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# How to Make Your Own Books



BY HARVEY WEISS Illustrated with Photographs and Drawings

## ***Binding: Stapling and Sewing***

The term 'binding' is sometimes used to describe the cover of a book. For example, you might refer to a book as having a binding of leather, or being bound in linen. But binding also means the act of attaching many pages to one another to produce a book. For example, if you are stapling pages together as described below you are binding a book.

There are several different ways to bind a book. The two most common ones are explained here.

### Stapling

al pages to exactly the same size. Pile them up. Then staple down along one edge. That's all there is to it. The staples may not look very neat and this edge of your book may have a somewhat unfinished look. But this can be easily fixed by pressing on a piece of



cloth adhesive tape over the bound edge. This tape is strong and sticks well. It comes in a roll and can be found in mloth adhesive tape over the bound edge. This tape is stost art or stationery stores. A common brand name is Mystik tape. It comes in various widths and in many beautiful, bright colors. A 2-inch width is best for our purposes. Another way to hide the staples is by attaching a separate cover as explained in the chapter on Covers.

There are two disadvantages to this kind of binding. One is that the finished book will never open up completely. The staples are pinching it closed along the bound edge. You can't lay the book down on a table and have it stay flat unless you hold it down with your hands. The other difficulty is that there is a limit to how many sheets of paper the stapler will fasten. The heavier the paper the fewer sheets you can use.

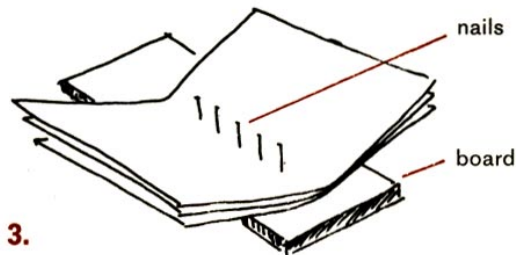
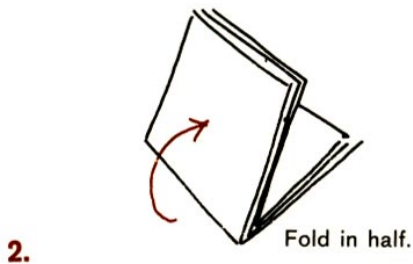
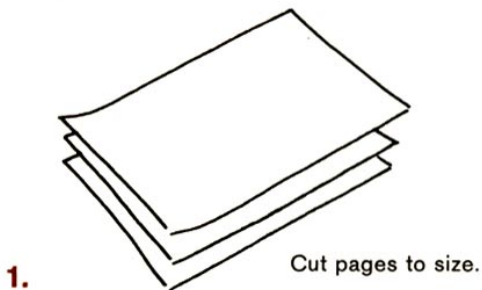
If your book is very small (about 3 inches wide) you can make it out of four-page sections and staple the sections together through the fold. This will take care of the two difficulties, but a 3-inch-wide book has very limited uses. (It is a size for pocket memos, tiny pictures, short poems, etc.) There are special staplers which have a very long arm. These will let you staple through the fold of a normal size book. But such staplers are rather hard to find and not worth buying unless you plan to go into the bookmaking business.

### Sewing

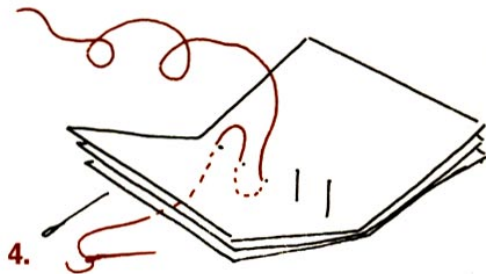
This is a neater and more permanent way to bind a book. It is suitable for a hundred pages or for eight pages. A book that is bound this way is "center-sewn." The drawings on the next page show how it is done.

If you are sewing only a few pages together you can use a plain, heavy, button thread. But if you are binding

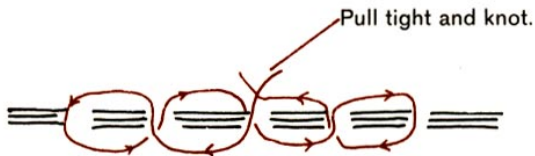
## SEWING A BOOK TOGETHER



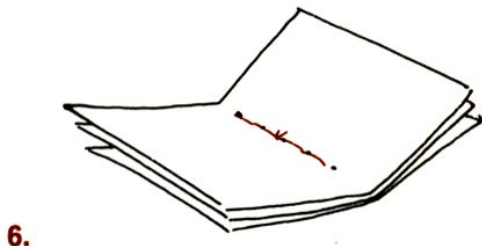
Punch five holes through the fold. The best way to do this is by hammering thin nails through the paper. Use a scrap of wood underneath to protect the top of your work table.



Don't take the nails out until you are ready to run your thread through the holes. This will keep the holes lined up and make the sewing easier.



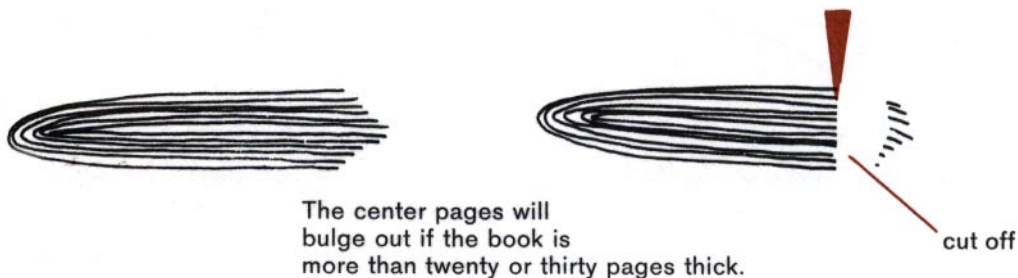
5. This is the path of the thread through the holes. If you are making a small, thin book you can get by with three holes instead of five.



6. Cut off the leftover thread and you have a neat, strong binding.

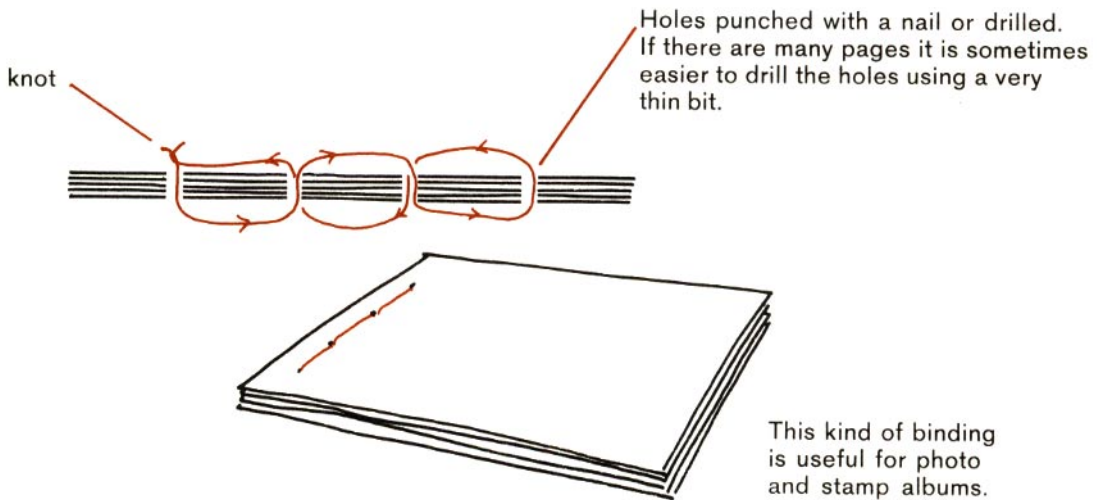
a rather large book, or making a book that you expect will get hard use or using heavy paper it would be a good idea to use a really heavy, strong thread, doubled up if necessary. I have always used a thin, braided nylon fishing line which is called squidding line. It looks nice and is almost unbreakable. Any fisherman is liable to have some. (Three or four feet is enough for several books.) Or you can buy a roll in any sporting goods store. Get the thinnest. (Don't use the glassy-looking monofilament fishing line which is hard to knot.)

When several four-page sections have been sewn together you'll find that the pages which are in the center will tend to project out slightly beyond the outer pages as shown below. This is of no consequence if you are making a book of only twenty or thirty pages. But if your book uses heavy paper and there are many pages you may



prefer the edges flush and even. In this case you will have to do a little trimming. Use a metal ruler and a single-edge razor, or a very sharp knife. Press down hard on the ruler so that the paper won't shift. Take your time and make as many passes with the blade as necessary. This is a rather delicate operation and must be done carefully. But when you are through the entire book will have a neat, professional look and you will no doubt decide it was worth the effort.

It is possible to sew together individual pages, as well as four-page sections. However you can't sew along the centerfold-as there is none. What you must do is punch holes along the edge and then sew the pages together. The result will be something like the edge stapling already described. The drawings show how this kind of binding is done. A book bound like this is said to be "side-sewn."



## *Glueing*

There are many times in the making of books when you will want to do some glueing. Here are some methods that will produce a neat, permanent job.

There are many different kinds of glues and pastes to choose from. A white paper paste, or "library paste," is good for most purposes. It is thick, inexpensive, and available in any five-and-ten-cent or stationery store. It is quite easy to make your own paste. A little flour and water is all you need. Put a couple of spoonfuls of flour in a cup or small bowl. Then slowly add water and stir until you get a thick paste.

A white casein glue such as Elmer's is another good glue. It is more expensive than paper paste but most useful when you are pasting down heavy or nonporous materials. If you wanted to paste down a leaf, or some grass, or a lock of hair, a white casein glue would be the kind to use.

Rubber cement is best avoided because it will stain the paper and isn't very permanent. The very strong glues such as the epoxies or Duco cement are not really intended for use with paper.

When you are pasting down a large piece of paper it is sometimes helpful to thin your glue or paste with a little water. This will let you brush it on more easily and evenly. Use a good-sized brush. A 1- or 2-inch wide paint brush is much better than a delicate little watercolor brush with scruffy bristles.

In general it is best to use the least amount of paste that will do the job. When the paste is applied too heavily it will take a long time to dry and will be more likely to cause wrinkles and buckling.

When you have finished your pasting it is important to place some heavy weights on your book. The more the better. This will help avoid wrinkling. Professional bookbinders have special presses and whenever they have done

any pasting they put the book in the press and keep it there overnight.

Let's take an example of a pasting job and see just how it should be done. Suppose you were making a book of trees, and you had a photograph of a tree clipped from a magazine that you wanted to include in your book. First, trim the clipping to the size you want. Place it face down on a piece of newspaper. Using a good-sized brush spread the paste on the back of the clipping. Then pick it up and lay it in place in the book. Put a piece of clean paper over the clipping and smooth it down. Rub from the center toward the edges to remove any air bubbles. If any paste squeezes out from under the edges wipe it up with a bit of damp rag. Then close the book and pile as much weight on it as possible. Let it dry for an hour or two or overnight.

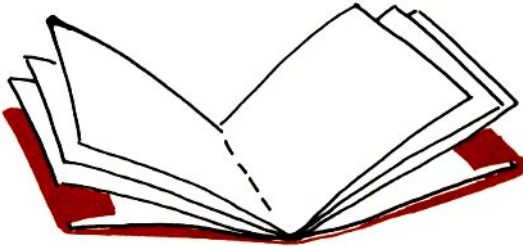
## *Covers*

Any book will be enormously improved if it has some kind of a cover. The cover doesn't have to be cloth or cardboard or particularly heavy. As long as it has a somewhat different appearance from the inside of the book you can consider it a cover. If, for example, you made a twelve-page book using a different color paper for the outside section you would have a cover of sorts. The different color would seem to "frame" the inside and give it a little more importance.

If you have already made a book and then decide



after it is finished to add a cover you can simply cut a piece of paper as shown below and fasten it permanently in place by pasting the flaps of the cover to the front and back of the book.



This kind of cover is made with flaps which are folded over the front and rear pages and held in place with paste.

A handsome cover can be made by using a piece of paper that has a nice pattern on it. Some of the larger art stores carry decorative, printed papers. Or if you rummage around your house you may be able to find printed papers that you like. How about maps, charts, or wallpaper? You can make your own pattern by pasting down on paper clippings from magazines. You can make all over patterns quite simply by printing with a cork or rubber eraser. Put a dab of paint on the cork or eraser, then press it down on your paper.

Sometimes the paper you find may be too thin to make a good cover. A road map, for example, is printed on fairly thin paper, and will also have creases from being folded up. In a case like this you would have to paste it down carefully on another sturdier sheet of paper.

## Hard Covers

A hard cover will make your homemade book look important. It will dress it up as well as give the inside pages some protection. The method for making them shown here is quite simple, but even so you should work slowly and carefully if you want a neat, professional-looking job.

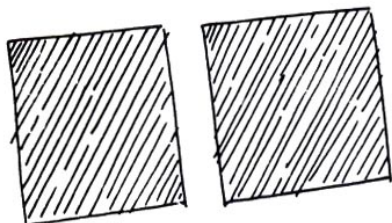
The kind of cardboard you use for the cover is very important. It must be stiff and strong. Shirt cardboard or the cardboard from boxes of store-bought merchandise is usually too thin and flexible. Corrugated board is also to be avoided. Take a look at a regular, hardcover book and notice the stiffness and thickness of the cover. This is what to look for. The cardboard that is used for the backs of large drawing pads is usually suitable and cigar boxes are made of a heavy cardboard that is ideal for our purposes. If all else fails you can buy a heavy cardboard called chipboard at any well-supplied art store.

Because cardboard is not a very good-looking material some kind of paper should be pasted down over it. Any decorative paper of the sort mentioned on the previous page can be used.

The other item you need is some cloth tape, such as Mystik tape. This tape has a strong adhesive on one side, is available in many colors, and comes in several widths. A 2-inch roll is best, though you could get by with a 1&1/2-inch width if nothing else is available. Surgical adhesive tape can also be used. And still another possibility is plain cloth. Sailcloth, heavy cotton duck, canvas, or any similar strong, tough material can be used. A white casein glue, like Elmer's, will hold any cloth like this onto the cardboard.

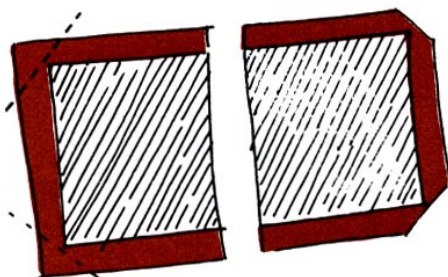
## MAKING HARD COVERS

1.



Cut the cardboard to size. You need one piece for the front, another for the back. Usually the covers of a book are slightly larger than the page size.

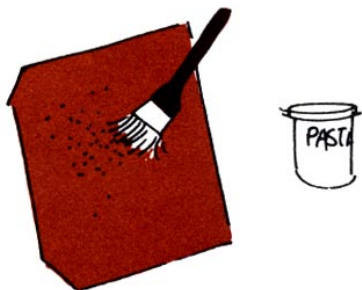
2.



Cut off corners.

Cut your decorative paper  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch wider than the cardboard on three sides.

3.



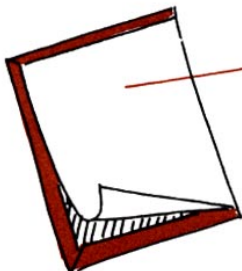
Apply paste generously to the back of the paper, using a good-sized brush.

4.



Place the cardboard on top of the paper. Press down firmly. Fold the extra  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch strip of paper over the edge of the cardboard.

5.



Paste a sheet of white paper over the exposed cardboard.

(Both front and back covers are handled in the same way.)