

Zigzag Tote Bag II -- More Info

Instructor: Christine Manges

Dates: May 8, 15, 22, 2026

Time: 3 Fridays at 3pm EST

Level: Intermediate

Folds: LO or RO

This class will teach you how to braid the Zigzag tote bag shown left. It is 15" wide and 11" high (to the top of the bag).

The bag begins with a 2-braid oval spiral. Both braids begin with a 3-strand T-Start, and are laced into a flat oval that is 6 to 8 braids in width.

No increases are made to start the braids coming up the sides. Then both braids are converted to 4-strand Diagonal Stripe braids, by adding a strand and changing another strand's color. One Diagonal Stripe slants in one direction, and one in the other.

Lacing the braids together is easy: one path is laced regularly with Inward Lacing (the braidkin heads *into* the crevice between the braids), while the other path is laced like a right opening braider with Outward Lacing (the braidkin heads *away* from the crevice between the braids).

At the top, the braids are converted back to 3-strand braids by losing a strand and changing one of the remaining strand's colors.

Handle options will be presented in class.

This bag is made in a continuous fashion until the final row with handles, which is butted. If you wish to make the tote bag either all-butted or all-continuous, you are welcome to do so – please contact instructor for additional instructions.

Supplies:

- Braid stand -- the 4-strand braid is not so much larger than a 3-strand braid, so you can probably use your current table clamp or stand for this project.
- Braid-Aids -- Folding the raw edges of 4 strips inward while braiding is not practical just using your fingers – it takes too long. Pre-fold the strips by pre-sewing the folds shut – leave the ends open for seams – OR by pre-pressing the raw edges to the center and rolling them up around a rubber band. Another option for folding the strands is using braid-aids. Braid master braid-aids (accommodate 1.5" wide strips) are available from Halcyon Yarn in sets of 3. If you prefer working with wider strips, Vari-folder braid-aids are available used from eBay and Etsy.
- 5" alligator hair clips (toothed kind) are helpful when managing more than 3 strands but not necessary.
- Usual Braiding Supplies

Fabric: Lighter-weight recommended (12-15oz /yd) in two contrasting colors: 1.5 yds light and 2.5 yds dark. It is fine to use wool-blends. It is best to use solid colors rather than plaids; small tight patterns that "read" as solid colors are also fine. The light & dark fabrics must be the SAME WEIGHT.

Plan for Class: (this is a rough plan and subject to change depending on students' interests & progress)

Week #1: Make the tote bottom with two 3-strand braids. Come to class with two solid-colored T-starts and about 30 inches of straight braid. We will set up the two braids for shoe-lacing, and then lace around the other braid's T-Start and the next curve as well. (Note: there is no hairpin turn or double corner turn in either braid).



Week #2: Stop making increases around the sides and come straight up with both braids for one row. We will add a light-colored strand to each braid, and change colors for one other light strand, to make one braid with a diagonal stripe heading “back left” and the other braid heading “back right.” We will use the weaving method of making a 4-strand braid, and cover the “tightening up” process.

Week #3: We will cover Inward (regular) lacing for one set of braids, and Outward lacing for the other set. Instructor will demonstrate how to revert back to solid-colored braids at the top of the bag: losing one strand, and changing colors on another.

Week #4: Demonstration of Tapering. Some students will be ready to work with the Instructor on losing strands, changing color back to 3 dark, and tapering. Instructor will demonstrate different handle options.

Prepare for Strips for Class:

Pre-wash fabrics if desired. Tear into strips of your desired width. Choose one of the following methods of strip preparation: it is hard to finger-fold when working with 4 strands, as in the zigzag portion of the tote bag.

Prep Methods: Braid-Aids, Pre-Pressing folds to center of strip, or Pre-Sewing folds together.

Class Prep: Come to class with the T-Start sewn and braided for two 3-strand braids, each about 30 inches long. Your multistrand strip prep-method (pre-sewing, pre-pressing, or braid-aids) should be ready and several strips rolled up from both colors.

NOTE: Braided handles will be taught in class. If you wish to use different handles, that’s up to you!



Zigzag II tote bags made by Rita Capella, Beki Biesterfelt, and Donna Bober.

Teacher Bio: Christine Manges has been braiding rugs since 2006. She serves as the Education Chair of Rug Braiders International and was one of the founding members of the guild. She is a co-author of the book, Combining Rug Hooking and Braiding. She lives in Pittsburgh PA with her husband and too many pets.

