

Upcycling project: jeans backpack



The size of the duffel bag and the cutting pattern depend on the available jeans. The instructions will need to be adapted according to the side and shape of the legs.

You will need:

- 2-3 pairs of jeans
- 2 m cord (diameter of approx. 10 mm)
- Sewing thread and possibly extra strong sewing thread
- Denim needles



Stitch types / techniques used:

Joining seams: Straight stitch with a stitch length of 2.5. Usually, a seam allowance of 1 cm is used. At the start and end of the seam, sew a few stitches in reverse to secure the seam.

Topstitching with thick sewing thread: Increase the stitch length to 4 and the thread tension. Always use a 90 or 100 denim needle.

Overcasting the edges: Zigzag stitch

Tip: Always sew a test seam on a remnant of the fabric first. This will allow you to check if the settings are correct and adjust them if necessary.

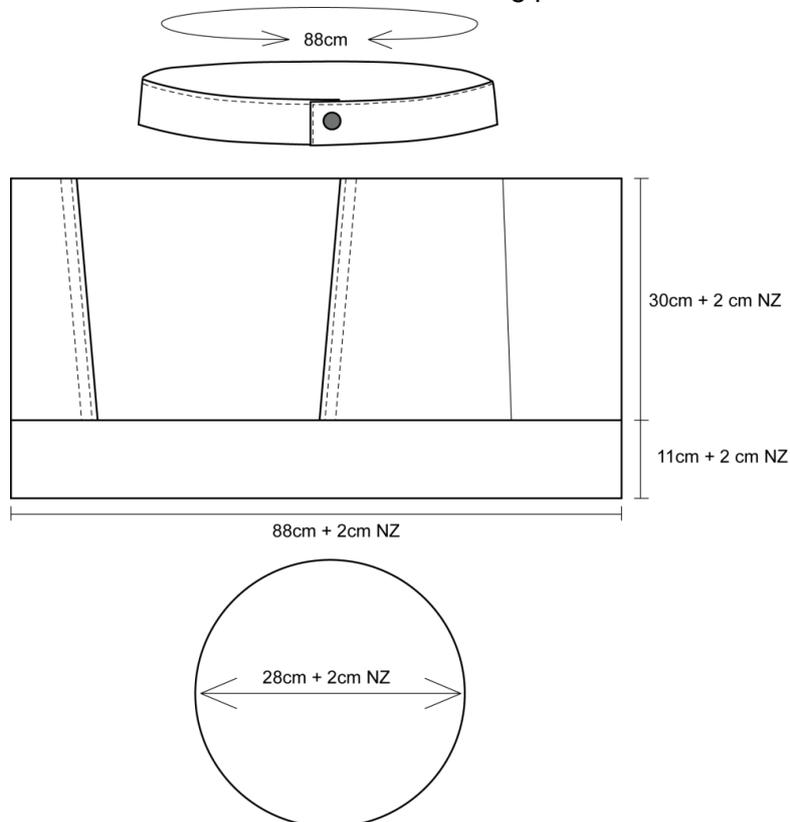
Cutting out:

Start by finding a pair of jeans with a waistband you want to use for the top border. Measure the circumference of the finished waistband; this is then used to work out the dimensions for the side and bottom pieces.

Calculate the diameter of the bottom piece based on the measured waistband circumference. The formula for this is: $\text{diameter} = \text{circumference} / \pi$ (3.14). Add 2 cm to this number for the seam allowances. The easiest way to draw the circle is on paper.

The side piece consists of two sections, the upper section being made of different pieces of the jeans. Both sections are the same width as the waistband + 2 cm for the seam allowances. The height of the lower section is 11 cm + 2 cm seam allowance, and for the upper section, it is 30 cm + 2 cm seam allowance.

In our example, the waistband size is 88 cm and the cutting pattern looks like this:



Sewing instructions

Cut out the bottom piece:

Cut one trouser leg slightly wider than the required bottom piece. Cut the trouser leg along the outside seam and cut out the circle for the bottom piece.



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Top border:

First, remove the belt loops and put them aside. These will be used at the end for attaching the cord. Now remove the waistband. To get a clean finish, unpick the seam used to sew the waistband on. If the waistband was sewn on using a chain stitch, you can easily unpick it by ripping a stitch on the inside and then pulling the thread. It should then be easy to rip the seam open.

Note: This only works in one direction



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Side piece: The lower side section is cut lengthways from one jeans leg. You can leave the hem on for sewing together later.



For the upper side section, first cut off the hemmed edge. Then cut off the trouser leg at the appropriate height. Depending on the jeans, you will need 2-3 pieces to get the required width.



Sewing:

Bottom piece: Fold a belt loop in half and sew it together using a zigzag stitch. Repeat with another belt loop. Pin the belt loops onto the bottom piece flush with the edge so they are about 15 cm apart. Attach them using a straight stitch.

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Now pin the lower side section onto the bottom piece with the right sides of the fabric together. Mark the point where the two ends of the side section meet.



Take out a few pins so that you can close the seam on the side section first. If you did not cut off the hem, you can use it to edge the seam and you only need to lay the pieces on top of each other.

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Now you can pin the side section in place fully again and sew the two pieces together 1 cm from the edge.

Turn the duffel bag the right way out and check that the loops are sticking out of the seam properly.



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It's now time to sew the upper side section together. For jeans with a washed finish, it looks nicer if the washed finish on the original seam remains visible. To do this, unpick the outer leg seams of the cut out pieces.



Place the pieces on top of each other and pin them in place.



Then fold the pieces over so that the two right sides are on top of each other. Now pin the pieces together again on this side so that you can remove the pins on the right side.

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Sew the pieces together and overcast the seam allowances. You may need to cut the seam allowances down to 1 cm.



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Sew as many pieces together as necessary until you get the width you need. It may be necessary to cut the edges straight at the end.

Now pin the side section onto the lower section of the duffel bag and again mark where the two edges meet.



Remove the pins once more and sew the side section together at the marked point. Cut the seam allowances down to 1 cm and overcast the edges.

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Now you can sew the upper side section onto the lower section. The seam allowances are overcast together and ironed towards the lower side section. Turn the duffel bag the right way and edgestitch the seam on the lower side section. For a decorative seam, you can use a thicker sewing thread or a zigzag stitch.



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Now you can decorate the outside however you like. You can do this by removing pockets, labels and badges and sewing them on. It is best to choose positions that are opposite the two loops on the bottom.



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To attach the waistband, unpick approx. 1 cm of an existing seam. If you don't have a seam, you can simply make a 1 cm cut.



Now pin the separated waistband onto the top edge. Start at the place where you unpicked the seam or made the cut. Slide 1 cm of the side section into the waistband.



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Sew the waistband on, trying to sew along the previous seam. It is best to use an extra strong sewing thread.

Now fold the belt loops and sew them onto the waistband along the top seam. Make sure that the center back lines up with the center of the two loops on the bottom.



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For the cord stopper, fold a belt loop so that the ends are on top of each other at the center. Sew down the middle to create two guide holes.



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Now all that remains is to thread the cord through the loops, decide how long you want the cord, and tie the ends. And you're done!

