

Tutorial: Miniature Leather Books

Taught by James Spyker at a CBBAG work shop in April 2017

Shared by Arielle's Bindery (ariellesbindery.com)

This is step-by-step tutorial for the miniature leather book I posted about last time. Last time I gave sort of an overview of the workshop with James Spyker from the Toronto CBBAG chapter, this time it will be a how-to guide.

For this book the signatures are sewn to the inside leather. They can easily be removed and new ones sewn in their place. Please note that for this tutorial you will need some basic bookbinding knowledge already!

To get started here is what you'll need!

Materials:

Boards - The boards should be about 1mm in thickness. This can be done by layering Bristol board together, anything will work though!

Leather (pared) - You will need two pieces of leather that has been pared between 0.3 to 0.5 mm. This prevents the turn ins from looking too bulky.



Thread - A thin thread (like a 40) looks nice aesthetically

Textblock paper - No limitation although thinner paper (like regular bond paper) looks better

Additionally, you will need two sewing needles, a paper clip, clamps, paste, PVA glue, wax paper, and plastic wrap.

Instructions:

Step 1: Fold the text block

You can make your book as big or as little as you'd like (in the United States, a miniature book is usually

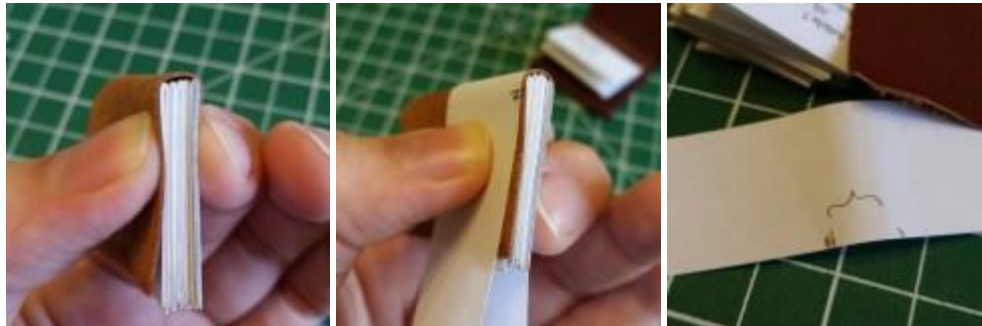


considered to be one which is no more than three inches in height, width, or thickness). The paper size *before* folding for this book, which stands at 2.5 inches (6.35 cm) when it is done, was: 2.25" (5.7 cm) tall and 3.25" (8.3 cm) long (the length is before the fold!).

Step 2: Measure the outside of the spine

Wrap the text block with the same leather you will be using for the inside and take a measurement from below the natural shoulder of the text block around to the other side.

*Note: You will run into problems if the outside spine is too small so err on the side of making it too big and you can work towards making it just right.



Step 3: Cut the cover boards

Make the cover boards the same width as the text block (the overhang at the fore edge will come from the fact that the spine goes past the natural shoulder). The covers should be made slightly taller than the text block to provide an over hang at the top and bottom. Also, cut a small piece of the same board material that is the width of your outside spine (this will be put between the covers to keep them apart as the leather dries).

The size of the boards for this book were: 2.5" (6.35 cm) in height and 1.75" (3.81 cm) in width. The little piece in the center to keep the boards apart was 5/8 inches (1.6 cm) in width, keep the height shorter than the boards, but the important part is width!

Step 4: Making the cover

Trim the leather so that there is enough to wrap around on all sides (we left a 1/4 inch from the boards when they were squared at one end of the leather, then the boards were centered). The leather is thin enough that you can do a simple corner, treating it like paper (so be sure to cut your corners). However, if you want to do a proper leather corner you can take the time to pare it properly and do that. Wrap the spine strip in plastic wrap so it can easily be removed when the leather is dry.



Wet the front of the leather with a damp sponge (the side the shows once the cover is complete), then on the back of the leather use paste. Position the cover boards in place and fold the leather over the edges. Use a bone folder to make sure they are pressed down and tight against the boards. Ideally you will let it dry under a board to keep it flat while drying.



Step 5: Attach the inner leather to one cover

First trim the leather so that it is the right height, don't worry about the width yet. For height it should be just a little smaller than the cover and should cover the boards inside, going over the cover leather a little. If you want to make it as tall as the text block that's usually a safe bet! Using PVA glue, glue it down to one side of the cover, don't let it get attached to the spine! You can cover the spine in wax paper so that it doesn't accidentally get stuck. At this point you can remove the middle board that was used to keep the width of the spine.



Step 6: Trim the inner leather to the right width

Wrap the text block in plastic wrap. Place it into the cover and mark the right width for the inner cover leather. Trim to that width. The width should be just a little longer than the text block. When you cut the leather, you will notice that it is smaller than what you intended (if you lay it flat), when it is pasted down the leather will pull the book together a little, creating a hollow in the spine. The outside leather spine is slightly larger than inside leather spine.



Paste it down to the second side with PVA, again don't let the spine get glued! You should let the book dry closed so put the covered text block back in and clamp it shut.



Step 7: Lay out the sewing holes

When it is dry, you will see that there is a hollow when the cover is opened glad. The inside leather spine is shorter than the outside and the outside leather forms a small hollow. Measure the width of the inner spine (from the edges of the boards). Cut a piece of board that width as well as a small piece of paper. Make them both taller than the book.



On the paper, you will lay out your sewing holes. First draw as many parallel lines across the width as you have sections.

Next mark out sewing holes, three for each section (we will do a basic 3-hole pamphlet stitch). You don't want all the holes to line up across the spine as that can leave the leather prone to tearing so alternate with slightly different sewing positions.

Hinge the board and paper together and stick the board through the hollow spine with the paper on top of the inside leather. The board is there to protect you from poking through the outer cover leather. Poke through the paper to make the holes in the leather spine.



Step 8: Sewing the signature

Each signature is sewn using a pamphlet stitch directly to the inside spine. The trick to doing that with the leather already on the book is to use two needles (one either end of the thread) and to start from the middle hole, using a paperclip to keep the loop of the thread from pulling through that hole.

Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

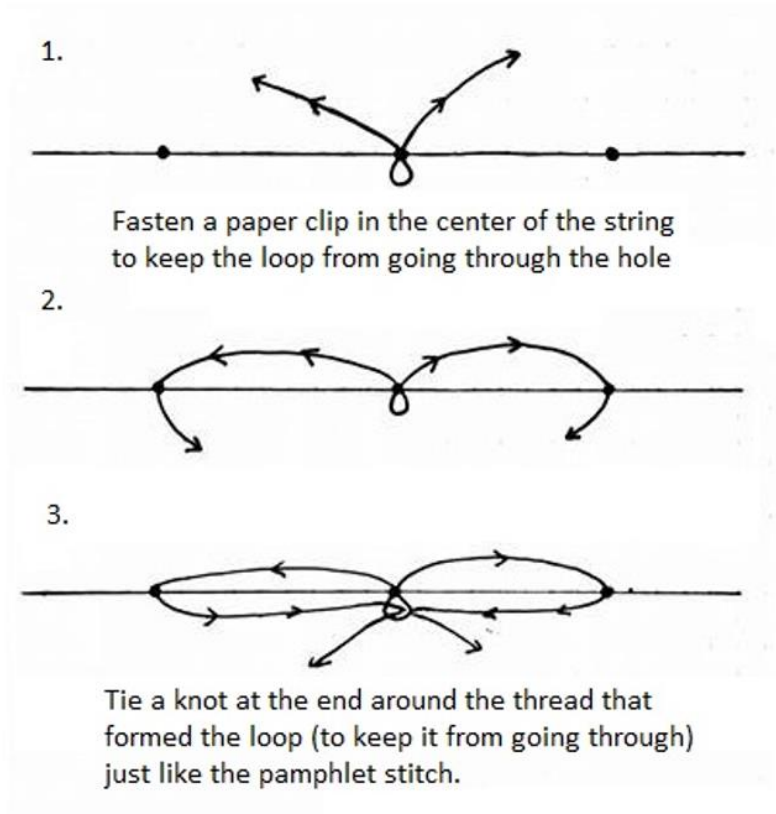


Photo 5



Stitching instructions:

**Reverse Pamphlet Stitch for Miniature Leather Books
from Arielle's Bindery**



Once you've sewn in all the sections you're done! It's a little tricky, the easiest way to do it is put both needles through the center and through the leather spine, hanging out each end. Then put the needles through the leather end holes first, then put the needles through the paper. Rather than doing one side all the way through first, try to do them at the same pace!

Hopefully these instructions are clear enough, please let me know if you have any questions I'd be happy to help! Also, if you do make the book yourself I'd love to see it so feel free to share a picture.

You can contact me at ariellesbindery@gmail.com or through Facebook!

Arielle