

A Tutorial for the Crafting of Easily Made, Pleasantly Rustic Books.

By Richard Paul



Greetings,

In this tutorial I'll show you the method of making your own books, and whilst not up to the enviable standards of the elaborate craftings you might see on etsy, they'll serve you well as notebooks, recipe books, sketch pads or whatever else you might need one for, and they'll be more rewarding and more pleasing to the eye than most of what you'll find in stationary stores. More than that it's a fun and straightforward hobby and a great way to pass the time, especially (at the time of writing) if you're stuck in lock-down thanks to this wretched plague.

Most of the materials you'll need will likely take the form of things you have around the house already, other materials can be obtained easily enough and, in my experience, used for making far more than a single book. Specifically you will need:

- A quantity of good quality A4 paper. (210mm x 297mm)
- Elastic thread and a needle. (Failing this, conventional thread will suffice)
- Fabric to form the cover.
- PVA or fabric glue.
- Strong scissors
- Acrylic or gouache paint

Whilst not essential, you might also wish to use:

- Cardboard, wood or sheet plastic to harden the covers and spine.
- At least one clamp and a sock (I'll explain later)



STAGE ONE

PREPARING THE PAGES

Note: Unless otherwise stated, this tutorial will be for a roughly A6 sized book. (105mmx148mm)

Firstly you'll need to get your paper cut and folded into suitable pages for your book. Take a single sheet, fold it neatly in half widthwise and then split it down the middle. You can cut the paper with scissors or a guillotine if you wish for neat, symmetrical pages or you can tear it if you want a rough, rugged look.

Either way, fold both halves of the paper widthwise again and slide one inside the other. You'll want to have five of these together, made into a makeshift 'booklet' as seen in image one. If you've torn the pages you'll want to have a consistent pattern of one rough edge against one smooth edge to keep a consistent look and feel to your pages.

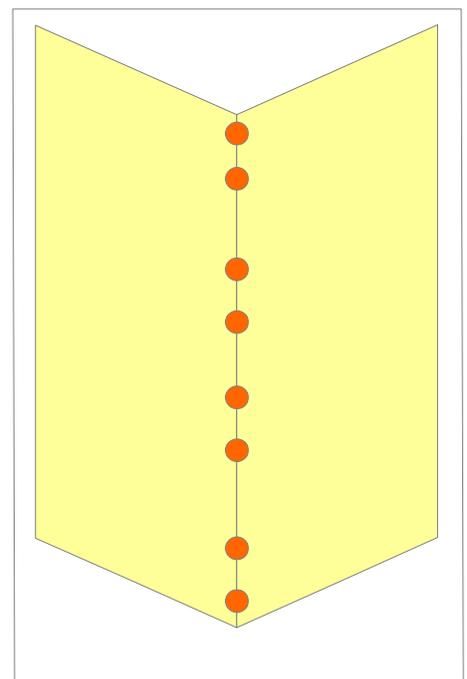
Note: For a larger, A5 book (148mm x 210mm) you need Only fold each A4 sheet once, then put five together to form a booklet

The next step is to take your sewing needle and punch a series of holes through the centre of each sheet in the manner shown in Image two. Rest assured the holes don't need to be so large as indicated, merely large enough for your threads to pass through. These are the holes through which the thread will join one cluster of pages to the next, but we'll come back to that later.

In the meantime you'll ideally want at least ten of these 'booklets' prepared, with holes in consistent positions on each of them. Feel free to add more booklets as you wish to form a book with the desired thickness and number of pages.

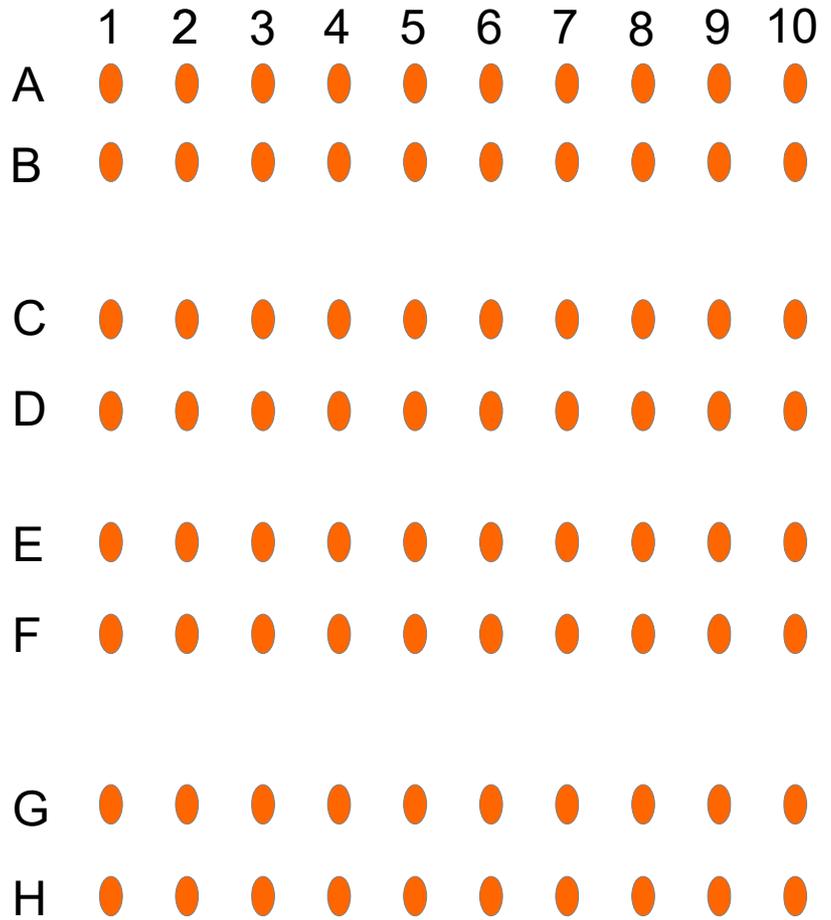


IMG ONE



IMG TWO

FRET NOT: The process of securing your booklets together to form the pages of your finished book is not nearly as complicated as it may seem on this page. Once you're used to the routine, which you should be in short order, you'll be able to do this almost automatically.



With a length of thread sufficient to weave between both row A and row B, thread your needle and move it through hole A1 from the outside (from the outermost booklet) to the inside (innermost booklet), leaving a length emerging from the hole on the outside of roughly two or three inches.

NOTE: With each new hole threaded you'll want to pull the thread and tighten the fastening as much as possible, be careful however not to tear the thread as you do so.

That done, attach each booklet together in the routine outlined below:

A1 to B1 – inside to out.

B1 to B2 – outside to in,

B2 to A2 inside to out

A2 to A1 outside to in (be careful not to interfere with the end of your thread hanging out of A1.

A1 to B1 – inside to out

B1 to B3 – outside to in

B3 to A3 – inside to out

A3 to A2 – outside to in

A2 to B2 – inside to out

B2 to B4 – outside to in

B4 to A4 – inside to out

A4 to A3 – outside to in

A3 to B3 – inside to out

B3 to B5 – outside to in

From here you should begin to see a consistent routine forming. Continue this routine all the way to A10, where you'll want the other end of your thread to emerge. Don't hesitate to run over existing threads at need to have the other end of your thread extending to the outside of A10. If your thread runs up short, you can extend it using another length of thread and as small a knot as possible without any ill effects to the finished book. If your thread gets unworkably twisted and irreparable, throw the entire project out the window in a fit of rage... or else just cut the pestiferous thread away and try again.

You'll want to repeat this process for rows C/D, E/F and G/H, with the ends of your lengths of thread emerging from C1, F1, and H1 on one side, and C10, F10 AND H10 on the other. Don't worry if gaps appear between booklets, these can be amended later on with PVA glue.

Finally, when all the holes have been threaded, you'll need an additional 4 even lengths of thread, each roughly half the size of the others. Add these as follows:

1st thread: B1 – Outside to in / B1 to D1 Inside to out / D1 to B10 Outside to In B10 to D10 Inside to out.

2nd thread B10 Outside to in / B10 to D10 Inside to out / D10 to B1 Outside to in / B1 to D1 Inside to out

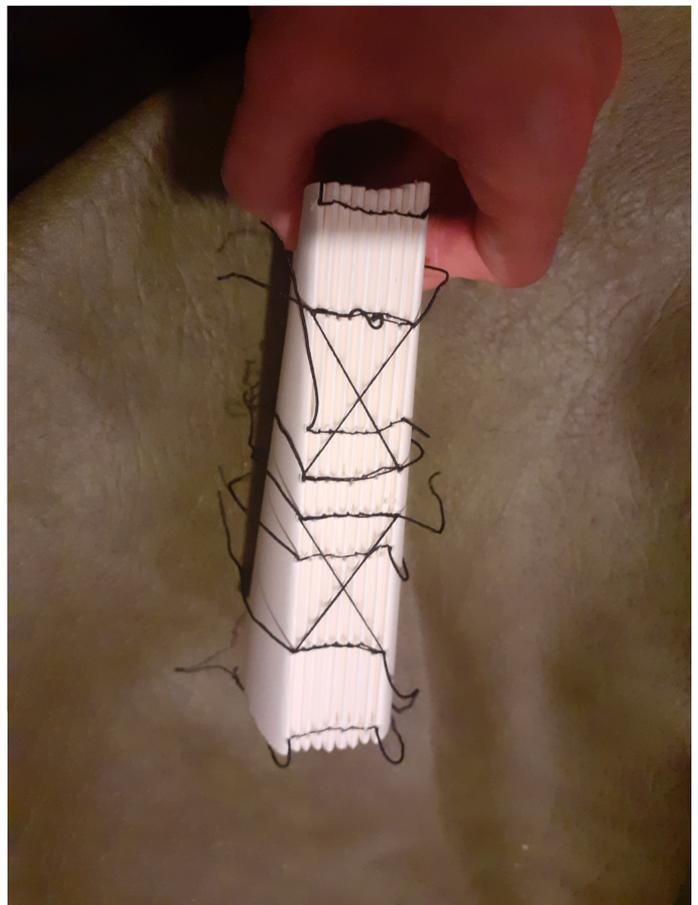
3rd thread: G1 Outside to in / G1 to E1 Inside to out / E1 to G10 Outside to in / G10 to E10 Inside to out

4th thread: G10 Outside to in / G10 to E10 Inside to out / E10 to G1 Outside to in / G1 to E1 Inside to out

This part can get fiddly as existing threads can interfere with each other, be sure to pull any disrupted threads taut if they come loose. When all is done you should have a set of pages resembling images three and four below.



IMG THREE



IMG FOUR

STAGE TWO

THE INNER COVER

Next you'll want to cut out a rectangular length of fabric for your inner cover. Start by opening your bound pages in the centre, to make your book as wide as possible, then place this on the fabric. Close the pages and the fabric around it to give you a sense of how much fabric you'll require to cover the book, initially you'll want some overhang to ensure the pages don't overshoot the cover, so to speak.

Mark the borders of your inner cover and cut out the rectangle. That done, put your pages in the centre of this rectangle, with the side you intend to use for your cover facing inwards. Thread your needle with each extending thread in turn and bring them through the fabric as close to where it touches the outermost booklets and possible, when all the threads are through, pull each adjacent thread as tightly as possible and tie them together, then trim the excess length from the threads so that no straggly bits get in your way later. The end result should resemble image five on the following page. With your inner cover attached, glue the edges of your pages to the inner cover. Be careful not to use too much glue as that might fuse too much of your first and last pages to the cover; also be careful not to let the pages slide away from the cover as this might make for awkward and unsightly gaps. This is where the clamps and socks come in handy, the clamps can hold the paper in place whilst the glue dries and the sock, placed between the clamp and the cover, will prevent any lasting indentations in the cover. See image six on the next page for an example. If you don't have a clamp to hand, careful positioning of the pages, held in place by anything sufficiently heavy, will suffice.

When the pages are firmly fastened in place, trim the edges of the inner cover as required to get the desired shape and size. Furthermore, go through your pages and where you find any gaps between booklets, glue them to the inner cover.

NOTE: This following stage whilst recommended, is not strictly essential.

REINFORCING THE COVER

At this point you'll want to prepare three separate lengths of card, thin wood or sheet plastic. These will be for the spine of your book, along with both covers. You do not want to make these too thick as they'll make for potentially awkward protrusions when it comes to attaching the outer cover, nor do you want to use anything too thin and flimsy as they'll have no discernible effect at all. For my part I find that ordinary cardboard from any art or stationary store will typically suffice.

The spine will want to be slightly smaller than the size as the that created by your booklets attached together, as demonstrated above in image four, the covers pieces should both be as identical as possible and the same size and shape as one page of your book. Align these as shown in images seven and eight below.



IMG FIVE



IMG SIX



IMG SEVEN



IMG EIGHT

THE OUTER COVER

Once your inner cover is cut to size and the glue has dried, there are two options available for attaching the outer cover. The first and simplest is to position the pages and inner cover on the fabric, with the side you intend to be seen facing outwards/downwards. Position the book close to a corner to minimize wastage, then fold the fabric over the book so that you can be sure you'll have enough material for your outer cover. That done, apply glue to the spine and hold or prop the book in position against the fabric until the glue has dried; that done, repeat the process with one of the covers and then the other. When the book is secured, cut around the inner cover and trim as needed to get a consistent and reasonably even shape to your book. Don't worry too much if symmetry eludes you; stage three will cover concealing such trifles. In any case, what you wind up with should resemble image nine below.

The second option is to cut out a second piece of fabric of the required size and sew it to inner cover. This can compound a rustic feel to your book if that's what you're going for, though it is a more cumbersome and time consuming process. Images ten and eleven below show two examples of books made this way.



IMG NINE



IMG ELEVEN



IMG TEN

STAGE THREE

PAINTING AND CONCEALING

Stage three is all about concealing rough edges and other optional extras to finish up your book. Firstly, you'll want to look over the join between the inner and outer covers and apply any required glue to plug any gaps. Once you're satisfied, carefully paint over the edges to conceal any obvious divide between the covers, as shown in image twelve. Acrylic or gouache paint are both good choices for painting fabric, in my experience, and I find that black paint works best for concealing purposes, but at this point we've moved into customization so you can use any colour of your choice.

Another two areas to paint are the top and bottom of the pages, close to the spine where any glue is visible, as shown in image thirteen below, as well as where the inner cover meets the pages down the length of the spine, this latter region is not strictly necessary but if any thread or holes remain visible they can be easily hidden this way.

SANDING PAGE EDGES

If you want to have an aged and rustic look to your book, one idea is to sand or else (carefully) take the edge of your scissors to the pages to wear at the edges. In truth this is best done before the pages are attached to the inner cover, but if you forget as I've been known to do more than once, it can be done now with no real ill effects.

DISCOLOURING PAGE EDGES

Another way to age your pages is to dip a sponge in coffee and lightly dab the edges of the paper. You do not want to do this excessively as coffee can leak down the pages if you're not careful, and an excess of coffee is not good for paper. In moderation however you can achieve a subtle yet effective 'old paper' look quite easily.



IMG TWELVE



IMG THIRTEEN

FINAL WORDS

These are just three simple ideas for finishing off your book, but there are a great many options for adding unique and interesting flourishes and features to your work. As you continue to make them, ideas of your own will occur to you. If you're anything like me, you'll find bookbinding to be a strangely habit forming hobby, whether you have a specific use for home-made books or not. (Seriously, I'm buried alive in these things.)

I hope this tutorial proves helpful for you, and that you have fun with your bookbinding.