

How to Make a Pamphlet

Tools for Bookbinding:



You don't really need much to bind your own books; however there are a few tools that will make the process easier. Start out with the bare minimum, and invest in some other fun gadgets as you progress if you find that you really enjoy making books!



For a pamphlet you'll need:

- Cardstock or other heavy paper for a cover
- 3-4 Sheets of Text-weight paper for the pages
- Something to cut your cover and pages to size – if you don't have a paper cutter you can use a craft knife and cutting mat or even just a pair of scissors.
- A ruler – preferably metal
- A small hole-punch or an awl
- A towel
- Some sort of fiber to sew your pages together. Heavy linen thread is standard for bookbinding, but you can get really creative here. I like using hemp cord for a rustic look, and ribbons are always pretty and you have such a variety to choose from. Yarn or embroidery floss would also work, but be careful that whatever you choose should be strong enough to withstand some wear and tear.
- A tapestry needle to sew it all together
- A bone folder is a nice-to-have item, and they're not expensive at all, but you can get away without one for this project.

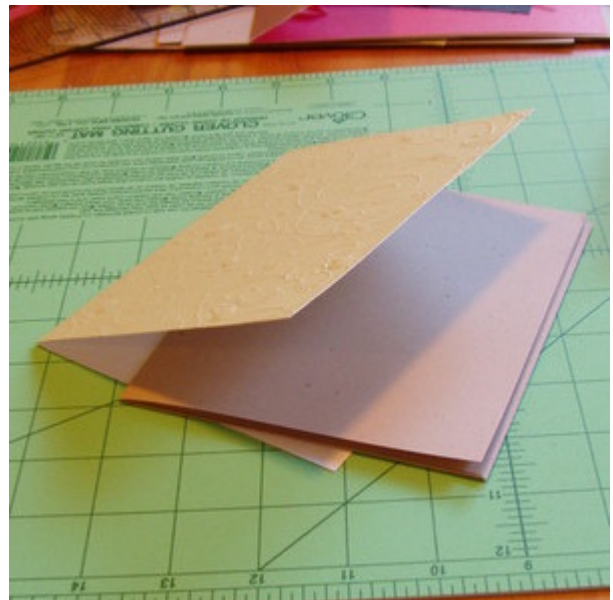
(1) Decide the finished size for your pamphlet. Cut out your cover, making it the height you want x twice the width. Cut out your pages. The dimensions should be 1/8 of an inch shorter x 1/4 inch narrower than your cover.



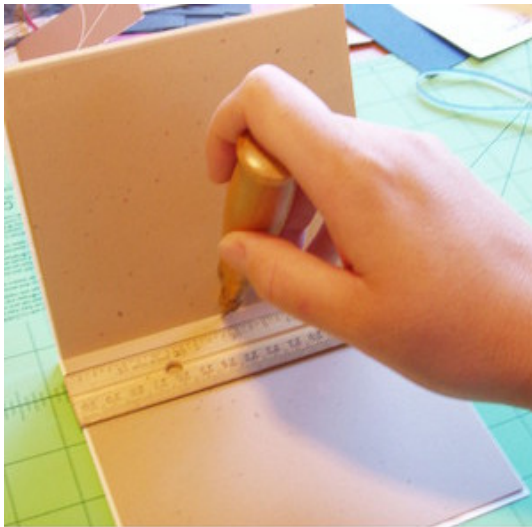
(2) Fold your cover sheet and pages in half, one by one. Here's where a bone folder comes in handy. If you are really accurate and careful, use a ruler and the bone folder to score the center of each sheet and it will fold over nicely. Once the sheet is folded, use the bone folder to really burnish the crease so it's nice and smooth



(3) Assemble your pages together, with the cover on the outside. The cover is slightly larger, so carefully center the pages, with the center folds all matching up to prepare to punch three holes for sewing. Make a mark in the very center, and then make two more marks an equal distance on either side of the center mark. The top and bottom marks should be about 3/4 to 1" from the top and bottom edges.



In bookbinding, the interior pages are arranged into signatures. A signature is a group of pages all folded together. In a pamphlet, you work with just one signature (although I'll show how to make a 2-signature pamphlet once we get through the regular single signature version). A signature shouldn't be more than 3-5 pages, depending on the weight of the paper you use. When you start folding more pages than that together the front edges of the middle pages stick out further than the outer pages. Even with fewer pages, this will happen to some degree. You can even this out with a paper cutter, if you don't like it. I like the handcrafted look of this when it's just a few pages, but if there are too many pages, it starts to look messy and not so nice. Also, having too many pages adds bulk, so your book won't close properly, which is also not nice.

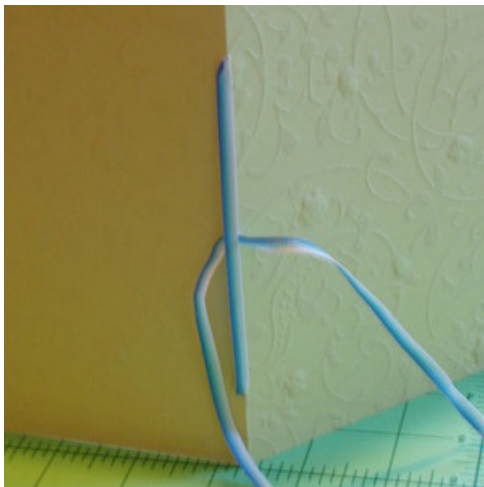
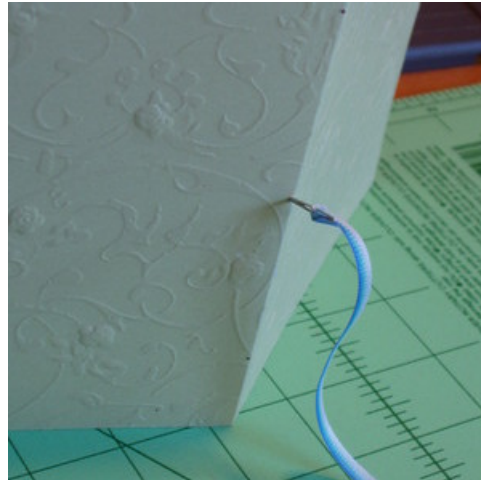


(4) Place your book on top of a folded towel, if you're going to be using an awl, or on a cutting mat if you're using a hole punch. To make a sturdy book, don't make the holes any bigger than the fiber you're using to sew it all together with. For example, if I were going to use linen thread, I'd probably stick with a very small awl. For hemp cord, I usually use the second from the smallest size on my screw punch. Keeping everything lined up, punch or poke away at each of the three marks.

Did you know that paper has a grain, much like fabric? You'll always get a neater fold when your fold is with the grain rather than across it. It's more noticeable with heavier weight papers, but see if you can feel a difference. Take a sheet of paper and bend it cross-wise. Don't crease it, just sort of let it spring back and forth between your fingers and thumb. Now try lengthwise. One direction will have more give and the other will be springier. Could you tell which way the sheet will fold better? The grain on most types of paper runs lengthwise, and you'll get a nicer fold if you use the paper in that direction. Don't worry, though, if you need to fold it crosswise to get the size you need, just use a bone folder and you'll still get a nice fold.



(5) You're almost done, and this is the easy part! Cut a length of whatever fiber you've chosen to use. You'll need twice the distance between the top and bottom holes, plus enough to tie (you can do a bow or a knot, whatever you'd like). Thread your tapestry needle and start sewing:



- a. Go into the middle hole from the outside to the inside, leaving a tail of a few inches.
- b. Come out through the top hole.
- c. Go back into the bottom hole.
- d. Come back out through the middle hole. Arrange the thread so that the tails are on either side of the thread running between the top and bottom holes. Pull it snugly, but carefully, so that it's flat, but doesn't tear through the holes and tie the ends in a square knot (right over left, left over right). Now you can tie a bow, add dangly beads, or just trim it short.



And you just made yourself a book! Now have some fun and make some more.

Cut the cover an inch or two wider and fold it over to make a flap closure. Sew on a button and ribbon to tie your book shut, or cut the flap into a point and cut a slit in the front cover to tuck it in.

Cut the cover a couple inches longer, and fold it up to create a pocket on the inside or outside. Use grommets to close up the pocket edges, or stitch them up on your sewing machine. Here I punched holes and tied it with a ribbon. There are so many things you can do to make your book special.



If you decide to make a larger book, you may want to punch 5 or 7 holes, rather than just 3. Any odd number will work. Just start at the center hole as before, and then come out the hole directly above it, back in through the hole above that and down through the hole under the middle hole. You can also sew your book together in the opposite direction, starting from the middle hole on the inside of the book, and that way your tied off ends will be on the inside.

If you want more pages, there are a couple ways to do a two signature pamphlet. The first is done by cutting the cover a couple inches wider and then folding first in half, with the right sides together, and then folding it back about an inch from the center fold on both sides. Then you just have to tuck each signature into each fold and stitch. For the second option, you'll really want a bone folder. Cut the cover about 1/4 inch wider than your finished book, depending on how heavy the paper you are using for your pages is. Measure from each edge what you want the finished width to be and carefully score at these two points. It's a little trickier to sew everything together, but definitely do-able.

So there is just about all you need to know to bind your own pamphlets. I'd love to see what you come up with, please be sure to either leave a comment on this post or send me an e-mail when you make something! And please feel free to ask me any questions if something isn't clear.

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