

Re-purposing Plastic Grocery Bags

Rev. 8/8/26

For a while now, crafters have been turning plastic grocery bags into a twine (nicknamed plarn) that's so far been used for crochet, weaving and knitting. We haven't specifically seen others use it for twining bags, so I've had a chance to test it in a number of projects. The material, when prepared, makes a fairly strong, very pliable, soft-handed fiber.

Benefits:

- Obviously cost
- The fact that you're re-purposing a waste material
- It's easy to work and soft on your hands, compared to some rough natural fibers like jute
- The result is dense, strong, very flexible, and resistant to wear
- It has a different, exotic look

Drawbacks;

- It's slippery and may take some practice and accommodation to handle
- It's joined in knotted loops, so the result will include lumps that will interrupt the smooth finish, which may be distracting
- Limited color choices

Ways to prepare the twine

Loop Method- Easy to do. The average bag makes about 10 feet of double-stranded twine, with a larks-head knot every 16 inches. Search "making plarn loop method" for the YouTube video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B44xjqBtEsw>

Spiral-Cut Method- Each bag makes a long single-stranded cord, with a double overhand knot between. Fewer knots, but weaker than the loop twine. Search "making plarn spiral-cut method" for the YouTube video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O--vwNHADjo>

We strongly recommend the loop method. Spiral-cut may be best for crochet or knitted work, but for twining, looped cord is easier to make, avoids balls that can tangle, offers flexible widths, and a double-strand cord is stronger and less susceptible to accidental breakage during work.

Working tips:

- As you cut, take extra time to inspect the condition of the bag. If you see any holes or rips, work around them or don't use the bag. Don't be too frugal with the material. It's better to discard a questionable loop and avoid having to fix a torn cord during twining, than trying to save an extra bit of plastic. And it's a good idea to keep the scraps and hand them in to the bag recycling bin at your local store!
- Avoid the temptation to join your loops into a ball. This may be convenient when crocheting or knitting with plarn, but when twining, it's best to eliminate the ball by joining loops only as you

need them, keeping the weft lines as short as possible. Trust me on this. This rule also applies when twining with scrap fabric. Join as you work, not before!

- When planning your project, be sure to have plenty of bags in stock, especially when incorporating colors into your design. Yes, it's free, but it always takes more material than you think.