

Instructions for sleeping mats for the homeless

Materials

- Plastic bags (clean, grocery store variety, between 500 to 700 per mat)
- Scissors or rotary cutter/mat
- 10 mm or larger crochet hook (size P)

Preparation Directions

- Place bag in lengthwise position
- Fold the bag in half, then fold in half again
- Cut off the bottom seam and top handles; discard or recycle
- Cut bags into 2 ½ inch loops; narrower if the bag is thicker
- Connect in the following way; Pick up two loops. Place one end through the other. Place the end of the second strip through itself. Pull both ends until tight
- Repeat steps and roll length into a large ball
- Write a bible thought and connect it to the mat

Crochet Directions

- Using a size P crochet hook or larger, make a chain 36 inches long (or 72 inches long)
- Make loops loose with space between each loop
- Crochet one extra loop at the end of the chain for a turning point
- Return to the 3rd stitch to make row two.
- Continue until the mat is 6 feet long (or 3 feet long)
- Crochet from front to back to avoid puckering (a finished mat measures 3'X6')
- For a tie, crochet 3 rows of single loops to make an 80 inch loop
- Connect the tie to the middle top. This allows the mat to be rolled up to transporting

Notes:

- Approximately 35 hours for one mat
- Search for “sleeping mats for the homeless” on the internet for more info
- YouTube video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiUC0iDQtkA>

Cutting
guide
2 1/2"

SLEEPING MATS for the Homeless

By Carolyn R. Tomlin



What common disposable item comes in shades of beige, yellow, blue, red, black — even, white? Give up? Plastic bags, of course!



Instead of tossing what once held groceries and merchandise, church groups are turning throw-away bags into sleeping mats for the homeless. Participants now see plastic bags in a new way. Plus, they're developing a heart for missions.

More than 100,000 plastic bags are handed out every minute. Some researchers say it takes from 500 to 1,000 years for a bag to decompose. Instead of contributing to a growing environmental problem, these bags can be turned into an item that will provide comfort for those

without homes — both near and far away.

The Plastic Bag Mission Project

Members of Concordia Lutheran Church in Jackson, Tenn., enlisted the community for this service project. They crossed denominational lines to involve people who are now finding renewed vigor in serving others, committing hours each week to helping people they do not know and probably will never meet. Volunteers gather at the church to cut bags into strips and turn the strips into balls. The balls are passed to other volunteers who crochet the mats.

Due to the high rate of unemployment, the homeless population is growing. Cities, and even small communities, across our nation report more people needing a place to sleep. Unfortunately, shelters for men and women are overflowing. During the winter months, from November through April, many churches have a program called "Room in the Inn," where homeless men come for a meal and a night's lodging. But in warm months, they often have no place to stay at night. The plastic bag sleeping mats provide a more comfortable sleeping surface.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me" (Matt. 25:40).

For complete instructions, go to www.facebook.com/matureliving, email us at matureliving@lifeway.com, or send a self-addressed stamped envelope to *Mature Living*, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0175. Go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiUC0iDQtkA to watch a demonstration.

More Than a Local Need

In January 2010, a major earthquake in Haiti destroyed homes and structures. Today, people continue to live in tents and sleep on the ground. Plastic bag sleeping mats keep moisture away from the body, create heat, and are soft to sleep on. The lightweight mats can easily be rolled up and carried, and they can be quickly hosed off for cleaning.

Churches may work with a local group to distribute mats or contact volunteers who plan missions trips to Haiti or other desolate countries.

One church is using this project in their prison ministry. Volunteers bring the cut strips to women inmates and teach them the simple crochet steps to make the 3-by-6-foot mats.

Often local businesses will donate new bags which are easier to cut into strips, but used bags work well, also.

Civic organizations who provide disaster relief request

plastic bag sleeping mats where earthquakes, tornadoes, and floods have forced people out of homes. Designated shelters may not contain sufficient cots or pads to accommodate all the people needing a place to sleep.

How to Get Started

Begin by asking your congregation to save plastic grocery bags. Schedule a time to meet and organize this mission project. Cut clean bags into strips, loop together, and roll into a ball. It takes 500 to 700 bags and approximately 35 hours to make one mat.

Crocheting plastic bags into sleeping mats has become a small, but powerful way to express the love of Christ to others.

Carolyn R. Tomlin writes for numerous Christian publications. She is the co-owner of Boot Camp for Christian Writers. Email carolyn.tomlin@yahoo.com.



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The Basic Stitches

The foundation chain (or base chain)

Almost all crochet starts with a foundation (or base) chain. This is the equivalent of 'casting on' in knitting. The base chain is a series of chain stitches, which normally begin with a loop secured by a slipknot.

Making a slip knot

Follow instructions given for '[Making a Slip Knot](#)'.

Chain stitch (ch)

1. Wrap the yarn over the hook in an anticlockwise direction (or hold the yarn still and manoeuvre the hook) (Fig.83).

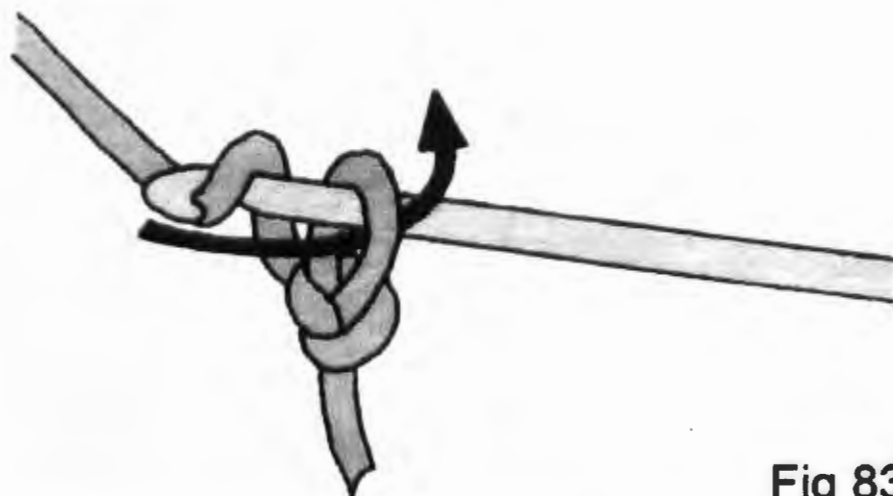


Fig 83

2. Draw the yarn through to form a new loop without tightening up the previous one (Fig.84).

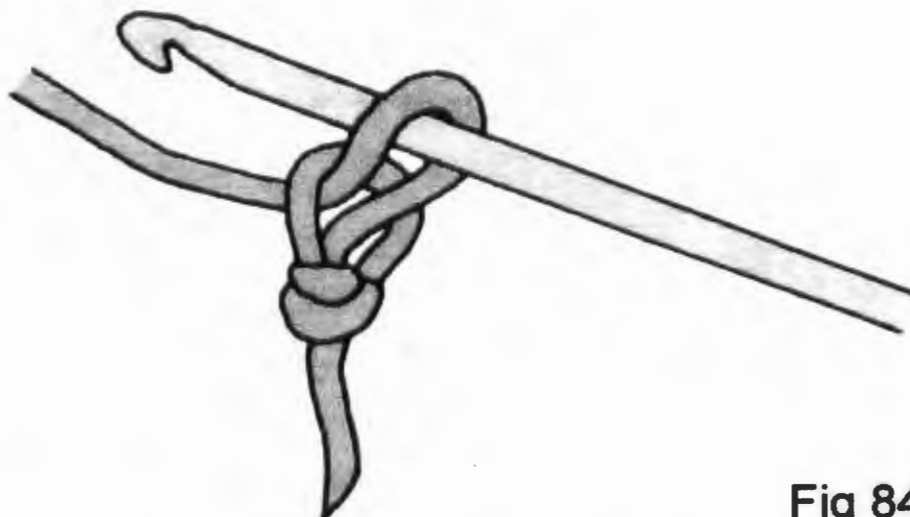


Fig 84

Note: Unless otherwise specified, always wrap the yarn this way round. To make a length of base chain, make as many chains as required. Keep shifting your left hand position up

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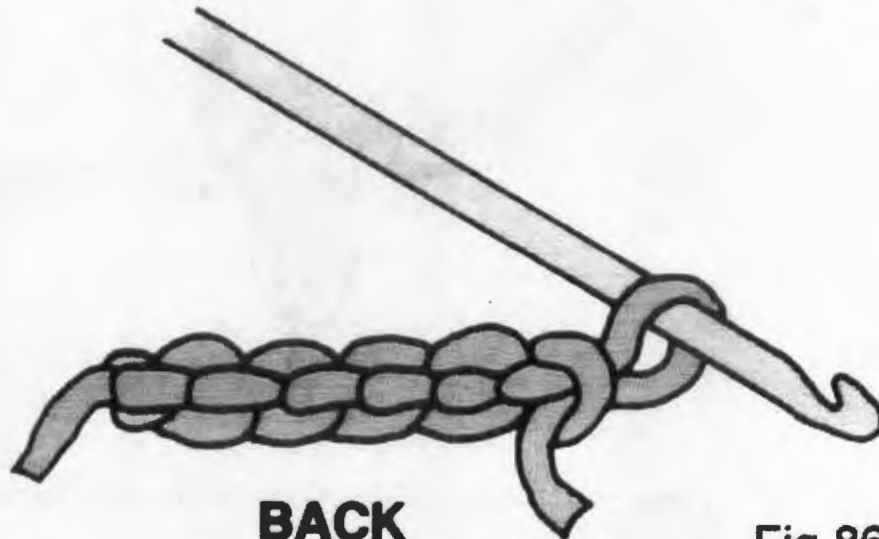
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close to the hook every couple of stitches or so; this is easy, if you use a right hand finger tip to hold down the loop on the hook, while you do so. To count chains correctly as you make them, do not count the initial slip loop as a chain. To count them afterwards, first make sure that they are not twisted and that you are looking at the 'front' (see Figs 85 and 86), then count back, but ignore the loop still on the hook.

**FRONT****Fig 85****BACK****Fig 86****Slip stitch (sl st)**

1. Insert the hook into 2nd chain from hook, wrap the yarn over the hook, draw the yarn through the chain and the loop on the hook in one movement - 1 sl st made (Fig.87).

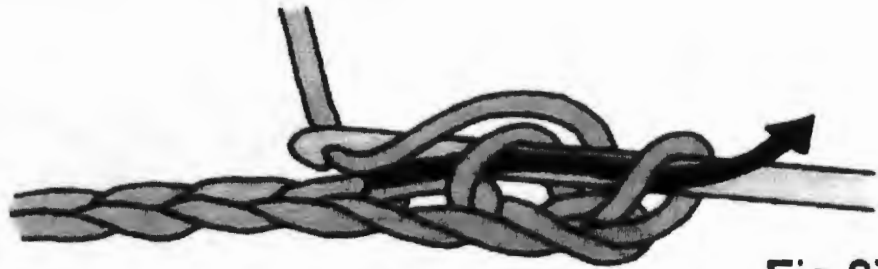


Fig 87

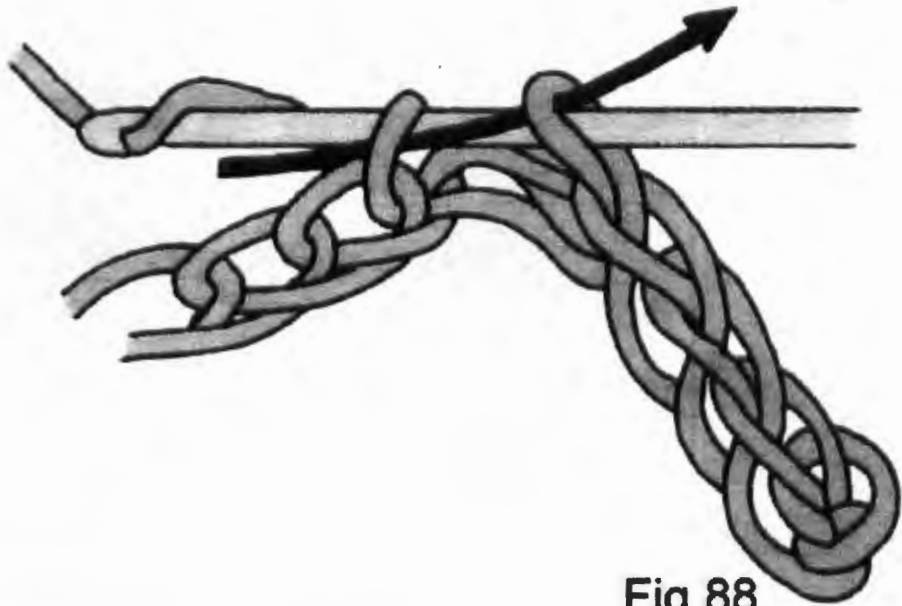


Fig 88

2. Repeat this last step (Fig.88).

Double crochet (dc)

1. Insert the hook into 2nd chain from hook, wrap the yarn over the hook and draw the yarn through the chain only (Fig.89).



Fig 89

2. Wrap the yarn again and draw the yarn through both loops on hook (Fig.90) - 1 dc made (Fig.91).



Fig 90

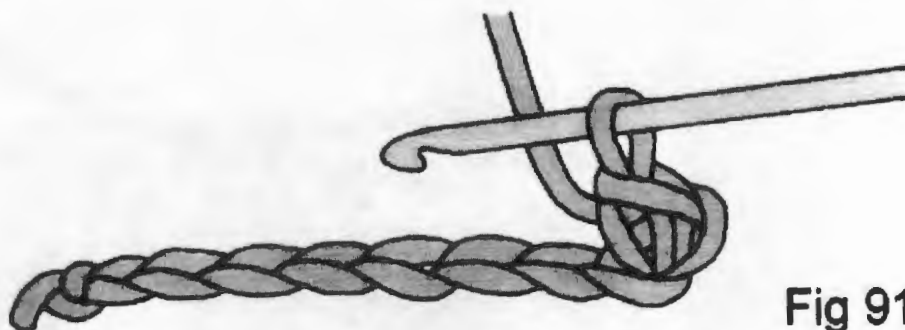


Fig 91

Half treble (htr)

1. Wrap the yarn over the hook and insert the hook into 3rd chain from the hook (Fig.92).



Fig 92

2. Wrap the yarn over the hook, draw through the chain only and wrap the yarn again (Fig.93).

3. Draw through all 3 loops on hook - 1 htr made (Fig.94).