

Haversacks and Satchels



Both haversacks and satchels are bags to be worn over the shoulder with usually one strap to carry items. A haversack is to be distinguished by a knapsack (modern word is rucksack or backpack) which is carried on the back. The word haversack is mostly used when describing a bag worn by soldiers to carry personal items and food with them. Haversacks, when empty, could be folded up and attached to a horse saddle with special buttons.

During the Revolutionary War, every soldier in the Continental Army was generally outfitted with a haversack, mostly made of linen. The name haversack originated in the 1600's from the German word Hafersack or the Dutch word haverzak, meaning a bag for oats or oat bag.



The word satchel is more commonly used when describing a bag worn over the shoulder by civilians when carrying books. A satchel is also often made of lather rather than linen to provide the strength to carry heavy items such as books.

Haversack or Satchel Instructions

You need:

- 1 rectangle piece of suede (Satchel), canvas or linen (Haversack) about: 14" x 35"
- 1 piece of cotton webbing or suede for bag strap about 1 inch wide
- 1 button, a piece of string, or ribbon for bag closure
- 1 Hand sewing needle or sewing machine
- Sewing thread

Step 1:

Hem the fabric all around. If you use the sewing machine, you can use the zig zag stitch.

Step 2:

With right sides together (so that the wrong side is shown on the outside), fold $\frac{1}{4}$ together. Folding line is $\frac{1}{2}$ of the length of the rectangle. $\frac{1}{4}$ of the rectangle is not doubled, because it will be the flap of your bag. Secure the fabric with pins and close the sides with back stitches (or running stitch back and forth). Turn the bag to the right side.

Step 3:

Sew the ends of the strap to the upper back corners of the bag (not on the flap, but where the opening of the bag is. You can either use a back stitch through the fabric or a hem stitch around the three sides of the strap.

Step 4:

Sew the button on the flap, in the middle and about 1" from the edge. You can close the bag by making a buttonhole or using string.

To close with a buttonhole (typical for Haversacks):



Sew a buttonhole on the spot where you want your button to be. To make the buttonhole, see buttonhole sewing instructions.

To close the bag with a string (typical for Satchels):

Sew the button on the middle of the flap about ½" from the edge. Knot the ends of the string together to make a circle of about 1 ½" diameter. Sew the string to the bag (not to the flap). The spot where you want to sew the string to is underneath the button.

For buttonhole stitch, please see general sewing instructions here

