

Making Wearable Devices for Memory Aids

AN INSTRUCTIONAL MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manual is to provide families and other caregivers with ways to create devices that make memory aids more accessible for individuals with memory impairment. Individuals who have memory impairment are frequently supplied with a memory aid by a speech-language pathologist or other health care professional. Memory aids promote increased independence and improved quality of life. However, for this to be possible, the memory aids must be accessible to the individuals who need them. This manual provides caregivers with ways of making memory aids “wearable.” This can be accomplished by making the memory aid small, lightweight, and portable and using an adaptive device to carry the memory aid.

Another issue regarding accessibility of memory aids is staff compliance with supplying the aids. Wearable memory aids should be included in individualized care plans, just as adaptive devices such as walkers, splints, eyeglasses, and hearing aids are. This would increase the awareness and compliance of staff members in making the prescribed memory aids available to their residents.

This manual provides ideas for devices, along with step-by-step instructions and pictures for making wearable memory aids. Included are vest pockets, wheelchair and walker bags, a necklace, and a belt. Feel free to adapt the ideas to your family member’s or resident’s needs. The only limit on making these devices is your own creativity!

VEST POCKET

The vest pocket is a popular form of adaptive device for memory aids because it is easy to wear and makes it easier to access the memory aid. For men, a suit vest can be used and worn over any kind of shirt or sweater. For women, a favorite vest can be used and worn over a dress or any kind of top. A clear plastic pocket is sewn onto the vest to carry the memory aid. The size of the pocket can be adjusted to match the shape and size of the vest. Just make sure the pocket is large enough to hold the memory aid. If the person does not already own a vest that can be adapted, then one can be purchased at a thrift store (for example, Goodwill or Salvation Army stores). Alternatively, fabric stores and craft shops often carry patterns or fabric printed with vest designs to cut out and sew. These stores also sell the clear plastic by the yard.

Materials Needed for Men's or Women's Vest

Craft plastic, 10" × 8"

10" double-fold bias binding tape in a color that matches the vest

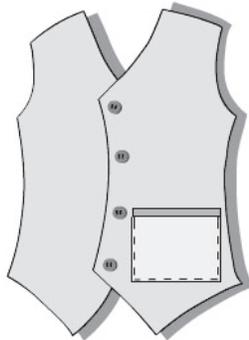
Thread that matches the vest and bias tape

Scissors

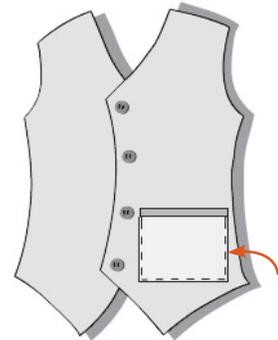
Sewing machine

Instructions

1. Place plastic on top of vest. Draw the shape of the lower part of the vest onto the plastic. Cut out the pocket shape 1/4" larger than the desired pocket on the sides and bottom edges.

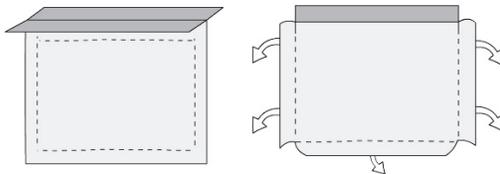


4. Edge stitch through the folded plastic onto the vest.



5. Put the memory aid in the pocket and share it.

2. Sew the double-fold bias binding tape to the top edge of the plastic.
3. Fold 1/4" of the sides and bottom edge of the plastic to the wrong side. Press the 1/4" fold.



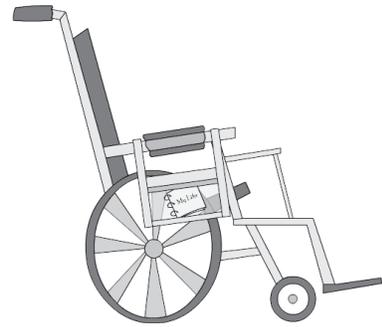
WHEELCHAIR AND WALKER BAGS

Wheelchair bags are useful for those individuals who are nonambulatory. The bag can be attached to the wheelchair arm with Velcro straps to make it easily accessible for the individual and for caregivers. Bags can also be made to fit on a variety of walkers for those individuals who are ambulatory with a walker.

Wheelchair Bags

There are two styles of wheelchair bags to match the type of wheelchair used. There are different types of wheelchairs, with armrests of varying shapes and sizes. Here are pictures of the two styles of wheelchair bags attached to the arms to demonstrate placement.

The exact proportions for the bag will depend on the shape and size of the wheelchair. The suggested dimensions on the following pages are for a bag to fit an average size wheelchair. You will need to measure the armrest of the individual's chair to determine exact proportions for the bag.



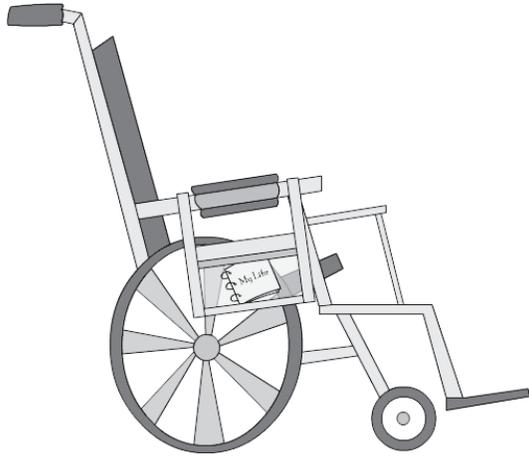
Walker Bag

Walker bags are useful for those individuals who are ambulatory with a walker. The bag can be attached to the front bar of the walker with Velcro straps. This keeps the memory aid in view of the individual and accessible to caregivers. It is suggested that you follow the directions for wheelchair bag #1 (see next page) for use on a walker, although wheelchair bag #2 will also work.



WHEELCHAIR AND WALKER BAGS CONTINUED

Wheelchair/Walker Bag #1



Materials Needed for a 6" x 10" Bag

Cotton or cotton-blend fabric, 16" x 16"

2 strips of Velcro, 3/4" x 3"

Craft plastic, 8" x 5"

10" double-fold bias binding tape in a color that matches the fabric

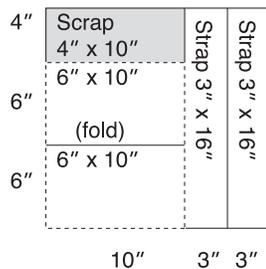
Thread that matches the bias tape and fabric

Scissors

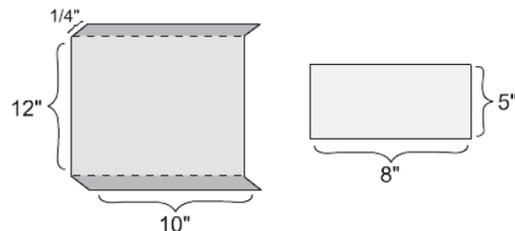
Sewing machine

Instructions

1. Cut fabric as shown in the diagram.
2. Or measure the length of the arm rest in front of the wheel and cut fabric 2" longer than the desired length of the pocket, and 12" wide. (Save the leftover fabric for the straps.)



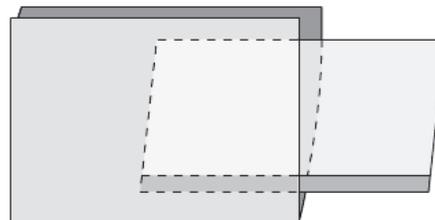
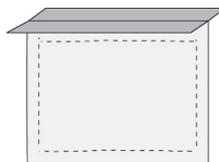
5. Fold the bias binding tape over the top edge of the plastic. Sew the double-fold bias binding tape to the top edge of the plastic.



3. Cut plastic 5" wide and 8" long, or 1" shorter than the desired length of the bag.

6. Fold the fabric in half, right sides together. Place plastic (bias tape edge down) between the 2 edges of fabric.

4. On the top and bottom of the fabric, fold 1/4" to the wrong side. Press folded edges.



WHEELCHAIR AND WALKER BAGS CONTINUED

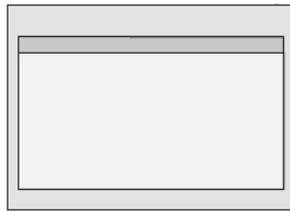
Wheelchair/Walker Bag #1

Instructions CONTINUED

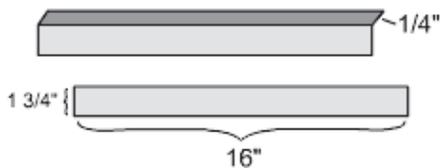
7. Sew together the fabric and the plastic along the edge (do not sew sides).



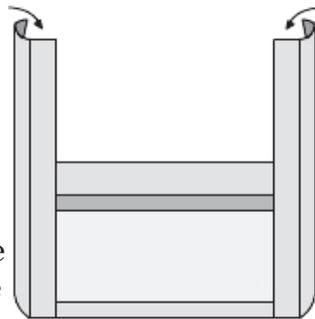
8. Turn fabric right-side out, with plastic on top of the fabric, and with the bottom (sewn) edge of the fabric turned up 1/2".



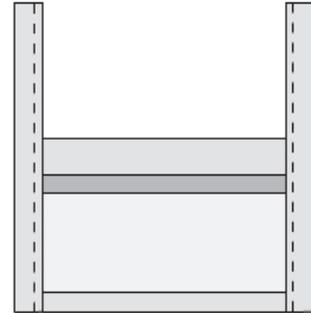
9. Cut the straps as shown in the diagram (16" x 3") or cut the leftover fabric to make straps. Press 1/4" of all edges to the wrong side.



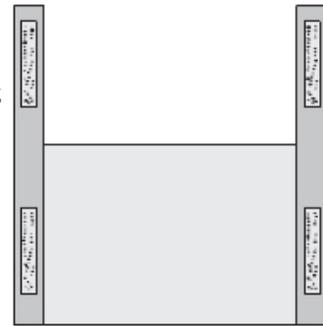
10. Fold the straps over the sides of the pocket, aligning the end of the strap with the bottom of the pocket, and overlapping the plastic at least 1/4".



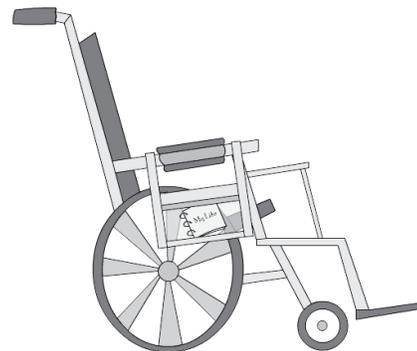
11. Sew the edges of the straps, starting at the top and sewing down the edges and onto the plastic pocket.



12. Sew one side of the Velcro pieces against the top part of the straps. Sew the other side of the Velcro pieces on the back side of the straps, aligned with the top edge of the bag.

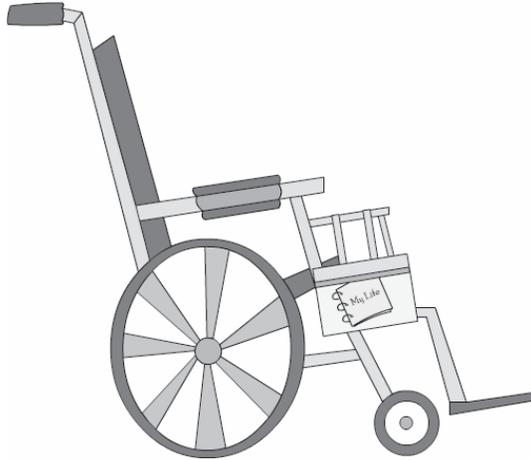


13. Hang the bag from the wheelchair and insert the memory aid.



WHEELCHAIR AND WALKER BAGS CONTINUED

Wheelchair/Walker Bag #2

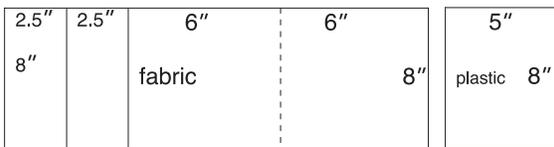


Materials Needed for a 6" x 8" Bag

- Cotton or cotton-blend fabric, 8" x 17"
- Craft plastic, 8" x 5"
- 2 strips of Velcro, 3/4" x 3"
- 10" double-fold bias binding tape
- Thread that matches the bias tape and bag
- Scissors
- Sewing machine

Instructions

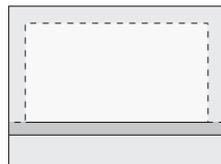
1. Cut the fabric into 2 pieces that are 8" x 6" for the body of the bag, and 2 pieces that are 8" x 2 1/2" for the straps. Fold 1/4" to the wrong side on the long edges of the straps, and the top edges of the body of the bag. Press all folded edges.



2. Fold the bias binding tape over the top edge of the plastic. Sew the bias binding tape to the top edge of the plastic.



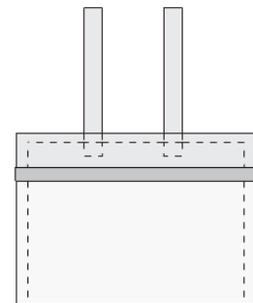
3. Align the two pieces of fabric for the body of the bag, with right sides



4. Turn the fabric right-side out, with the plastic pocket sitting on top, and the sewn edge forming the bottom of the bag.

5. Fold the 2 strap pieces in half lengthwise. Sew the edges of the straps.

6. Insert 1" of the end of each strap between the 2 pieces of fabric at the top of the bag. Sew the top edge of the bag.

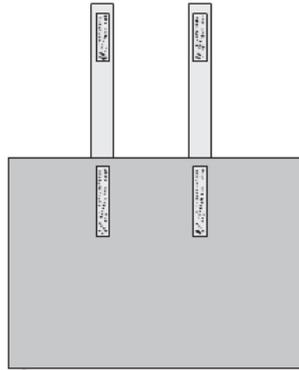


WHEELCHAIR AND WALKER BAGS CONTINUED

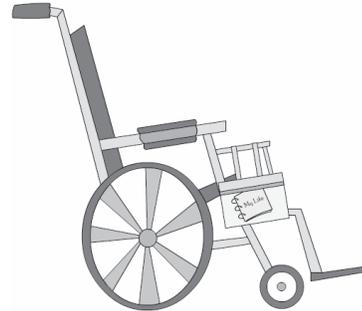
Wheelchair/Walker Bag #2

Instructions CONTINUED

7. Sew the Velcro pieces to the top of the strap and back of the bag.



8. Hang the bag on the chair and insert the memory aid in the pocket.



WAIST PACK

The waist pack is a convenient bag for those who are ambulatory without a walker. This bag will allow the person to keep the memory aid easily accessible without interfering with mobility. A commercially available waist pack could also be used, but the disadvantage is that the pocket will not be clear, and the individual or caregivers may forget that it contains the memory aid. This bag is similar to wheelchair bag #2, but with some modifications for the strap.

Materials Needed for a 6" x 8" Bag

Cotton or cotton-blend fabric, 12" x 8", and a strip 3" wide by 2" longer than the person's waist dimension

Craft plastic, 8" x 5"

1 strip of Velcro, 1" x 3"

8" double-fold bias binding tape

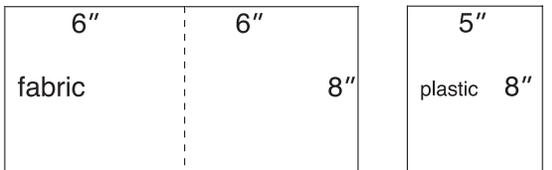
Thread that matches the bias tape and bag

Scissors

Sewing machine

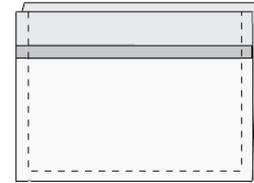
Instructions

1. Cut the fabric into 2 pieces that are 8" x 6" for the body of the bag, and 1 strap piece that is 2" longer than the person's waist dimension by 3" wide. Fold 1/4" to the wrong side on the long edge of the strap, and the top edges of the body of the bag. Press all folded edges.



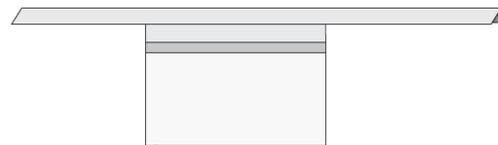
2. Fold the bias tape over the top edge of the plastic. Sew the bias tape to the top edge of the plastic.

3. Align the two pieces of fabric for the body of the bag, with right sides together. Insert the plastic between the fabric and align with the edges of the fabric. Sew the bottom and side edges of the fabric and plastic, leaving the top open.



4. Turn the fabric right-side out, with the plastic pocket sitting on top, and the sewn edge forming the bottom of the bag.

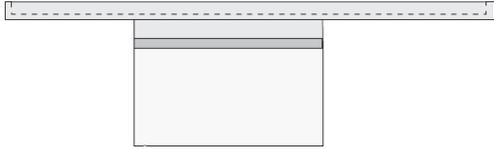
5. Fold the strap lengthwise over the top of the bag so the bag is centered in the middle.



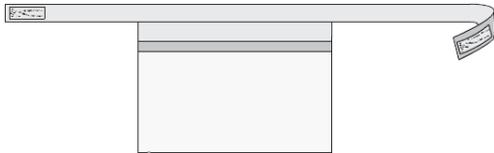
WAIST PACK CONTINUED

Instructions CONTINUED

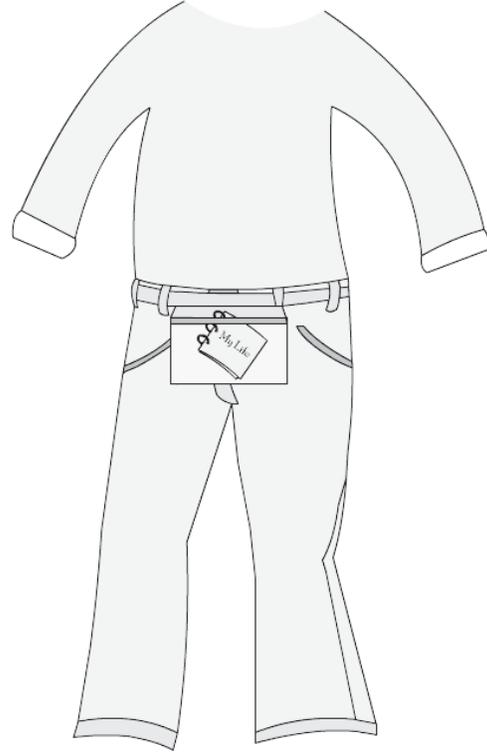
6. Sew the edges of the strap, going through the top of the bag.



7. Sew the Velcro to the ends of the strap—one on the front and one on the back side of the strap, so that when the strap is wrapped around the waist, the pieces will come together.



8. Put the memory aid in the bag and put it on the person.



APRON

Aprons can be adapted for men or women. Any style of apron will work fine. It is easiest to use an apron that the individual already owns, or you can buy one. (Note: most thrift stores have a wide variety of aprons.) In either case, you can simply sew a pocket onto the apron. Alternatively, you can sew an apron, using a commercially available pattern, and adding a clear pocket to it. Below are instructions for sewing a pocket onto an apron.

Materials Needed for an Apron

8" × 6" piece of craft plastic

8" strip double-fold bias binding tape in a color that matches the apron

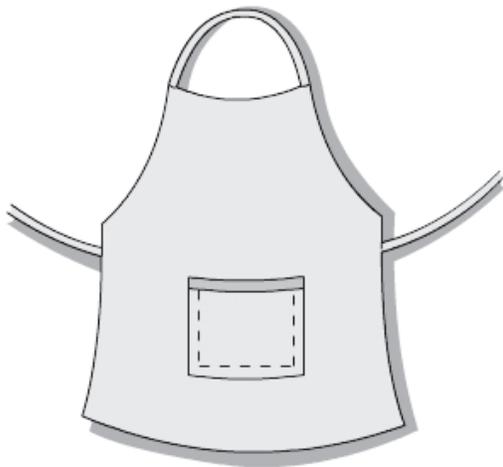
Scissors

Sewing machine (or needle and thread)

Thread in a color that matches the apron and bias tape

Instructions

1. Fold the bias tape over the top edge of the plastic. Stitch the bias tape to the top edge of the plastic.
2. Press 1/4" to the wrong side on the bottom and sides of the plastic.
3. Position the plastic on the apron. Stitch the bottom and side edges of the plastic to the apron.
4. Put the apron on the person and insert the memory aid.



BELT

Belts can be adapted or crafted for both men and women. The memory aid can be attached to a favorite belt by hanging the aid from a coiled cord or bias binder strap. Make sure to have the cord or straps long enough so that the individual can comfortably use the memory aid while still attached to the belt. If he or she does not have a belt available, then you can make a fabric belt following the instructions below. You will need to measure the person's waist to determine exact measurements for the materials listed.

Materials Needed for a Belt

5" wide cotton or cotton-blend fabric, with length 4" longer than your family member's waist

Elastic, length equal to your family member's waist
1 strip of Velcro 1" x 3"

Scissors

Sewing machine (or needle and thread)

Thread that matches fabric

Plastic spiral cord (like a key chain)

Instructions

1. Use a belt or measuring tape to determine the desired length of the fabric belt.
2. Cut the elastic equal to the person's waist dimension. Cut the fabric 4" longer than his or her waist dimension.
3. Fold the fabric in half lengthwise, with the right sides together. Stitch the edges of the fabric.

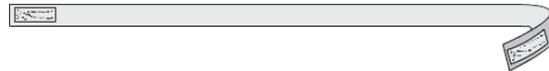


4. Turn the fabric right-side out. Place the elastic inside the fabric.

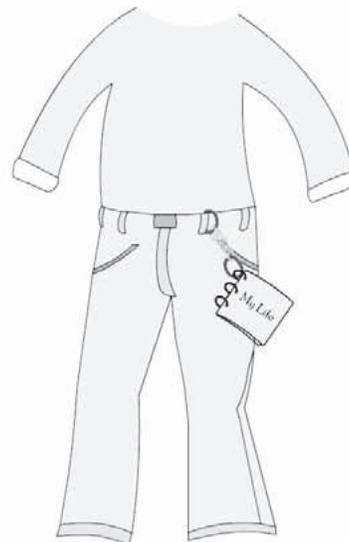


5. Fold the ends inside 1/4". Stitch the ends.

6. Sew one side of Velcro to each end of the belt, one on the top and the other on the bottom of the belt.



7. Attach the plastic spiral cord to the belt. Attach one ring of the memory aid to the spiral cord. Put the belt on the individual.



NECKLACE

The necklace is a simple alternative for women. Any long, sturdy chain or beaded necklace that the person owns can be used, or you can buy or make one. You could also purchase a plastic cord used in many workplaces for wearing photo identification. The necklace can be made from fabric or ribbon. If making a fabric necklace, follow the instructions to make the belt, but do not use elastic, and make it half as wide. Instructions are provided for making the ribbon necklace.

Materials Needed for a Necklace

Lightweight fabric or ribbon, suggested size approximately 26" × 3/4" (or so the memory aid rests approximately 4" above the navel)

1" × 1/2" Velcro strip

Decorative beads

Thread that matches ribbon

Instructions

1. Cut ribbon to desired length.
2. String decorative beads (optional).
3. Sew Velcro to the ends of the ribbon, one piece on the top and the other piece on the bottom edge.
4. Loop the binder ring of the memory aid through the ribbon
5. Share the memory aid.



OTHER ATTACHMENTS

You may think of other ways to add pockets to clothing, or to use attachments to keep memory aids with the individual. One more adaptive device is the use of a spiral cord key chain to attach the memory aid to a wheelchair, walker, or belt loop. Below are some pictures of the use of spiral cords. Feel free to use your knowledge of the person's tastes to be creative and devise your own adaptive devices. Once again, the only limit is your own imagination!

Spiral cord on wheelchair



Spiral cord on walker



Spiral cord on belt loop

