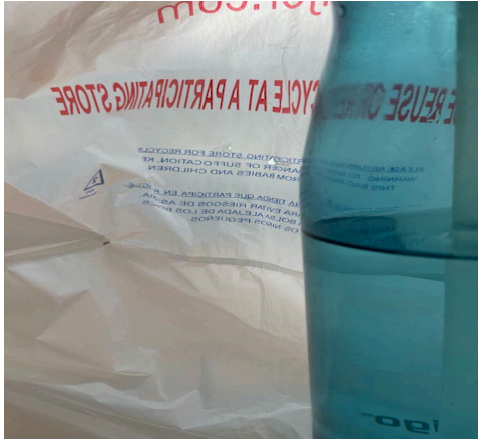
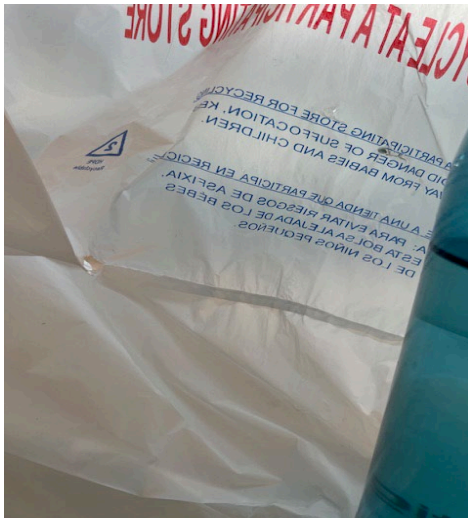


How to Prepare Plastic Bags for Use Making Sleeping Mats for Homeless

Be sure the bag is clean and not sticky either outside or inside. Then check for holes. The easiest way is to hold both handles and jerk the bag down quickly thus filling it with air. Look inside while facing toward a window. The light will make the holes show more clearly. I had to use a water bottle to hold the bag open so I could take this picture. Holes along the bottom seam and up by the handles are OK. Holes in the middle, between the cut lines, mean the bag should be recycled and not used for the mat.



This bag is not OK to use because the hole is above the cut line.



This bag is OK to use.

Next, lay the bag you just examined flat and smooth the air out of it.



Fold the bag in half lengthwise.



Fold in half again.



Fold in half one more time. Now it's ready to take to church to put in the "Donated Bags" box on the lower shelf of the Loom Cart.



If you want to cut the bags yourself, stack 3 flattened bags on top of each other. Don't use more than 3 because they tend to slither easily and a larger pile will mess up your efforts.



Make sure all 3 are lined up exactly on top of each other.



Fold all 3 in the stack in half.



Measure about 2 inches (2 or 3 fingers, depending on the size of your fingers) up from the bottom.



Cut the bottom 2 inches off the bags.



Measure about 2 inches down from the lowest part of the top.



Cut off the top.



Congratulations! You have just made “Thick Plarn!” This is what we use for the warp (the part that goes the length of the mat). If you want to make “Thin Plarn,” what we use for the weft (the part that goes from side to side), just cut the Thick Plarn in half.



Here are some mistakes we've found in cut bags:



Either the cutter accidentally cut the already cut Thin Plarn, or there was an unnoticed tear in the bag before cutting.



Probably the cutter stacked too many bags before cutting and they slithered. There's a slit in the side of the bag, "fringes" in the middle which interfere with weaving. The cut should be one smooth line. This cut piece is not useful and will be recycled.

Again, probably stacked too many bags and missed the “fringe” from the top of the bag.



The cutter didn't measure down far enough from the lowest part of the top of the bag. Another case of “fringes.”



This cutter didn't measure up far enough from the bottom, or stacked too many bags that slithered, or both! A bag corner is just not useful.



Please don't use bags with deep bottom folds, like McAlister's bags. It's too hard to get rid of the inside fold.



Don't forget to recycle all the bags that are too dirty or sticky to use, all the bags with holes in bad spots, and all the pieces that you cut off the top and bottom of the bags

that are useable. Most grocery stores have bins where you can drop these recyclable bags. McAlister's bags ARE really useful to carry recyclable plastic bags to these bins!



Thank you for your interest in Meridian Street UMC's Mission project of making sleeping mats for the homeless! We appreciate the help!