GLOBAL LEARNING

Global Gives Back Service Project

Making Plastic Bag Sleeping Mats

Creating sleeping mats out of used plastic bags is an innovative way to help those in need. The mats are soft to sleep on, they keep moisture away from the body and create warmth.

Materials Needed:
- Clean plastic bags (about 600 bags per mat)
- Knitting needles (size 10 or higher) or crochet needles (O or P recommended)
- Scissors or rotary cutter

INSTRUCTIONS (see tips and best practices on back)

Making Plarn (plastic yarn)
1) Flatten bags, by folding in the side and back pleats and smoothing with your hands.
2a) If using rotary cutter — stack 10-15 flattened bags.
2b) If using scissors — stack 3-4 flattened bags, then fold bag in half lengthwise, then fold in half again lengthwise.
3) Cut off handles and bottom seam of bags. Recycle these.
4) Cut strips 2.5 to 3 inches in width to create loops.
5) Take two strips and loop one end through the other, then loop end of the second strip through itself and pull tight to form a knot. Keep repeating these steps adding more strips to create plarn.
6) Roll the plarn into a large ball, or place the plarn into a bag.

Crocheting the Mat

To start a new mat:
Using a simple chain stitch, create a chain approximately 3 feet long. Keep the stitches very loose with generous loops. Should be around 40-50 stitches. To start the first row of single crochet stitch, reverse direction and skip the first stitch. Insert your hook from front to back into the loop of the next chain stitch. Wind plarn over hook and pull it through, leaving two loops on your hook. Wind plarn over the hook again and pull it through both loops, completing the single crochet stitch.

To continue a mat:
To begin a new row, turn your work. Chain one for the turning chain (does not count as a stitch). Insert hook from front to back under the top 2 loops of the first single crochet in the row below. Wind plarn over the hook and pull it through, leaving two loops on your hook. Wind plarn over the hook again and pull it through both loops, completing the single crochet stitch. Repeat the single crochet stitch for the whole row.
FLATTENING BAGS

- Make sure bags are right side out.
- Toss sticky or dirty bags in a recycle bin.
- Sort out thicker bags from thinner bags. Optionally sort by color.
- Flatten plastic bags, align pleats, press to remove air.
- Stack flattened bags with the bottoms of the bags aligned, approximately 10-12 bags in a stack.

LOOSENING LOOPS

- Collect Cut Loops.
- Use Sortkwik, as needed.
- Take Cut Loops and loosen into loops, place in bag or container.

MAKING PLARN (Plastic Yarn)

- Take Ready to Plarn material and make Plarn (Plastic Yarn) by looping strips together.
- Make sure loops are even and knot is small.

CUTTING BAGS

ROTARY CUTTING

It’s easier to do this with two people as one person can hold down the bags while the other cuts. (CAUTION – rotary blades are SHARP!)

Person 1 (holder) — Take flattened stack (10-15 per stack), align bag bottoms, place on cutting mat, press air from bags, hold bags for cutter. Help remove cut pieces and place in a bag or container.

Person 2 (cutter) — Cut with light pressure, remove bottoms and handles and throw them away. Cut stack of bags into 4 or 5 strips approximately 2-3 inches wide. Help remove cut pieces and place in a bag or container.

SCISSOR CUTTING

Stack 3-4 flattened bags. Fold bags in half lengthwise, and in half lengthwise again, pressing all air out. Cut off bottoms, throw them away. Cut off handles, throw them away. Cut into 4 or 5 strips (about 2-3 inches wide).

BLELLING PLARN

- Take Plarn and roll into balls up to about 6-8 inches in diameter (manageable size).
- Use rubber band to hold together.

MAT MAKING

- Chain approximately 45-50 stitches (a little longer than 3 feet wide).
- Use single stitch crochet until the length of mat is approximately 6 feet long.
- At the end of each row, do a single chain before turning directions.

Problems that may occur:
Side seam is bumpy, not straight. This is caused by using yarn that is too thick or by adding/leaving out a stitch. As long as the mat is usable, don’t worry about this.

To Learn More
Contact Meg Brady in Global Learning at megbrady@mst.edu, or call (573) 341-4845

Watch Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yr_WHW_TGSE
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