

Quick Instructions on how to bind a book, sewn onto bands into a hard cover

Approximately 15th century style

Written by Lady Isabell Winter

1. Take the paper you want to use for your book.
2. Fold each leave of paper in half
3. Interfold 6 -8 of these folded leaves into each other to form a quire (collection of pages)
4. Repeat with the number of quires you would like you book to have (6-8 is usually a good number but can have a lot more)
5. Choose how many bands you want to have on the spine of your book.
6. Add the number 2 to the number of bands you want (this is for the kettle stitches at each end of the book),
7. Add one more to this total and then with a piece of paper the same length as the spine of your book on some grid lined paper, count along the total number you came up with and move your piece of paper along that many lines on the grid keeping the top piece of the paper at count 0. (for example if you want 3 bands, your number will be 6 $[3+2+1 = 6]$, if you want 5 bands your number will be 7)
8. Mark on this piece of paper where each y axis line intercepts your paper – these are your sewing points.
9. Use this piece of paper as your template to now pre punch your holes into your quires.
10. Take your first quire, place on a piece of cardboard (or something that you do not mind putting holes into) open to the centre page and put in the template, use an awl to piece thru all the pages. This makes it easier to sew.
11. Repeat with all your quires.
12. Take some linen thread or what you have at hand to sew your pages. It makes things easier if you wax your thread before sewing. I suggest beeswax for this.
13. The length of thread you need is the length of your books spine x the number of quires plus 2 extra lengths of the spine.
14. I suggest using a single needle for your first books, but it is also correct to use two needles in some cases.
15. Tie a figure 8 knot in the end of your thread
16. Mark the fore edge of your quires while they are all collected together – this helps you know which way is the correct way incase you turn your quires over while sewing – also important if using printed material so that it is all sewn up the same way.
17. Starting on the outside of the book at the first hole, thread the needle from the outside spine to the inside of the quire, then thread from the inside to the outside using the next hole down that you have pre punched.
18. When you bring the needle back to the outside of the spine, get your cord that you are sewing over and place in front of the thread, then go over this and put the needle back down the same hole to the inside of the book.
19. Pull tight (make sure not to tight that you pull the thread thru past the figure 8 knot).
20. Repeat this going in and out of the holes down the spine till you reach the last hole (this is known as the kettle stitch stations)
21. When the needle is on the outside of the spine get your second quire, put this beside the one that you have just sewn and pass the needle thru its corresponding hole to the inside of the second quire.
22. Repeat the steps you did with the first quire keeping your thread tight as you work.
23. Once you get to the end of the second quire, tie the thread to the tail that you left from the first quire (after the figure 8 knot).
24. Then get 3rd quire and repeat
25. Once third quire is sewn over the bands, this time before adding the 4th quire you will loop the

- needle under the bridged thread of quires 1 and 2 at the kettle stitch station and then into 4th quire, each time you reach a kettle stitch station now when adding quires you will do this. This knots the quires together by doing a kettle stitch.
26. When you have finished adding your quires, knot your thread to the previous “bridge”. Cut off excess thread.
 27. Sewing is complete.
 28. If you want end bands you will now sew these on over a core (I use leather as a core to sew over)
 29. Starting from the outside spine of the book thread your thread to the inside of the first quire, then up and around the core.
 30. Wrap around the core a couple of times then down thru the inside of the next quire to the spine (this ties it down) then up, around the core a few more times then down thru the next quire.
 31. Keep repeating till you reach the end. Tie off.
 32. Repeat at both ends.
 33. Headbands complete
 34. Prepare your boards for your book.
 35. You can use either wooden boards or pasteboard – both are acceptable for this time period.
 36. Mark approximately 1 cm in from the edge of board on what you want to be the spine edge.
 37. Bring your cords over the board and mark where these lie (or you can use your template that you made for sewing)
 38. make a hole at these points – do the same for the end band cords.
 39. The hole only has to be big enough to put the bands thru. If using wooden boards you could instead drill thru from the spine edge to the inside or outside – there are many different ways to attach the boards.
 40. If using pasteboard glue down the cords on the inside of the board (cover) If using wood you can make a peg to go into the hole to keep it in place so you do not need to use glue.
 41. Repeat with both sides,
 42. Boards attached
 43. To cover your book take leather (or fabric) and cut to the size of your book plus approximately an inch all around. This extra is for turning in around the covers.
 44. If you take some scrap paper and wrap it around your pages this will help protect them from here.
 45. Apply paste to both your leather and your book covers.
 46. Smooth down.
 47. Cut the corners of the leather, cutting off a triangle at each corner.
 48. Turn in the skirting of the leather and press down.
 49. At the spine you will need to cut slits at each side of the book block (group of pages) so that you can turn in the leather over the end bands (if you sewed on end bands.)
 50. Place some baking paper or similar inside your book between the cover and the first pages – this prevents excess paste sticking the pages to the cover.
 51. Put under some weight or in a press
 52. Leave to dry.
 53. If happy with the corners and pasted turn ins of the leather covering, now you can paste down the first page to the cover and last page to the cover.
 54. Put baking paper between first and second pages at both front and back. To prevent them being stuck together.
 55. Put under weight or in a press.
 56. Leave to dry.
 57. Book made, and either ready to read or start writing in if blank. Enjoy.

For more in-depth instructions and photos

How to sew

<http://isabell.paradise.gen.nz/Bookbinding/How%20to%20sew%20a%20book%20block%20.pdf>

How to attach to boards and cover

<http://isabell.paradise.gen.nz/Bookbinding/How%20to%20bind%20a%20basic%20book%20block%20on%20bands.pdf>

Some useful references

Diehl, Edith. 1980. *Bookbinding, Its background and Technique; two volumes bound as one*. Dover Publications. New York.

Harthan, J P. 1950. *Bookbindings*. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Marks, PJM. 1998. *The British library guide to Bookbinding History and techniques*. The British Library Board. ISBN 0 7123 4582 5

Needham, P. 1979. *Twelve Centuries of Bookbindings 400 – 1600*. Pierpont Morgan Library, America. ISBN 0192115804.

Pearson, D. 2004. *English Bookbinding Styles 1450-1800*. Oak Knoll Press. ISBN 0-7123-4828-x

Smith, S. 2001. *Bookbinding 1: A home study course in basic hand bookbinding*. The Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild as part of its Home Study Programme. ISBN 0-9695091-7-0

**Szirmai J A. 1999. *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*. Ashgate, England. ISBN 978-0-85967-904-6

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/32989680/The-Archaeology-of-Medieval-Bookbinding-—By-John-A-Szirmai>

**Vervliet, H D. 1972. *The Book thru Five Thousand years*. Phaidon Press, London. ISBN 0714815335

A guide to the Census of Western Medieval Bookbinding Structures to 1500 in British Libraries. 1998. British Census Project.

**Extremely useful and highly recommended.