold on the opposite side. The bag can now be opened up to make a rectangular shape which is open at both the top and bottom.
Step 6:
Now to make the side pleats simply press corner A to corner A and then B to corner B, making sure the paper folds inwards. Press down firmly and repeat on the opposite side, as indicated.

Step 7:
Keeping the bag flat, make a fold about 6cm (2½ inches) from the bottom edge and press the crease down firmly. Unfold it and flip the whole thing over to the other side. Make the same fold along the same crease and press down firmly again. There should now be an easily visible crease on both the inside and the outside of the bag.

Step 8:
This part can be tricky if the creases you just made aren’t easy to see. With the bag fully open, tuck in the bottom edges along the fold lines as shown. Crease the corners into triangles and glue them in place.
Step 9:

Now fold in and glue the two base flaps. You will also need to put some glue along the inside of one bottom edge to seal the base of the bag. It is usually easiest to apply pressure from within the top of the opened bag to press the joins together. Now fold the bag flat again and make sure that all seams are pressed firmly in place.

Step 10:

Make 2 small holes on each side of the top rim of the bag, approximately 7cm (2½ inches) apart and thread the string through. Tie a knot in the end of each length of cord so that it will not easily slip back through the hole.

(A good tip here is to place a lump of modelling clay under the paper before using a tool to make each hole)

This is the most basic style of bag I make and the easiest to describe. There are many possible variations - the ones I use in the shop myself are thicker and have a stronger reinforcement in the rim, but the design described here would be adequate for most small purchases.