

Tutorial to Re-purpose a “Relay for Life” T-shirt into a Drawstring Bag

Supplies

T-shirt
scissors
rotary cutter
6” x 24” ruler
small ruler or measuring gauge
cloth or metal measuring tape
pins
seam ripper
iron & ironing board
sewing machine with straight and zig zag stitch
stretch or ballpoint needle (optional) NOTE: Since I originally wrote these instructions I have started sewing with a stretch needle. It is not required but I found this type of needle helped when stitching.

Machine Stitches and Settings Used: The straight stitch length used was 3.0 (8 stitches/inch). Zig zag setting was 5.0 (width) x 3.0 (length). If your machine has a stretch stitch that may work. I wrote the instructions assuming a basic machine.

Generally I used a 3/8” seam allowance. And I often used the edge of my regular sewing foot, which happens to be 3/8, as the guide when sewing. The t-shirt material tends to move and stretch as stitching so don’t stress too much about sewing accurate seams.

Cutting T-Shirt



Layout the T-shirt and cut off the sleeves. I used scissors to do this.

NOTE: Since I wrote these instructions, a fellow sewer suggested that if you turn the t-shirt inside out before cutting, it is easier to see and lineup the front and back logos. And it eliminates the step further on where you need to flip the bag pieces to put rights sides together. Thanks Lorraine!

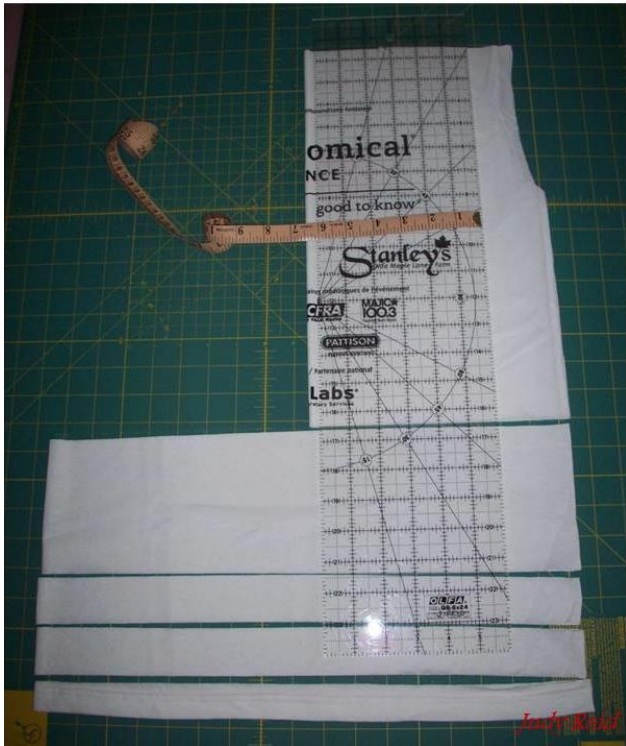


Cut off the hem at the bottom. Then cut 2 strips 1 ½" wide across the width of the t-shirt. These strips will be used to make the drawstring for the bag.

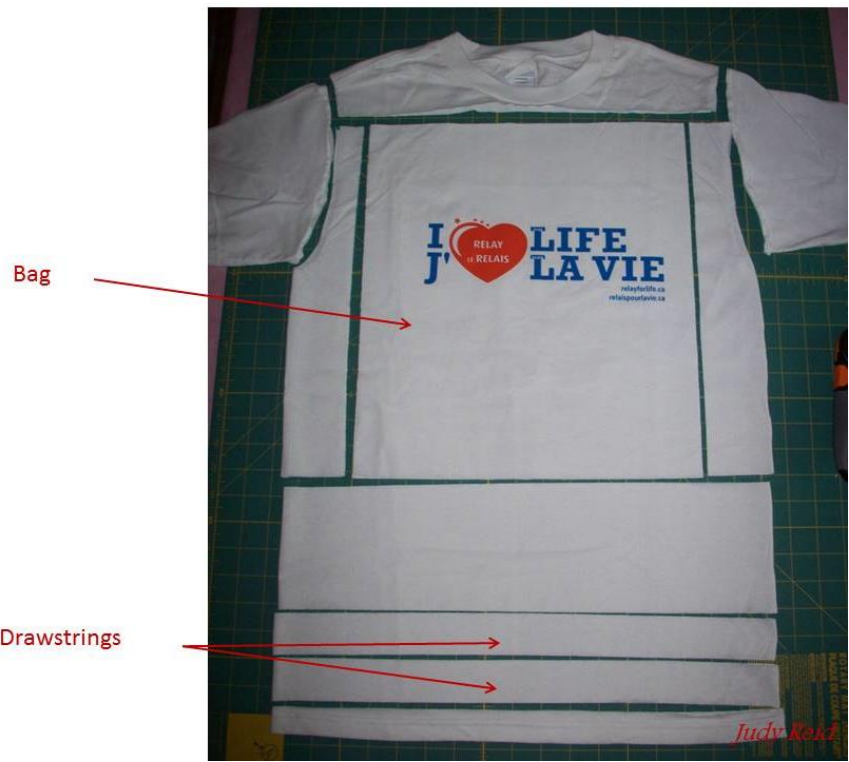
Check that the writing on the back of the shirt is below the bottom of the front neckline. Then cut across the t-shirt at the bottom of the front neckline.



Measure down 15" from the top edge and cut across the t-shirt.



Fold the 15" piece over to one side and cut 6.5" from the middle of the t-shirt. Be careful not to stretch the t-shirt when doing this. These two 13" x 15" pieces will be used to make the bag.

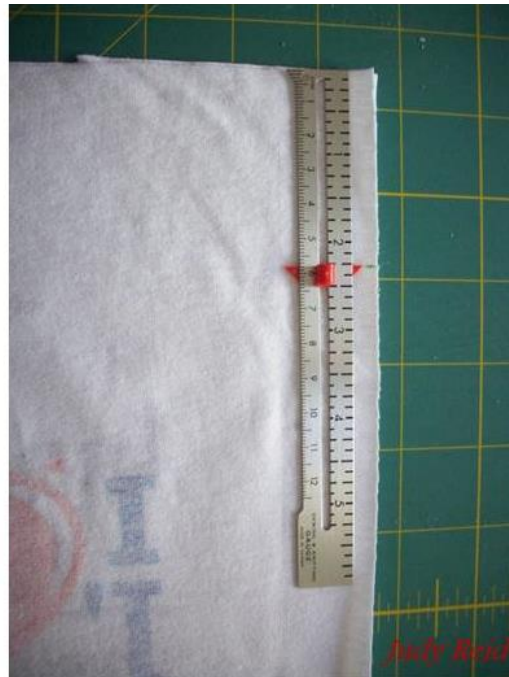


Sewing up the bag



NOTE: If you turned the t-shirt inside out before cutting, this step is eliminated.

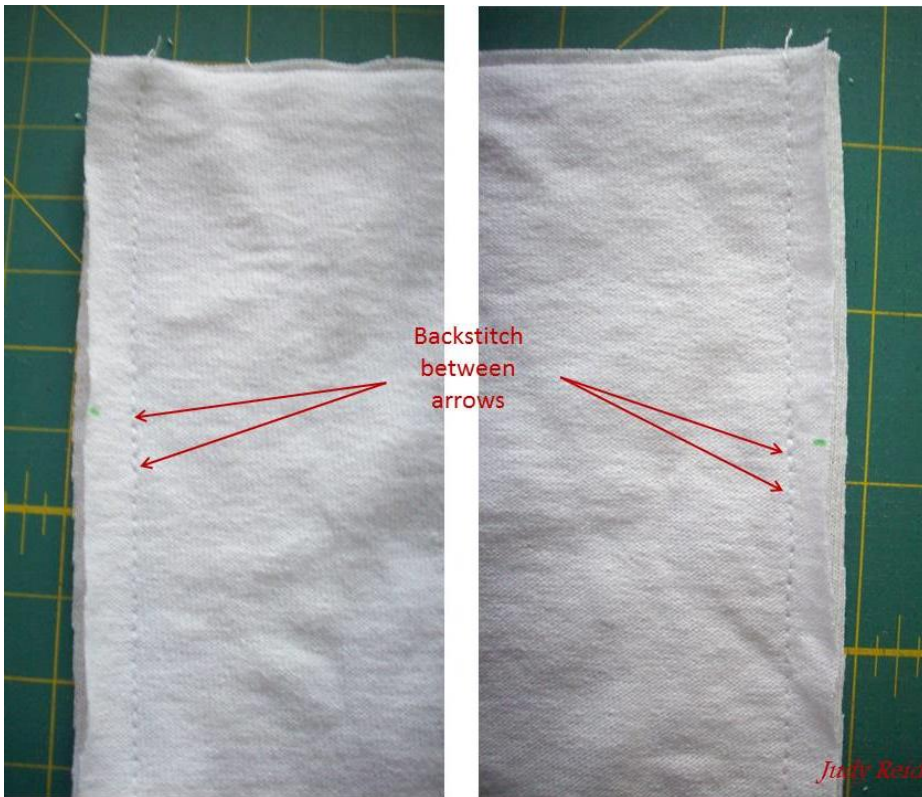
Place the two pieces for the bag right sides together (logos facing each other) and line up the edges (as best as you can).



Mark down 2 1/4" from the top edge on both sides of the bag pieces. This is to turn under for the casing. Note I used a green Frixion pen so that it will show up in the pictures.



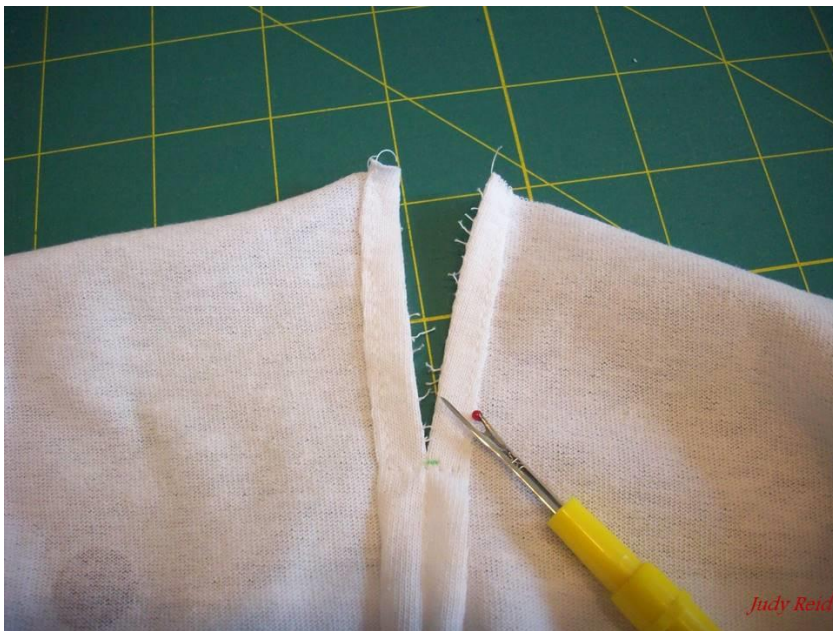
Pin the two sides and bottom of the bag in preparation for stitching.



Start at the top edge on one side and machine baste down to a few stitches past the 2 ¼" mark (this is to baste the opening for the casing). Backstitch to the 2 ¼" mark and then continue sewing along the side, around the bottom and up the other side until you reach the 2 ¼" mark. Backstitch a few stitches and then continue stitching to finish at the edge. Note, do not lock or backstitch at either edge as we are just basting the area for the opening of the casing.



Press the seam open where it has been basted for the casing. Stitch around the edges for the casing to tack down the seams.



Unpick the basting stitches for the casing.

Repeat for the casing seam on the other side.



Finish the inside seam. Use either a zig zag stitch to sew around the edges or if you have an overlocking foot and stitch, you can use that to finish the seam.

Turn bag right side out.

Making the Casing



Press under and stitch down 3/8" on the top edges of the bag.

NOTE: Since I originally wrote these instructions, I no longer stitch down this edge. I just turn under the 3/8". If you have a serger, you could eliminate turning under and serge the edge instead.



Press under approximately 7/8" to 1" and stitch down along the bottom edge. If you turned under a 3/8" edge, then 7/8" works better to make the casing.



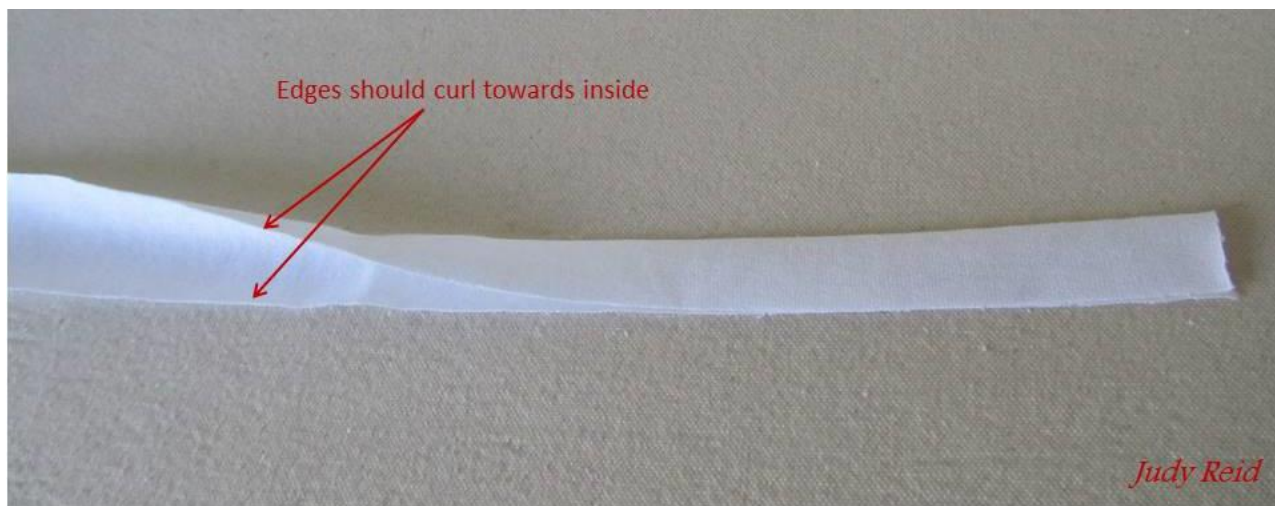
Casing has been made with holes left on each side to thread the drawstrings.

Making sewn drawstrings - Option 1

Making sewn drawstrings is a bit tricky and not easy to explain, but I will do my best with writing instructions as to how I did it.

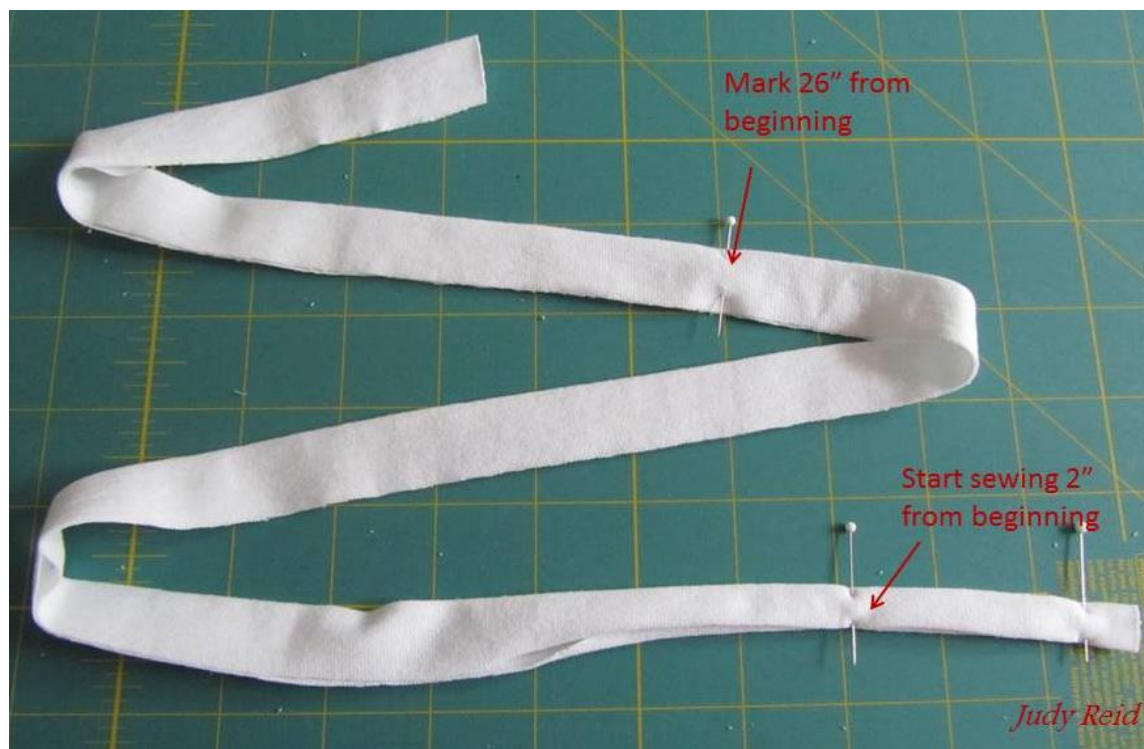


Take the 1 1/2" circular strip and cut apart so that it is one long strip. There will be one side where the edges of the strip will want to curve towards the centre of the strip.



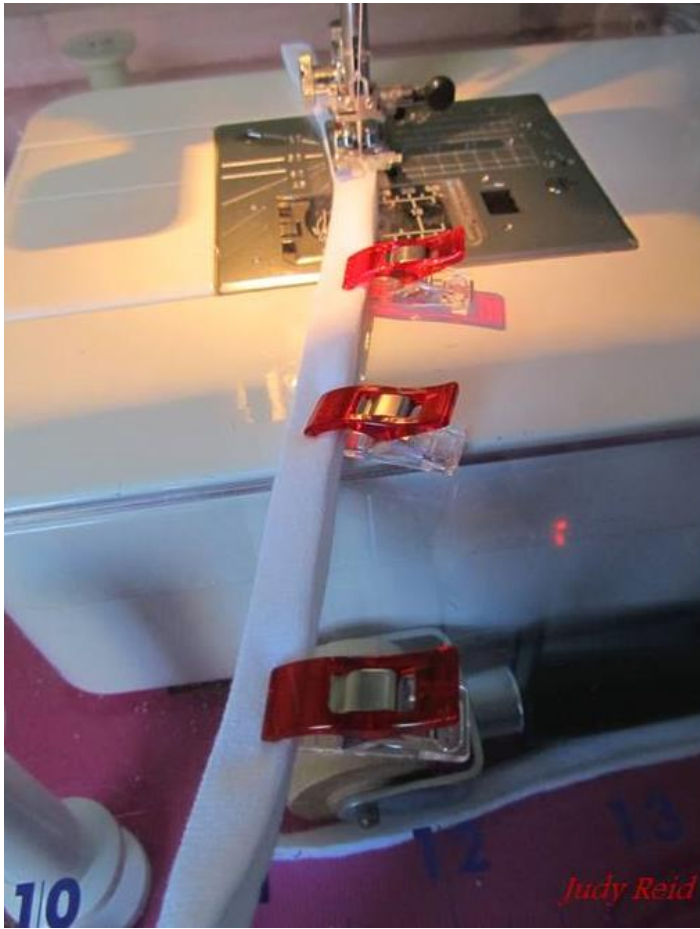
Press the strip in half lengthwise.

NOTE: Since I wrote the original instructions, I no longer press the strip in half lengthwise. I have found I can just turn the edges in towards the centre and sew without doing this step. But do what works for you.

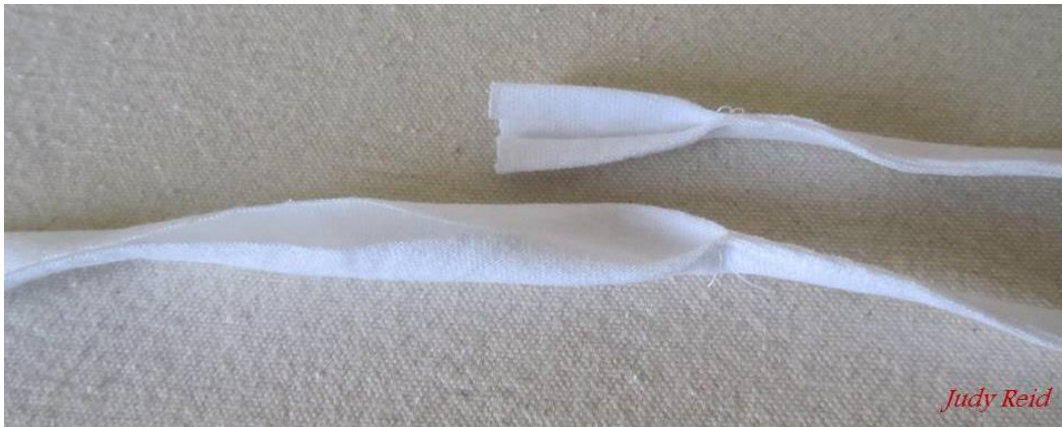


Place a pin or mark approximately 26" from one end.

Open and turn raw edges towards the centre and re-fold. You can pin and press before stitching but as you will see in the next picture, I just folded in the edges and used wonder clips to hold it as I sewed. Pins can be used too.



Start stitching approx. 2" from the beginning (do not backstitch) and continue stitching until you get to the 26" mark that you made (do not backstitch). Ensure that you are catching both edges when stitching.



The drawstring should have an unsewn section at the beginning and a larger unsewn section at the end.

Repeat the above steps to make the second drawstring.



Use a safety pin to thread one drawstring through the entire casing (both the front and back of the bag).



Once threaded, the beginning of the drawstring should extend approximately 3 inches outside the casing. Ensure that the drawstring is not twisted and that the casing is not gathered.



Cut the end of the drawstring 1" longer than the beginning of the drawstring (seam allowance to join ends).



Pin the two ends together making sure that the drawstring is not twisted.



Stitch the ends together using a $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam. Finger press the seam open.

*Note you may have to pick out some of the stitching in order to join the ends as the drawstring has a tendency to stretch while it is being stitched.



Turn the raw edges into the centre. Stitch the remaining edges of the drawstring closed.

Threading second drawstring: Starting at the opposite side of the bag, thread the second drawstring through the casing and repeat the steps to join the ends. Again make sure that the drawstring is not twisted before joining the ends.



The bag is done.

Making “t-shirt cord” drawstrings - Option 2



Take the 1 ½” circular strip and cut apart so that it is one long strip. There will be one side where the edges of the strip will want to curve towards the centre of the strip.



Working from one end to the other, pull the strip taunt between your hands. Now you’ve got a cord.

Note, depending on the length of the cord, you may have enough with the one cord to make the two drawstrings for the bag. If not, then make a second cord with the second strip.



Use a safety pin to thread the cord through the entire casing (both the front and back of the bag).



Ensure that the casing is not gathered and tie a knot in the cord and snip off the excess cord.



Starting at the opposite side of the bag, thread the second cord through the back and front casing.

Tie a knot extending the same distance outside the casing as the first one. Snip off the excess.



The bag is done.