

Getting Started

Use plastic grocery bags to create a portable sleeping mat for local homeless outreach service agencies to give to the homeless they serve who are surviving on the streets of your community.

Thank you so much for your interest in the Bag Mat Project! May this information help you launch your own Bag Mat Project team.



If you are starting a team, you can have some people working on 1) **cutting**, others on 2) **rolling plarn**, and others on 3) **crocheting**, so that those who don't know how to crochet can still get involved.

Having your team meet to work on the mats together at least once a month can make the work much more fun and helps those who are new to the project to learn from the more experienced members.

Connecting

Before you start collecting and cutting the bags, be sure to contact an agency, that can use the bags mats and get them directly to a person who is homeless and sleeping outside.

Some may also be able to provide a speaker for one of your team gatherings in order to help team members be aware of their services to those who will be receiving the mats you make.

As easy way to obtain service provider numbers can be to dial 2-1-1. When connected to an Information & Referral Specialist, identify the county where you are and ask for a list of services that serve people who are homeless or who do homeless outreach.

Crocheting

You will need a 10mm crochet hook (or adjust based on how you crochet) and a measuring tape. The recommended size for an adult's mat is 36" x 72" or 3 ft. by 6 ft.



You'll be doing a single crochet. Take your crochet hook and put in the end of a loop of yarn. Twist the plastic around so that you can make a loop and then put the hook under your row of one inch plastic and grab both layers of the plastic and pull through. Now, chain 36 inches across and then, do 2 more stitches to turn. On the next row, start crocheting at the second stitch in. Continue back and forth with two extra stitches on each end to keep the edges of the mat flat.

If you have never crocheted before, it would probably be a good idea to borrow a beginner's book on crocheting from your local library and try out some basic projects with regular yarn before attempting these mats. These mats are not difficult to make since they just use one basic crochet stitch, but it may take a bit of practice to work with the plastic so a little bit of experience with regular yarn is often found to be helpful.



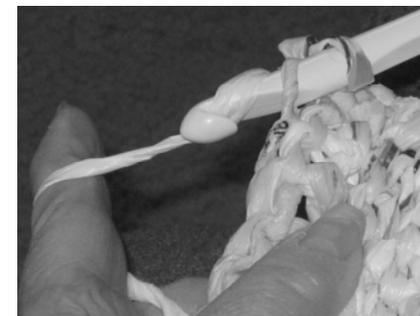
For a demonstration video, visit this site <http://vimeo.com/4887139> provided by Lutheran Church Charities, First St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Chicago, IL
Photo atop of Grayville (IL) Senior Center volunteers

Bag Mats

Sleeping Mats from Plastic Bags



Helping the Homeless and Saving the Environment by Crocheting and Creating "Plarn"
(plastic yarn)



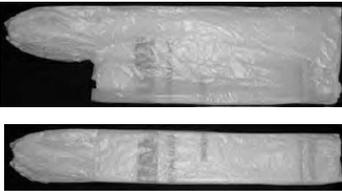
Inspired by eco-friendly crafts, "plarn" is plastic yarn. The image on the cover is a ball of plarn. The ball contains about 10 plastic grocery bags. To make plarn, all you need is a bunch of old plastic bags and a pair of scissors.

Bag Preparation

If you're not sure of the cleanliness of the bags you've collected, be sure to rinse and thoroughly dry the plastic grocery bags and remove foreign objects, stickers, tape, etc. before folding them. This helps to reduce mildew and portions being too thick or stiff. Often, simply wiping out the bags is sufficient and reduces the problems in trying to thoroughly dry out the bags.

Folding the Bags

Smooth out the bag and fold in half. Then fold it in half again length-wise. See images to the right.



Cutting the Bags



Trim off the handles and the bottom seam, so that it is now open on the bottom and the top. (Those parts can be taken to your recycling center.)



Plarn Creation



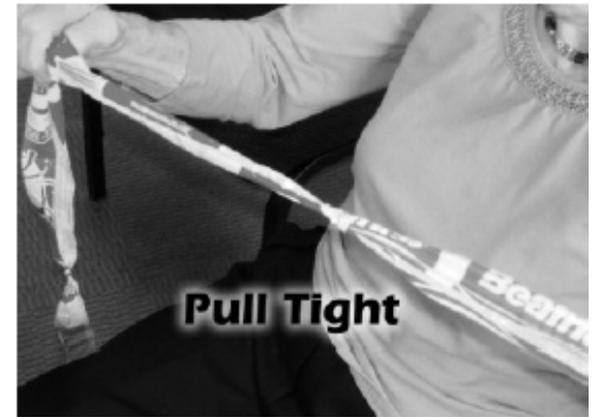
Starting at one end of the folded piece, cut approximately every 3 inches. You should now have several loops about 3 inches wide. (For light-weight, thinner bags, cut every 4 inches. For thicker bags, cut every 2 inches.) To create the "plarn," you'll need to loop the bag pieces together. Open loop number one and pass about an inch of loop number two through the opening near one end.



Then, open the short end of loop two and pass the long end through and pull tight (the plastic is strong and tighter, smaller knots will make crocheting easier), being careful not to tear the plastic. Repeat until you start to get a length of plarn.



Instructions have been adapted from information provided by North Burlington Baptist Church, Burlington, ON and www.crochetspot.com/how-to-make-plarn-plastic-yarn/



Start rolling the plarn into a ball and stop looping once the ball is about the size of a grapefruit. Anything bigger than this will make the crocheting difficult. You can continue by making more balls of plarn.

