

SQUARE WEAVING

Inspiration for
Recycling Coffee Bags



Pipsa Hyttinen



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Where It All Began

A few years back, I started collecting coffee bags because I wanted to try making a coffee bag tote. I had seen totes made from sewn and woven coffee bags, where long strips were first sewn together and then woven into a tote. Once I had gathered a decent amount of coffee bags, I started looking up instructions. That's when I found a tote made from Juhla Mokka bags, woven into a cool black-and-white pattern using square weaving. I found the instructions for square weaving from Seija Saarinen's book.

I dreamed of making my own black-and-white tote, but I hadn't collected enough coffee bags yet. Plus, around that time, Juhla Mokka package design changed, so the original black-and-white pattern wasn't possible with the new bags. My first tote ended up being only partly black-and-white, with the rest of it woven from the silver inside of the coffee bags. Later on, I managed to collect enough of the old Juhla Mokka bags, and I've made four black-and-white totes since. Every now and then, I still find more of those bags, so I'm sure I'll be making even more!

At first, I only made the same kind of tote with 14 squares, over and over. They were practical and made great gifts, so I gave them to all my friends and family. I experimented with different patterns by using various coffee bags, which kept the weaving interesting, even though I was technically making the same tote again and again.

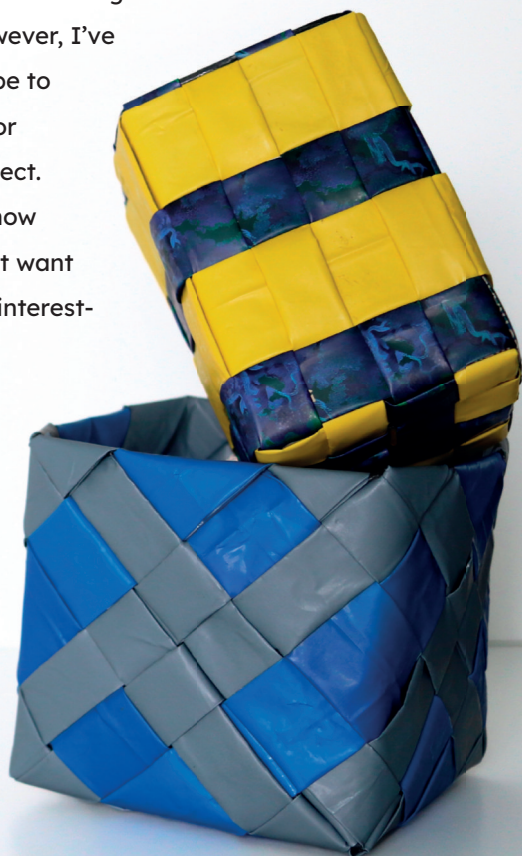
After posting my work online for over a year, I attended a digital marketing course in spring 2020. The course taught us how to create websites, and I got inspired to create my own site dedicated to coffee bag weaving. That's when I really got hooked on trying out new techniques and patterns. I realized that the strips used in square weaving can be woven into so many different designs, allowing you to create all kinds of unique patterns from coffee bags. There weren't many tutorials available online, so I wanted to share my own ideas and instructions in a place that was

easy to find and access.

On the other hand, it's hard to find instructions if you don't know what you're looking for. That got me thinking about how I could make coffee bag weaving more visible and easier to discover for new hobbyists. Shortly after completing the website project, I became interested in trying my hand at video creation and launched my own YouTube channel. I knew that YouTube would allow my videos to reach an audience, as long as I could make them engaging enough. Through videos, I could also enhance the website's instructions by showing, step by step, how weaving progresses—not just with pictures and text, but in motion.

At first, I wanted to keep all instructions in digital format so they would be easily accessible. However, I've come to realize how distracting it can be to scroll through instructions on a phone or computer while working on a craft project. Perhaps there's still a place for books now and then. And let's face it, who wouldn't want to be an author if they had something interesting to write about?

In this book, I wanted to compile the basics of square weaving and various ideas for designing your own unique weaving projects. Of course, you can also replicate the projects in this book to test out different ideas in your weaving projects. The most important thing is to find projects and weaving techniques that you enjoy.



Supplies and Tools

Getting started with square weaving is simple, and you probably already have the supplies and tools you need at home. To weave a single square, you only need four intact coffee bags. Personally, I've been weaving for years without buying any new tools, except for this book project, where I bought a few tools just to test how they'd work with square weaving.

Where to Find Coffee Bags?

The fun part about coffee bag weaving is the hunt for materials! There are so many different types of coffee bag designs, and they affect what you can make. Collecting bags takes some patience, especially if you're aiming for a project with a specific pattern. Soft laminated coffee bags work best for weaving, especially the vacuum-packed ones, that resemble bricks. Thicker bags can also be used, but they're tougher to handle and the results will be a bit different.

If you're drinking coffee at a regular pace, collecting enough bags for bigger projects can be slow. That's where friends and family come in handy! Ask them to save their bags for you. You can also score bags from cafés, flea





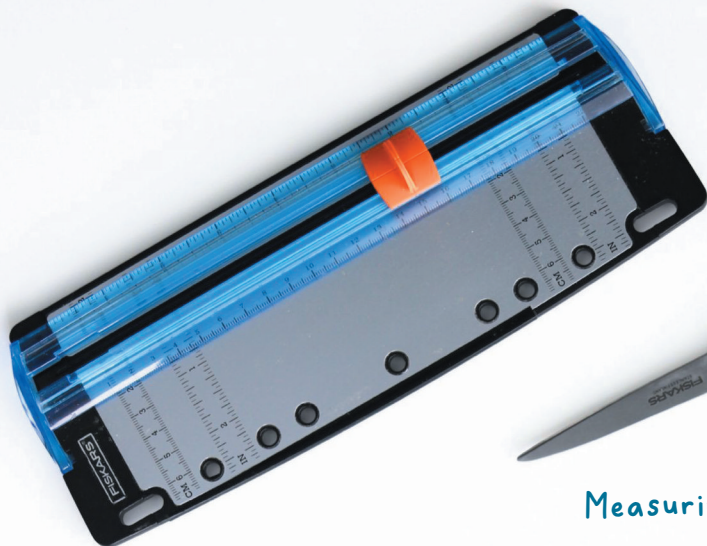
markets, office break rooms, or even in local recycling groups on social media. It's easy to gather popular brands, but if you're looking for rare ones, it might take a little more effort.

I get coffee bags from a lot of people—family, friends, and friends of friends. Thanks, Mom and Päivi, for those hundreds of coffee bags!

How to Prep Coffee Bags

Before you start weaving, open the bottoms of the empty coffee bags (without cutting them) and clean out any leftover coffee grounds. **Don't open the back seam!** Coffee dust gets everywhere when you handle the bags, so it's easier to keep your workspace tidy if you rinse the bags with water first. You can use a little soap if the bags feel too sticky, but I've found that water usually does the trick. If you're going to weave with the inside of the bag showing, it's a good idea to wash it with soap to avoid any stickiness.

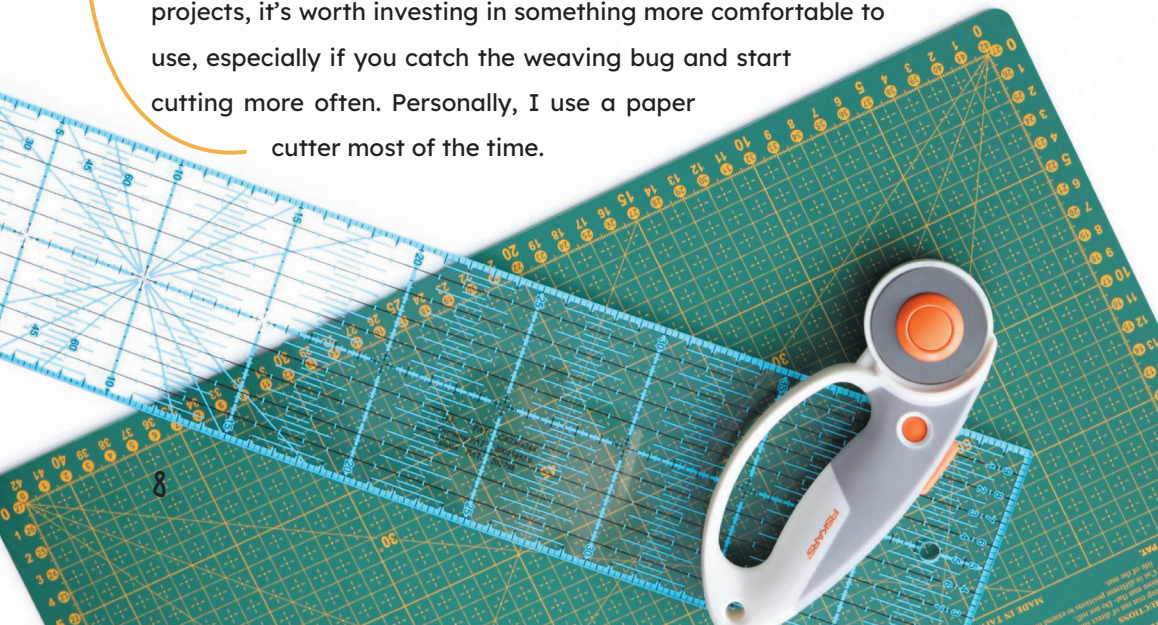
In square weaving, coffee bags are cut into strips while the back seam remains intact, making the strips loop-shaped. The edges of the strips are folded in, and then the squares are woven from those folded strips. From the finished squares, you can make totes and baskets by combining several squares or other woven parts.

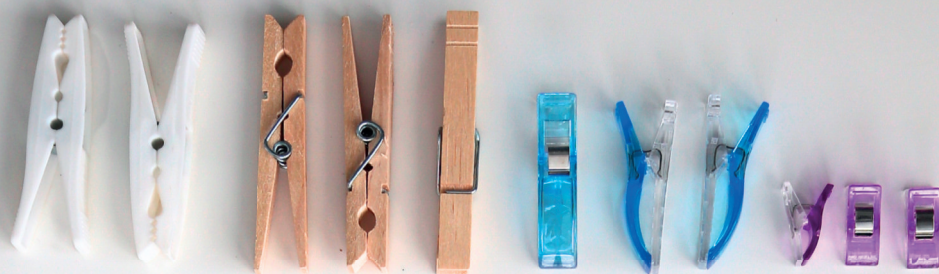


Measuring and Cutting

In square weaving, the width of the coffee bags determines the dimensions of the squares and how wide the strips can be. You can shrink the width of coffee bags, for example, by pressing them with a medium-heat iron (with the coffee bag between sheets of baking paper), which makes the inside layers melt together. But in this book, I'm using coffee bags at their original size. To measure the width of the coffee bags, you'll need a ruler or measuring tape. Paper cutters and cutting mats also come with handy measurement guides that you can use.

For cutting the strips, regular craft scissors or a paper cutter will work just fine. You can also use a rotary cutter. If you plan to make bigger projects, it's worth investing in something more comfortable to use, especially if you catch the weaving bug and start cutting more often. Personally, I use a paper cutter most of the time.





Weaving Aids and Accessories

To keep things in place while weaving, you can use **clips** that are commonly used in sewing or just **regular clothespins**. These will help keep your strips bundled before weaving, and they'll also hold the weaving together while you're working. I've mostly used clothespins since I don't really need them for hanging laundry, and they work just fine. Just be aware that some craft clips have textured gripping surfaces that can leave marks on the coffee bag material.

You'll also need some **thin sticks** to keep the hinges on the edges of the squares in line. Knitting needles are great for this, but if you're working with tighter weaves, they can sometimes bend or break. So, don't use needles that you'd mind damaging. Grill skewers are also a good alternative. Be careful with sharp sticks though, since they can puncture the coffee bag material—or worse, poke and hurt you while you weave.

I've personally used the sticks from a Mikado game that are just the right length and aren't too pointy. They're not super durable, but one set has lasted me for years, and I still have plenty of unbroken sticks left. Sometimes, I also use cocktail sticks if I need shorter ones.



Finishing Touches

When you're done weaving the squares, you'll need some kind of ribbon or string to join the pieces. I've always used 1 cm wide plastic curling ribbon, which I buy in 100-meter rolls. A thinner 0,5 cm curling ribbon also works well. Avoid using newer biodegradable or eco-material ribbons since they're not as durable as plastic ones. You don't want to use anything too thin or too stiff either, because it could damage the coffee bag material. Thin ribbons might cut through the strips while you're joining the squares, and stiff ribbons or strings can wear the material down over time.

To finish the top edges of bags and baskets, I usually use the same ribbon, but you can also get more creative and use decorative cord. When I want something different, I use polyester anorak cord for a more durable finish. For threading the ribbon through the hinges, you'll need a darning needle or something similar. I use a 25 cm long mattress needle, with the

tip smoothed out with sandpaper. It's thick enough to handle some force without bending and long enough to pull the ribbon through the entire side of a square in one go. With shorter needles, you can thread the ribbon through one hinge at a time.





Square weaving is a crafting technique that allows you to easily recycle coffee bags into baskets and bags. The coffee bags are cut, folded, and woven into squares. These squares are then joined together with materials like gift ribbon, eliminating the need for a sewing machine. You can also try square weaving with other plastic package material that is in a bag shape. You can start square weaving with items you already have at home, making it an affordable hobby.

The Square Weaving book provides instructions for square weaving and its adaptations. It includes a wide variety of projects for all skill levels, offering inspiration for your own creations. With the measurement tables, you'll find the right dimensions for folding your strips.

Square weaving is a fascinating technique, especially because of its potential for pattern design.

You can create unique patterns and align the designs on coffee bags with precision for your projects.

With coffee bag weaving, you give a new life to waste by turning it into practical storage baskets, totes, and handbags.



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