



## Handles

Handles can make or break a bag, and it's great fun to experiment with different and sometimes amusing ones. I'm always on the lookout for great handles to personalize my bags, and it's even better if they feel comfortable in the hand.

### Cord Handles

Wool, silk or cotton cords can be plaited, wrapped, beaded and mixed with other fibres. Plastic or leather piping, sold for jewellery-making, can look very effective, as can shoelaces. Try plaiting leather strips and adding homemade beads made from polymer clay, or using heavy rope bought from hardware stores. Cord can be wrapped with bobbly yarn for a textured effect.

### Cane Handles

Cane handles can be bought quite cheaply from craft stores and look very professional. They can be bound with wool or thread to make them look more interesting.



### Plastic Handles

The clear tubing sometimes used by winemakers for siphoning homemade wine can be used to make handles, though these sometimes need embellishment to stop them looking 'cheap and nasty': try decorating the ends with silk pods or binding them with thread. Remember that you have to be able to get a needle through it, so don't buy it too thick (or try pulling the needle through with a pair of pliers). Plastic carrier bags are a good source of cheap, readily available handles. They go well with little chunky bags.



### Reused Handles

Try shopping in flea markets or charity shops for vintage frame purses and clasp bags. The handles can be removed and reused for your own creations.

### Natural Handles

Sticks make unusual but effective handles. Look out for straight sticks, but make sure they retain some character. I once spent ages measuring, cutting and sanding two perfectly straight sticks and when I had finished they looked so perfect I thought 'what was the point of that? I could have bought sticks like that!' It is well worth taking the time to sand sticks, as this makes them easier to handle – you don't want splinters in your hand when you go out with your bag. Sticks can also be coloured with Procion dye when they've been sanded.



### Paper Handles

The handles on brown paper shopping bags are cheap and extremely useful. They may look unappealing at first but when they are wrapped they can look very different. Try wrapping them with wool, thick and thin yarns, embroidery thread, machine embroidery thread, cord, strips of silk paper and lengths of fabric.

