

How to Crochet a Plastic Sleeping Mat

Using Recycled Plastic Shopping Bags



How to Make Plarn



Figure 1- smoothed shopping bag lying flat illustrating Step 1.

A long plastic strip made from cut up plastic shopping bags is called “plarn,” short for plastic yarn. You can use bags from the same store or alternate bags from different stores for color variety when making your plarn. To make a more random color pattern in the completed mat alternate bags with distinct color. For stripes, it takes approximately 10 plastic bags to form enough plarn for a 3-row stripe.

1. Straighten out each bag by pulling at the end and the handles, so that it becomes smooth and flat. Be sure that any flaps are straightened out toward the handle.
2. Fold the bag in half lining up the outer edges and then half again.
3. Cut off the plastic bag handles and the bottom of the bag.
4. Cut into 4 pieces, then unfold to open the loops of plastic.



Figure 2 - fold shopping bag in half with outer edges together and then fold in half again.



Figure 3 - Cut off both ends of the shopping bag.



Figure 4 - Bag is ready to cut to form rings.



Figure 5 - Cut the bag in half then cut each half in half to form four quarters.

5. To form the chain, straighten one loop and then pull it through the center of another loop, pulling the two ends together. Pull one end of the doubled ring through the other end and gently pull that end while holding onto the end of the ring that you originally pulled it through. Before tightening the ends together to form a knot make sure both rings are even so you do not form a loop that will interfere when you are crocheting.



Figure 7 - Pull one end of the top of the T through the other end to begin forming a knot.



Figure 6 – Forming a “T” by pulling one ring through another ring.

The bags can be cut into more than 4 rings, if the bag is large. Try to make them all approximately the same width as when cutting the 4 from a regular bag. Narrower rings will make thinner plarn. This takes longer to crochet and creates a mat which is not as cushiony.



- To make a ball out the plarn, start by loosely wrapping in around your hand. Once you have it wrapped around several times, carefully slide it off your hand and begin wrapping it around the gathered loops, like you would do with regular yarn. Be sure to not wrap it too tight as this will cause the plastic to stretch thin.



Figure 9- Loosely begin wrapping the plarn around your hand to form a ball.



Figure 10 - After several loops around your hand, slip the loosely wrapped plarn off and continue loosely wrapping it around the bunched loops to form a ball.



Figure 11 - A ball of plarn.

How to Crochet a Mat

You need a crochet hook size 10 or above or a “P” crochet hook. (A large hook, makes it easier to crochet looser, making a more cushiony mat and easier to crochet with the plastic.)

- Set-up: Chain(ch) 41. This is the width of your mat (minus 1st loop) and should be approximately 3 feet wide.
- Row 1: Single Crochet(sc) into the 40th, and sc all the way across. ch 1. Turn over work.
- When you start the 2nd row of crochet, it is better to go through both loops of the crochet because it makes a softer mat since it will not form a ridge across the mat.
- Row 2: repeat row 2 until your mat is approximately 6 feet-long.
- You can tuck the end piece into the mat by weaving it through the loops.
- To finish the mat, loop the end of the plarn through the loops like you did with the beginning loop.
- For stripes crochet 3 rows and then add a new color by cutting the end of the next ring beyond the knot and looping a new ball of plarn through the original line of plarn.



Figure 12 - Begin with a basic chain of 41 loops.



Figure 13 - Add plarn as needed by looping it through the last ring of plarn.



Figure 14 - A completed mat with stripes made of bags from different stores.