

# Tote Bags

## Material:

Tote bags come in several different types of material and depending on your budget and intended use, certain materials will be a better fit. In addition to your personal preference in materials, you will have to consider in very practical terms how much weight the tote bag will have to hold. Almost all bags will hold up to 10 lbs but a cotton canvas bag will hold more weight than a 70-gram Non-Woven polypropylene material.

- **Cotton Tote Bags** - These bags are made from 100% all-natural cotton material. They tend to be mid-weight cotton that is heavier than a shirt but not as heavy as a canvas material. Cotton is obviously an earth friendly choice but does cost a bit more than the less expensive non-woven materials. Cotton tote bags can come in a variety of colors and can be hand washed or in some cases machine-washed if necessary. Cotton is a very durable material so the tote bag will survive many years of everyday use, which is always the goal when giving an item away as a promotional product.
- **Cotton Sheeting** - This bag is made from a lighter version of the cotton tote bag. Generally a cotton sheeting or lightweight cotton bag is made from a 5oz. - 7 Oz. cotton material. To put this into perspective heavyweight cotton shirt normally uses a 6 oz. cotton material. Therefore, a cotton sheeting tote bag typically feels like a heavyweight cotton tee shirt. The advantage of cotton sheeting is it costs less than the other cotton bags and can compete in price to many of the non-woven bags. The obvious downside is that it is not as strong or durable as a heavier cotton or canvas tote bags.
- **Cotton Canvas Tote Bags** - This tote bag is the strongest and most durable of all the cotton bags on the market today. Normally bags that are made from cotton heavier than 10oz. is considered cotton canvas material. The most durable canvas material is typically used as a boat tote bag which makes it the most durable of bags. The heavier weight cottons will feel firm and the material will be stiff to the touch. The boat tote bags typically are able to stand up on their own without any sag are considered a canvas material and the strongest of all the cotton choices. This of course makes these tote bags the most expensive choice as well.
- **Denier Nylon** - Denier nylon tote bags are made from threads of nylon weaved together to make the material. It is a synthetic material that is used in a number of products from nylon stockings, to bags, to bulletproof vests. The stronger the nylon and the tighter it is woven together will create the overall strength of the material. Denier nylon tote bags normally begin in weight from a 200-denier nylon all the way up to a 600-denier nylon. The 200-denier nylon is more commonly used to make drawstring backpacks, most tote bags fall within the 400 to 600 range. The overall strength and durability compare favorably to the cotton and cotton canvas alternatives. A 600-denier nylon tote bag will normally be as strong of a material as a cotton canvas tote bag. The difference is that the denier nylon bag will tend to cost less than the all-natural cotton alternative.
- **Non-Woven Polypropylene Tote Bags** - This material has been around for quite some time but has become extremely popular in the last few years with the wide spread use of non woven bags as a reusable bag in grocery stores around the country. Non-woven polypropylene is made from molten plastic that typically has been recycled from plastic bottles and is processed into thread like fibers that are bonded together rather than woven like cotton or denier nylon. The overall strength of these non-woven tote bags is measured in grams depending on their overall strength. Most non-woven polypropylene bags today fall between 70 grams and 100 grams in weight. A 100-gram non-woven bag will feel thicker and more durable than a 70-gram bag. Both materials can be just as durable depending on the

overall size of each bag and the way they are stitched together. However, given the same construction and size a 100-gram non-woven tote bag will be significantly stronger than a 70-gram bag. There are two primary factors driving the popularity of this material for tote bags. The first is the material costs less than any cotton alternative and the second is that typically the material is made in part from recycled plastic bottles making it an earth friendly alternative. Some non-woven bags come with a bottom stiffener to add strength and rigidity to the overall bag. It's a nice feature to look for with the larger, grocery type non-woven bags.

- **Jute Bags** - A relatively new material that is becoming more popular and also 100% natural and earth friendly. Jute comes from fast growing leafy plants and wood fibers, therefore, it is considered partially a textile fiber and partially wood. The combined fibers are spun into a strong material that makes a very durable tote bag.

## Size & Shape:

There are many sizes of tote bags to choose from. The best way to choose the right size is to think about how the person will be using the bag. You should consider how much weight the tote bag will have to hold, the size of the items it will be holding, how the user will hold the bag and how long you want the bag to be used.

- **Medium Tote Bag** - Any tote bag that is over a 12-inch square is considered a medium sized bag and is now large enough to hold brochures and other marketing information that a user may receive at a trade show or other promotional event. You should be able to find a wide selection of bags in the size range and there are many uses that people will have to use a bag of this size.
- **Large Tote Bag** - Bags that are over 16 inch will begin to be classified as a large bag. Bags in this size also tend to be more durable to allow the bag to hold more items and not have any weight capacity issues. Therefore, cotton canvas bags and 80 to 100 gram non-woven bags will be sized in this range.
- **Gusset** - Most of us are familiar with the height and width of a tote bag but another consideration is the gusset of a bag. The gusset is the depth or thickness of the bag so that when the bag is open it is the amount of space at the bottom seam of the bag.
- **Shape** - Most tote bags tend to be more square shape however, depending on the use of the bag a more rectangular shape might be preferred. There are probably more square shaped bags to choose from, however, you should be able to find several rectangular shape alternatives fairly easily.

## Other Factors:

We have listed other factors that you might not initially consider when choosing a tote bag but may prove to be very helpful in selecting the exact right bag for your promotional event.

- **Handles** - The size of the handle will depend on how you want the bag to be help. Longer handles, normally over 26 inches will allow you to hold the bag by your side as well as over your shoulder. This provides the most flexibility for the user. However, if the handles are 28 inches long and the height of the bag exceeds 20 inches a person not much taller than five feet may not be able to hold the bag by the handles by their side without the bottom of the bag hitting the floor. This may be more detail than you want to think about but it's here to consider.

- **Outside Pocket** - You may want the bag to have an outside pocket for quick access to get business cards or sell sheets. You may also want a small outside pocket to keep a water bottle or cell phone.
- **Closure** - There are a wide selection of tote bags that close at the top of the bag. You can consider a zippered, snap or Velcro closure as well. This may be important or helpful if the user can secure the items inside the bag. Keep in mind that the goal is to have your tote bag with your logo being used on a regular basis to promote your brand so you want to have the right features to add value to the tote bag.
- **Imprint Area** - As with all promotional products you want to have the largest imprint area possible. It goes without saying that the larger the tote bag the larger the imprint area. However, some outside pockets or design elements may decrease the size of the imprint area. There is no simple rule here, but you will need to weigh the benefit of a stylish looking bag with a smaller imprint area versus a plain bag and a larger imprint area.

## Drawstring Backpacks

### Material:

Drawstring backpacks come in a few different types of material; however, by far the most popular is denier nylon material. The most important factor, outside of price, to consider when purchasing drawstring backpacks is how the bag will be used. You will want the stronger material if textbooks are going to be carried because the heavy weight as well as the hard edges of books need the added strength and durability.

- **Cotton Drawstring Backpacks** - These bags are made from 100% all-natural cotton material. They tend to be mid-weight cotton that is both strong and durable; certainly stronger than a tee shirt. Cotton is obviously an earth friendly choice but does cost a bit more than the less expensive non-woven materials. Cotton drawstring backpacks are available in a natural color as well as some dyed colors. The bags can be hand washed or in some cases machine-washed if necessary. Cotton is a very durable material so the drawstring backpack will last for a number of years with normal use.
- **Denier Nylon Backpacks** - Denier nylon drawstring backpacks are probably the most common type of backpack. Denier nylon is made from threads of nylon weaved together. It is a synthetic material that is used in a number of different products. The overall strength of the denier nylon material is measured by the strength of the nylon the the tightness of the weave. Most drawstring backpacks will be a 210 denier nylon strength. This is typically strong enough for the normal backpack use. There are some more expensive drawstring bags that will be a 400 or even 600 denier nylon strength. These bags are obviously stronger and can withstand more aggressive everyday use than the more popular 210 denier nylon drawstring backpack.
- **Non-Woven Polypropylene Backpacks** - Non-woven polypropylene is made from molten plastic that typically has been recycled from plastic bottles. This type of material is used extensively with the very popular Grocery Tote Bags. Non-woven backpacks tend to be less expensive than denier nylon or cotton and are also less durable. The non-woven material is generally not as strong as the other available materials and a sharp edge (like a text book or a pen) can puncture the bag if enough force is applied to the surface. A non-woven backpack would work if the intended use if for lighter objects and not heavy textbooks.

## Size:

Drawstring backpacks are typically a square or slight rectangular shape. Most backpacks have a width that is between 13" and 18" and a height that is between 16" and 20". The most popular size drawstring backpack is approximately 14" wide and 18" high. The drawstring typically runs on either side of the bag with the ability to cinch it closed at the opening. The drawstring on each side is designed to be carried over each shoulder and with the bag resting on your back.

## Other Factors:

We have included some additional factors you may want to consider before purchasing a drawstring backpack.

- **Reinforced Corners** - Most drawstring bags will have reinforced stitching on each of the bottom corners for added strength. You can get added strength out of the bag if the bottom corners have additional material (most often simulated leather) covering each of the bottom corners and then reinforced with stitching. This is a nice feature to have and it normally does not add a significant amount to the price.
- **Outside Pocket** - Some drawstring backpacks have an outside pocket that provides additional storage for a brochure or other small, almost flat object. Many outside pockets will also have a zipper or Velcro closure. Also, some outside pockets will be made completely or partially from mesh material. Outside pockets can add a nice style point to the bag as well. This will add to the cost so only consider it if it will help with your promotion.
- **Safety** - Many drawstring backpacks will add reflective stripes on each side of the bag to reflect any light and provide additional protection to a person using it at night.
- **Imprint Area** - The imprint area on most drawstring bags are large relative to the overall size of the bag. In other words, bags that have at least one side without an outside pocket or other design element can be used for your imprint.