

Oakshott - Designer Collection

‘Komebukuro’ (Rice Bag)

designed by

Susan Briscoe

Japanese *komebukuro* storage bags were made from strips of scrap fabrics. Smaller sizes were used for storing rice (and for gifts of rice), dried beans and other foodstuffs, while larger ones were used for other storage, including textiles. This modern rice bag is reversible, with ‘Nine Patch’ blocks for the lining and strips and squares on the outside.



Instructions given for both
a 12" & 9"
square bag



Requirements

- 1 pack Colourshott eighths in Autumn colourway
- 1, 12½" (9½") square denim or similar fabric for bag base
- 4, 13" (10") squares cotton (cotton/polyester) wadding
- 4, 13" (10") squares calico (for backing quilting)
- *optional* – add 5 more squares of wadding and backing if you want to quilt the bag lining
- 2,100" (75") pieces cord (for drawstrings)
- sewing and quilting thread to tone with fabrics
- basic sewing kit
- sewing machine, with quarter inch foot for patchwork and walking foot for quilting
- rotary cutting equipment

The larger bag makes a great store for fat quarters or fabric scraps in your sewing room, but is also good for storing items like scarves and socks, makes an unusual way to present towels in a guest room or an unusual gift sack. The smaller size is good for threads, a small sewing project, knitting or other crafts. You will find many uses for these handy bags!

With a little careful cutting, one bag of both sizes can be made from one pack of twenty eighths, shown here in the Autumn colourway, or make two of the smaller size (cutting sizes for the 9" bag are shown in brackets). Construction is the same for both bags.

Before you Start

- Pre-shrink, press and lightly starch your fabrics before you start. Fabrics can be finger pressed while making the bag.
- If making two bags, cut the pieces for each at the same time, to make sure you don't run out of one fabric!
- If you wish to quilt the lining, use very thin wadding for both the lining and outer panels.
- Use ¼" seams throughout.

Bag Lining Panels

1. 5 'Nine Patch' squares are used for the bag lining. Select eleven of the 'warm' colours, including yellows, browns and oranges, keeping the brightest yellow to use on the outside of the bag. Cut 5, 4½" (3½") squares from one fabric (I used golden yellow) and 4, 4½" (3½") squares from each of the remaining 10, so there are 45 squares total.

Note - *The remaining fabric will be used to cut strips across the shortest side for use on the outside of the bag, so cut the squares from one end of each fabric piece, rather than cutting along the longest side.*

2. Arrange the squares to make 5 'Nine Patch' blocks, with the same golden yellow fabric in the centre. Sew squares together in groups of three to make strips and then sew 3 strips together to make the block. Press patchwork so adjacent seams lie in opposite directions and the patchwork seams butt up together neatly when the strips are joined. If you are not going to quilt the lining (optional), consider overlocking or zigzagging the patchwork at each stage, to stop the seams fraying when the bag is in use. If you wish to quilt the lining, follow the instructions for making the quilt sandwich and quilting in the ditch in Step 11.

3. Arrange the 'Nine Patch' blocks to form a cross shape, **Figure 1**. The block in the middle is the base of the lining. Sew one block on either side of the base block, starting and finishing each seam ¼" from the edge of the patchwork, with a few backstitches. Join the two remaining blocks to form the cross shape, starting and finishing each seam the same way. Now join the corners of the cross to form a cube, but leave a 5" long gap unsewn in the middle of the last seam (the bag will be turned right side out through this gap, so don't make it any smaller!) Press side seams open.

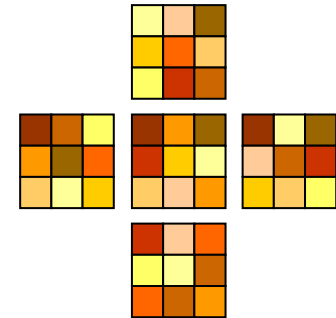


Figure 1 - Assembling the Bag Lining

Drawstring Tabs and Base Corners

4. Cut twelve tabs for drawstring – 4" (3") wide x 3" (2½") long - from one of the darker fabrics. Fold each strip in half lengthwise and press. Open out the fabric and fold the sides of the fabric to meet the crease running down the middle and press again to make a strip with 4 layers of fabric folded into it. Stitch along each long edge, sewing close to the edge. Leave the ends raw (these will be encased in the top of the bag).

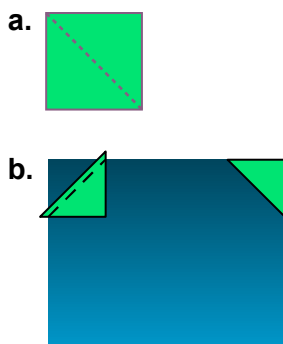


Figure 2 - Attaching the Corner Triangles

5. Cut 4 base corner triangles from 2, 2½" (2") squares, by cutting each square in half along the diagonal, again using a darker fabric, **Figure 2a**. Position a triangle in each corner of the base panel and mark a line along the long side of the triangle. Remove the triangle and draw another line ½" further into the corner. Line up the long edge of a triangle on one of these lines with the triangle pointing away from the corner and the points overlapping the edge of the base panel. Pin and sew. Flip the triangle over and press - it should line up with the corner of the base panel, **Figure 2b, Photo 1**.



Photo 1

Bag Side Panels

6. There are 4 bag side panels made from 12, 1½" (1¼") pieced strips, 12½" (9½") long, cut from patchwork strips. Cut 1½" (1¼") strips across narrowest side of the remaining fabric eighths and the fabric leftover from making the bag lining - the strips will be about 8½" long but they don't have to be accurately measured. Keep the yellow and golden yellow (leftover from making the bag lining) for the smaller squares. Cut the ends of each strip so they are square with the strip sides. You will need 96 strips for the larger bag and 72 for the smaller bag.
7. These strips are joined together with 48, 1½" (1¼") squares in yellow. If you are making the bags in both sizes, you will need to cut some squares from the golden yellow fabric leftover from the bag lining, as there won't be quite enough to cut all the squares from the same fabric.
8. Sew the strips and squares together to make longer strips. For the larger bag, sew a strip to either side of one yellow square and press towards the strips, combining warm and cool colours in each patchwork strip. For the smaller bag, sew the strips together in groups of three, with a square in between each strip, with a 'warm' centre strips and 'cool' strips on the ends (you may need to reassign fabrics from one group to the other, so you have enough 'cool' fabrics – some of the fabrics combine warm and cool shades in the weave, so put these in the 'cool' group).
9. Cut each strip to make 12½" (9½") long pieced strips for the bag side panels. For the larger bag, separate the strips into 2 sets of 24 strips and cut the excess fabric off the 'cool' end of one set and off the 'warm' end of the other. This will create the staggered squares pattern when the strips are sewn together. For the smaller bag, cut two 9½" strips from each longer strip, cutting from one end of the strip only, so the squares are also staggered along the shorter strips.

10.

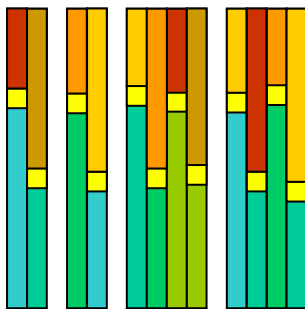


Figure 3 - Sewing Strips together in Pairs

Arrange the strips in groups of 12 for each side panel, so the yellow squares are staggered from one strip to the next. Machine sew strips together in pairs, then sew pairs together, until each side panel is complete, **Figure 3**. Press all seams in one direction.

11.

Layer each patchwork panel with wadding and backing to make a quilt sandwich, checking that the patchwork is square and not distorted (use a square rule to help you, or check the diagonal measurements are the same). Quilt in the ditch along each strip. Sew around each completed panel. Trim the wadding and backing to the edge of the

panel and overlock or zigzag the edges all round.

12. Sew the bag panels and base together as for the lining in Step 3, but complete all the seams. Press side seams open.

Assembling the Bag

13. Fold each drawstring tab in half, bringing the two raw ends together, and pin to the outside edge of the top of the outer bag panel with the fold pointing downwards, so the raw ends are standing up ⅛" above the top edge of the bag. Arrange the tabs at equal

intervals around the bag, using the strips in the patchwork as a guide. There are 3 tabs per bag panel. Pin each tab securely or tack in place.

14. Turn the bag lining inside out. Place the bag outer inside the bag lining, lining up the corners of the cube shape formed by the bag and the top edges of bag and lining. Sew the bag to the lining, sewing right round the top of the bag.
15. Place your hand through the opening left in the lining side seam and carefully turn the whole bag right side out through this gap. Press the seam around the bag edge, being careful not to squash the wadding. The drawstring tabs will be standing up around the top of the bag. Topstitch around the top of the bag, $\frac{1}{8}$ " from the edge. Close up the gap in the side of the lining by slipstitching or ladder stitching the fabrics together by hand.
16. Thread each drawstring through the drawstring tabs, taking care not to twist the drawstrings around each other, **Photo 2**. Knot the ends of each drawstring together to make a loop and fluff out the ends of the cord. Finished!



Photo 2

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