

# Making a Portable Carrying Case (PCC) for a Multiple Simultaneous Display Communication Board

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## Sample Board

- Many of you have seen a sample of a cloth-based board that I present at workshops. This board was designed specifically for an ambulatory client who had behavioral issues. The cloth board is lightweight and does not hurt if he hits someone with it. Plus, it was made from fabric he choose in order to increase motivation to carry it with him. Since I made this board, I've made nearly a dozen others, each with some additional design modifications.
- Others have copied my idea and made their own version, using fabric appropriate for the child.



## Original Sample Board



22 columns x 10 rows x  
2 layers = 420 Words  
in a 10 inch HIGH x 24  
inch WIDE carry-able  
cloth display (original  
fabric was about 20 x 24)



## Current Favorite Design

1 inch targets

"bottom pockets" =  $63 (x2) = 126$

"flip pockets" =  $56 (x5) = 280$

Extra back pocket for temporary displays = 56 locations (x 1 or more, depending on how many you make.)

Total = 406 + extra displays in a 8.5" x 20.5" carrying case



## Materials 1

- The Cloth
  - Choose a basic cotton or poly-blend fabric. Nothing too heavy.
  - Pre-treat it with a spray to make it more water and stain resistant.
  - Look for pre-cut bundles of fabric at a local fabric store (at least 18"W x 20" to 22" L). Fabric and craft stores carry "quilting squares" that work very well for this. Quarter Flats are 18" x 22".
  - I generally make myself a "pattern" out of tag board that is 18" H x 22" wide to use when cutting large pieces of fabric.
- Needle - While at the fabric store, pick up a sewing machine needle for medium to heavyweight material.



## Materials 2

- The Handles
  - When at a craft or fabric store, pick up something sturdy for the handles. I've tried ribbon and it works okay, but real strapping "handle material" works the best.
  - The strapping material unravels very easily, so tape the end with clear or masking tape. Keep the tape on when you sew the straps to the fabric.
  - Cut 2 pieces of handle material for each carrying case. Cut 9 inch piece for a small, child-sized handle and 12 inch pieces for an adult-sized handle.



## Materials 3

- The “Pockets”

- I originally protected my paper picture displays by sealing them using contact paper and then sewing the contact paper to the cloth. But if I needed to change the vocabulary, I had to pick out all the stitches, remove the old display, make a new display, cover it in contact paper, and sew it back on. That is ok for people with very “stable” AAC systems, but isn't good when a system needs on-going changes.
- I now use clear vinyl that I buy at a fabric store. It is used for things like tablecloth covers and can be sewn through very easily. Use it to make “pockets” so you can slip the paper displays in/out.
- When buying the vinyl, you will have a choice of different weights - “8 gauge” is durable, without being too bulky to sew through. Have the store roll your vinyl onto a tube to avoid creasing it. DO NOT fold it. But, if you do get creases in it, use a towel or cloth OVER the vinyl and iron on very LOW, DRY heat.



## The Paper Displays

- Determine the target size on you paper displays, based on the visual and access needs of your client.
- The bottom displays are stationary and do not flip.
- The top displays flip and have vocabulary on both sides.
- It takes some “figuring out” as to where you want to place your vocabulary and how to organize it (alphabetical, categorical) for easiest production of language.

## Sewing Tip #1

- I've made lots and lots of mistakes as I've sewed and designed my various cloth displays. The key to everything, if I can quote a familiar saying, is to "measure twice and cut once." Plus, it helps if you have some basic knowledge about sewing, such as "right sides together" when joining surfaces.

## Sewing Tip #2

- Make a paper prototype - like a pattern. Once I did this, I could envision that steps of how to make the case successfully. Plus, it made cutting the pieces of fabric, handles, and pockets a lot more consistent.
- Write on your pattern all the instructions you need to line things up correctly.

## Sewing Tip #3

- Expect that your first attempt is going to be a bit of a mess! I can't tell you how many times I had to rip out seams and redo something. Even though I've made nearly a dozen of these, I still always pin and "test" before sewing to make sure everything is positioned and aligned correctly. If you make a mistake, be careful removing stitches from the vinyl, since it can be easily damaged.

## Sewing Tip #4

- Don't forget to IRON your fabric.
- Ironing helps keep everything smooth and improves the sewing process. However, don't use high or direct heat on your vinyl. It will destroy the vinyl and mess up your iron. If you need to iron creases out of the vinyl, remember to cover it with another cloth (like a pillowcase) and iron with LOW, DRY heat.

## Sewing Tip #5

- A general rule of thumb in the sewing world is that you sew 5/8 inch seams; however, I use 1/2 to 1/4 inch seams, based on the cloth and vinyl sizes I have.
- Also, when you are sewing something that is going to be turned inside-out, you trim the seam (and especially the corners) before turning. (With 1/4 inch seams, very little trimming is necessary.) I usually trim with a pinking shears.
- Be careful that you don't trim BEFORE checking that everything fits properly.

## Sewing Tip #6

- Sewing 2 different types of materials together (cloth and vinyl) can be challenging. I find that it is easiest to have the slippery fabric (the vinyl) on the top, with the "feet" of the sewing machine grabbing the fabric. This seems to help everything run more smoothly through the sewing machine. Also, if you start sewing about an inch into a seam, it helps. (Backtrack to sew the bit you missed.)
- Also, when working with "folded" materials, sew the seam starting at the open end and going to the folded end.

## Step 1 - Cut the Fabric

- Decide on your finished size and **DOUBLE** the width (not the length). Remember, you are going to **FOLD** it.
- I plan on a finished size of 8.5" H x 21" W, so I cut a piece of cloth 18 x 22 inches (with 1/2 inch seams). All the rest of the instructions are based on a cloth size of 18 x 22 inches.

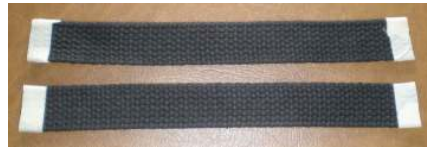
## Step 2 - Cut the Vinyl

- Cut a 9" x 22" piece of vinyl for the **BOTTOM** pocket (the section that **DOES NOT** flip).
- Cut 3 pieces of vinyl for the **OUTSIDE** flip pockets. Cut each 9" x 11".
- Cut 1 piece of vinyl for the **INSIDE** flip pocket. Cut it 18" x 11".
- Cut 1 piece of vinyl for the back pocket. Cut it 9" x 5.5" (5.0 will work too).



## Step 3 - Cut Handles

- Cut 2 pieces of handle material - each between 9 to 12 inches long, depending on the desired “loop” size you want. To prevent unraveling of your material, put tape at the spot where you are going to cut and cut down the middle of the tape, leaving tape on both cut edges.



## Starting To Sew

Relax and Take Your Time!  
It usually takes about 3+ hours to  
make a carrying case.

## Back Pocket for Extra Displays

(see picture on next slide)

- Lay out your fabric, right size up.
- Position the 9 x 5.5 piece of vinyl on the cloth so that AFTER you fold and sew the case, the pocket is on 1/2 of the long length.
- Position the bottom edge along the raw edge of the fabric.
- Using a zig zag stitch, sew along 3 edges, making sure to leave an opening into which you can slip the displays.

## Back Pocket for Extra Displays

Sew on RED LINES.



## Handles

(see picture on previous slide)

- Attach your handles to the fabric on the same half as the Back Pocket.
- You want the rough edges of the handles to be **INSIDE** the seam, so you have to attach them so that when you sew the right sides of the cloth together and then turn it inside-out, the handles are accessible.
- Sew using a zig zag stitch to reduce unraveling.
- Remove the excess tape **AFTER** sewing.

## Bottom Pockets

(see picture on next slide)

- Attach the 9 x 22 piece of vinyl to the **RIGHT** side of the fabric.
- Baste along the 3 edges that need to be sealed (left, top, right), starting with the long side and then the short sides.

## Bottom Pocket

Sew on RED LINES, starting with this line.



## Outside Flip Pockets

(see picture on next slide)

- You are going to make each outside flip pocket separately. You have 3 to make.
- Take one of the 9 x 11 pieces of vinyl. Fold in half the short way and tape the top shut to hold the piece together securely. Pick the most even of the sides for the "top." You will trim and clean up the edges when you are done with everything.
- Sew the bottom edge with a 1/2 inch seam, going from the open edge to the fold.
- Turn inside out.
- Baste or tape the side seam. You should now have a pocket with 3 closed sides.
- Repeat and make 2 more pockets.

## Outside Flip Pockets



Sewn bottom seams and turned inside out - secured temporarily with masking tape

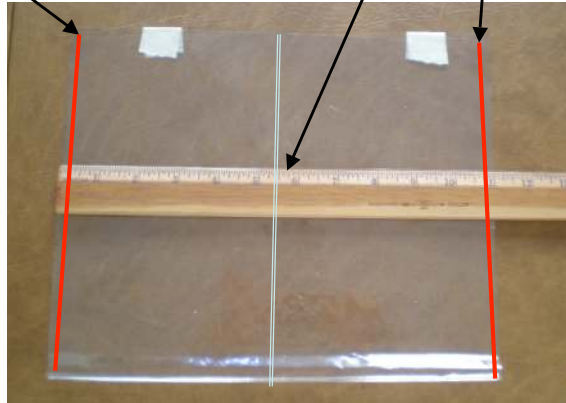
## Inside Flip Pockets

(see picture on next slide)

- Take the 18 x 11 piece of vinyl.
- Fold in half the long way and baste the side edges (L & R).
- Turn inside out. You now have a wide pocket with 3 closed edges.
- Mark the CENTER with an erase-able marker so you know where to sew again when you attach it to the cloth case.

## Inside Flip Pockets

Fold and hold shut with masking tape. Baste here and here. Mark down the middle (5.5") here.



## Sew Outside Pockets to Fabric

(see picture on next slide)

- Position the TOP, OUTSIDE flip pockets on the cloth, laying them over the bottom, stationary pocket. Position each at least 1/2 inch from the bottom edge.
- Attach 1 of the pockets to the LEFT side and 2 pockets to the RIGHT SIDE.
- Make sure the openings of the pockets are aligned correctly.
- Baste the edges.

## Outside Flip Pockets

Sew on RED LINES.



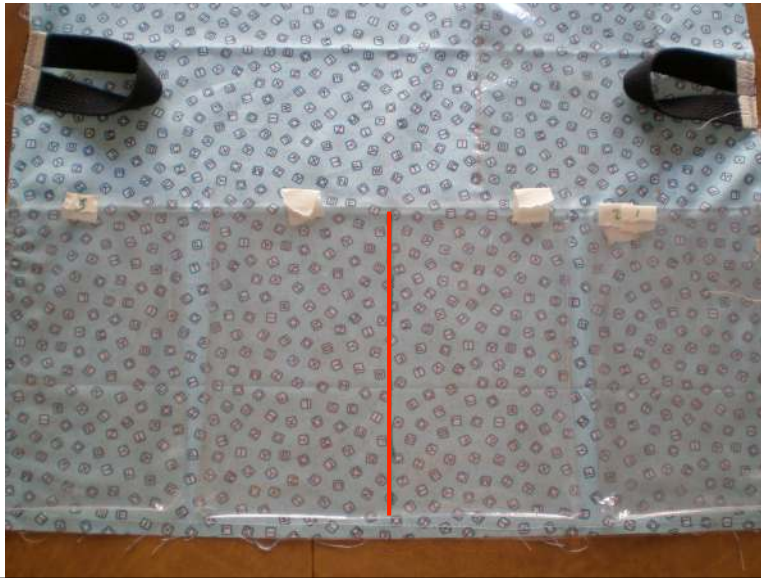
## Sew Inside Pockets to Fabric

(see picture on next slide)

- Position the TOP, INSIDE flip pocket to the center section, 1/2 inch from bottom edge, just like the outside pockets.
- Sew (not baste) down the center along the line you drew (through the top and bottom pockets.) This is the hardest one to sew without the fabric puckering.
- You should now have ALL your flip pockets attached.

Sew on RED LINE.

## Inside Pockets



## Fold & Finish

- Fold your cloth RIGHT SIDES together and sew a 1/2 inch seam along the 2 outside edges.
- Leave the LONG side open so you can turn it inside out.
- Fold under the long, open edges of the fabric and iron carefully (don't touch the vinyl with your hot iron).
- Top Stitch shut the open, outside edge (either by machine or hand), being careful not to accidentally sew down the flip pockets.



## Displays

- Print and laminate your displays for extra protection.
- Insert your displays into the pockets.
- Put your activity based displays in the extra pocket.
- Trim the tops of the pockets, as needed so they are even with the fabric.
- Add sticky-back Velcro® dots to “seal” the top edges of all your pockets.

## Final Product!!!!

