SHOPPING BAG WITH STORAGE POUCH,
MADE FROM A T-SHIRT
WITH SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR A FLAT BOTTOM

Start with a heavy-duty T-shirt. A school gym shirt or college sports shirt works great.

Note: the shirt can be any size, even infant or children's size.
Your toddler might not want to give up his or her favorite Batman t-shirt when it gets torn and old, but it might be ok if you repurpose it as a special sack for books or toys.
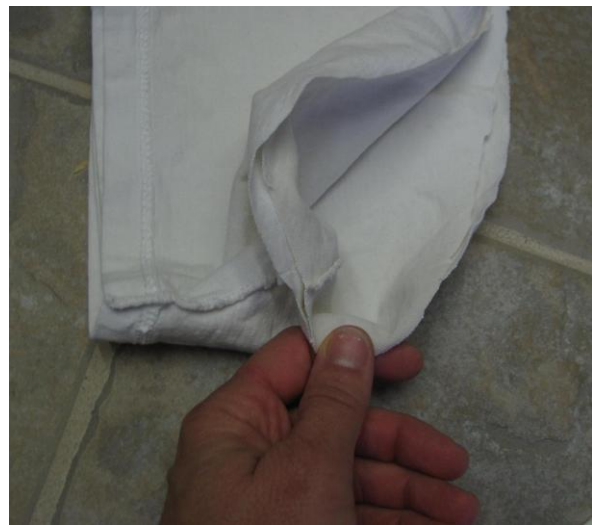
Cut the neck and both sleeves off. Make sure you LEAVE THE SLEEVE SEAMS on the shirt.
This will give extra strength to the handles.

Trim the neckline into a square-ish shape. This makes the handles even on both sides.

Take the two cut-off sleeves. Turn one inside-out.

Slide the right-side-out sleeve into the inside-out sleeve so the two right sides (outsides) are together.

Line up them up so the hemmed edges are together, nice and even. Note the seams are back-to-back (one inside, one outside).

Sew the two sleeves together about 1/2" in from the cut edge.

The doubled sleeve will become the "storage bag".

Cut two tiny holes on one cuff, one hole on either side of the sleeve's bottom seam.

Cut a piece of string or cord so when it's folded in half it is longer than the width of the sleeve.

Don't have a cord? Use the nylon string from a newspaper. It's incredibly strong!

Thread the cord through the cuff. One way is to attach the cord to a safety pin and thread the safety pin through the cuff of the sleeve.

Tie a knot so the cord makes a closed loop. Your handle is ready for use!

Invert everything: make sure the t-shirt and the sewn sleeves are both inside out.

Pin the sleeve hem without the cord along the side of the shirt, just under one arm... er, I mean under one handle.

Sew the sleeves in place, using a stretchy stitch.
This is the storage pouch.
(Storage pouch shown attached underneath one arm.)

Now close the bottom of the bag.

With the shirt still inside out, fold the bottom of the shirt up about 1".
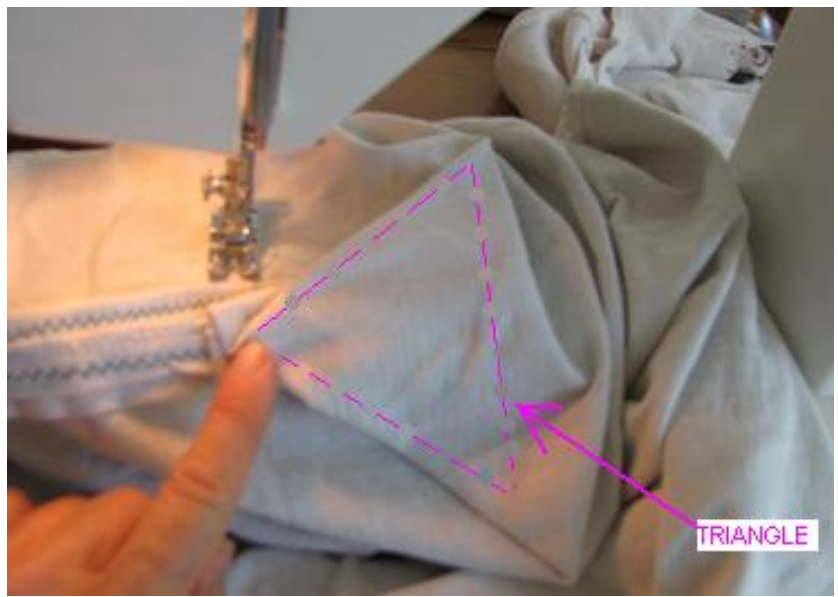
Sew it closed all the way across.

It is a good idea to sew this seam twice. The folded cloth makes the bag stronger at the bottom, but a double seam prevents accidents in case one seam tears open.

NOW FOR THE TRICKY PART:
Giving the bag a "flat" bottom.

With the shirt still inside-out, fold over the bottom seam against itself, about 4 – 5". The folded seam should make a triangle when the shirt is held flat.
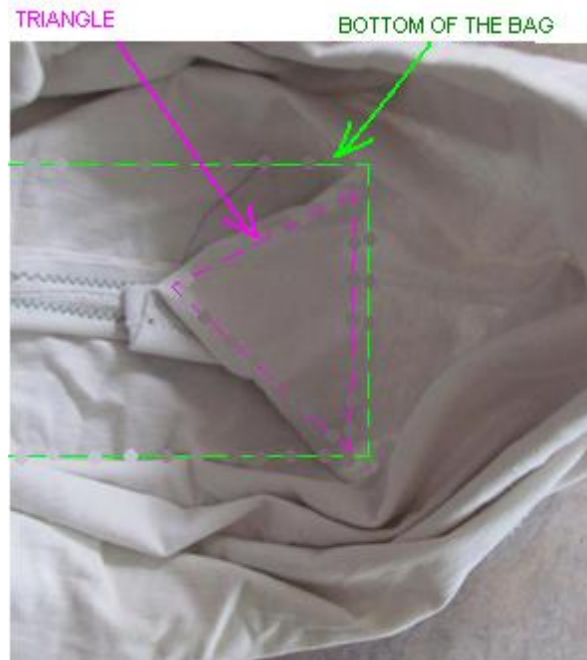
The corner will look like this inside the bag.

Tack/sew the triangle corners in place. This will be difficult, because you are sewing through several layers of cloth. (4 layers from the bottom edge folded up, plus 6 layers of the seam on the triangle itself.)

If you don't want to sew across the seams, you can tack/sew on either side of the seam.
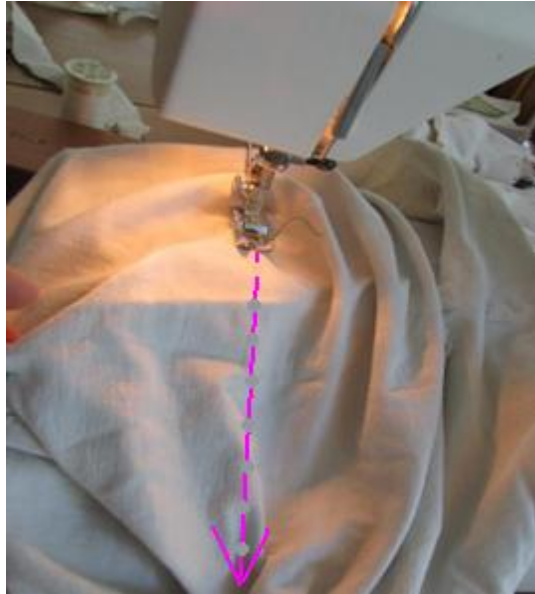

If you can't sew through all those layers, tack the triangle tip down on either side of the doubled seam.

Now to make the fold "flat".

OPTION 1: SEW ACROSS THE THICK SEAM
With the triangle folded flat, sew a straight line at the widest part.
This seam will go over the really thick seam.

OPTION 2: DON'T SEW ACROSS THE THICK SEAM
Starting at the point of the triangle, sew two seams, each about ½"
in from the folded edge.

TRIANGLE TIP: START HERE

Here is a comparison of the two seams.

The seam on the left went over the thick fold.
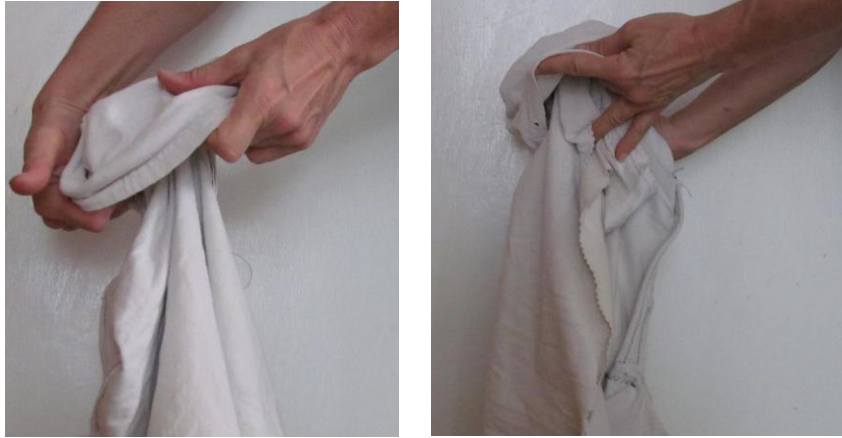The two seams on the right go along the edge of the triangle.

Turn the shirt right-side in. The bag is ready to be used now. Or you can decorate the cut edges with ribbon or other pretty things.
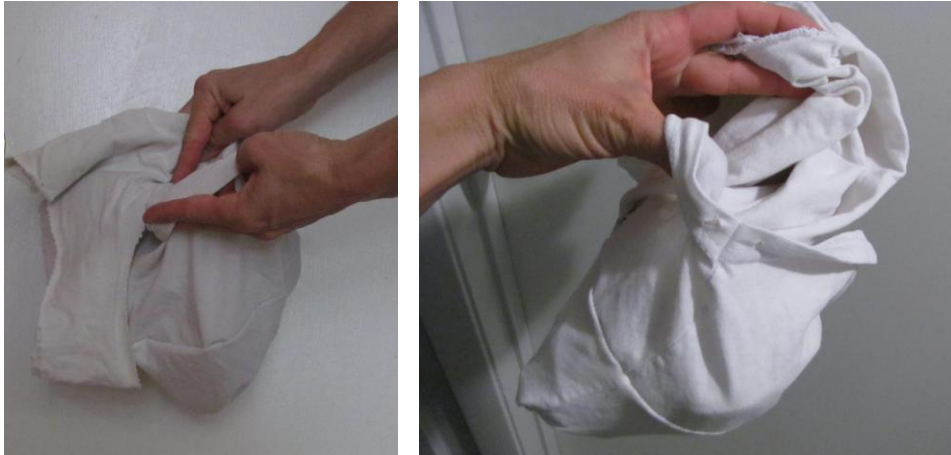
This is what the different seams will look like from outside:

SEW OVER THE THICK SEAM

DON'T SEW OVER THE THICK SEAM

Ready to put your bag away? Turn it inside out.
Take the sewn sleeves and…

..stuff the T-shirt bag inside.

Pull the string and your bag is nicely tucked away.

Ready to go!