

BOOK ART STUDIO HANDBOOK



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TECHNIQUES AND METHODS FOR BINDING BOOKS, CREATING
ALBUMS, MAKING BOXES AND ENCLOSURES, AND MORE

STACIE DOLIN AND AMY LAPIDOW



BOOK ART STUDIO HANDBOOK

Techniques and Methods for Binding Books, Creating Albums,
Making Boxes and Enclosures, and More


Stacie Dolin & Amy Lapidow



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For AMR – Amy, For DLH – Stacie



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Friend-of-a-Friend Book,
Stacie Dolin.

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Travel Journals,
Amy Lapidow.



Introduction

Welcome to *Book Art Studio Handbook*! This primer covers the fundamentals

of creating books and related objects by hand. Basic tools and materials are described, as well as the essential techniques and concepts to use them effectively.

This guide will show you that you can create interesting work with minimal equipment, a little bit of time, and a dose of imagination. We will teach you the skills you need to make beautiful, structurally sound books to house photographs, writing, illustrations, and much more. You can easily alter the structures we describe to accommodate a variety of content. And all of the books featured in this primer are easy to make without the use of large equipment.

While making the projects, refer to the introductory sections on materials, tools, and techniques to become adept in their use. Understanding the materials on hand and accommodating them accordingly will minimize later problems with the structures. Having the right tools

for the job will make things much easier, and will aid in your mastery of the techniques and fine hand skills described; practice using these things together in order to hone your fine hand skills.

Each section is fully illustrated to enhance the step-by-step instructions. Look at the tip boxes for extra pieces of advice. The gallery photos at the beginning of each project will show you variations to spur ideas. Mix, match, and combine ideas or techniques from one project to another. Be patient and have fun!

Additional pieces in the gallery pages will inspire you with ideas of what you can do with these techniques. Experiment with materials that inspire you and make the book your own.

Have fun! Make books!

– *Stacie and Amy*

Some book artists use a sewing frame to keep tapes taut, but it isn't necessary.

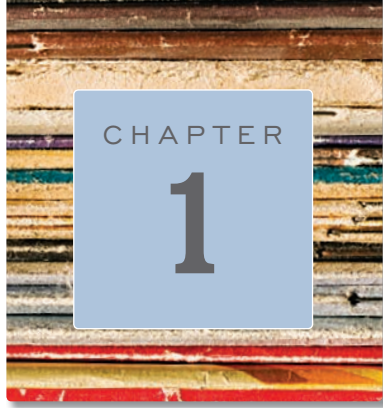






PART
1

Getting Started



Planning Your Studio

Welcome to your book art studio! Before you get started, consider where you will work and gather the supplies you will use regularly. Having everything in place will set the stage for many happy hours of bookbinding experimentation.

The following sections will give you an overview of how to create your workspace, what materials you should have on hand, the basic tools you will need, and how to use them. The information we provide here encompasses the fundamentals that are used in every project no matter how advanced the bookbinder's skills. As your skills expand, the types of materials you use can expand as well, and you can add more specialized equipment.

Keep a variety of both handmade and commercial decorative papers on hand to personalize your books.



Create Your Workspace

It is important to have a clean, dedicated, well-lit workspace. A sturdy countertop is perfect, as many things are done while standing, and working at a table while standing can lead to back and wrist pain. There are varying opinions as to what is a good height for a working table. The average is waist height or where your hands can work easily with your elbows bent. We tend to do everything standing, except sewing, so the task is in complete view from above. Experiment and see what is the most comfortable for you. An ample amount of overhead and/or natural light is best, while an adjustable task lamp can be useful when working on more detailed projects.

You can scale your workspace to the space you have. We know bookbinders who work in large studios and bookbinders who work in a dedicated corner of their kitchen.

Having things easily accessible is important as well. It's frustrating to not have an extra piece of waste paper on hand when gluing things up, for example, and having to look for press boards while things are drying can cause warping. Label boxes and folders so that you can find things easily. Art bins or organizational products that are easily found in craft stores work very well.

BASIC SUPPLIES

Here are a few of the consumable supplies you'll be choosing for each project in this book. Most can be found at general art stores, or at the specialty suppliers in the back of this book (see Resources on page 152).

PAPER

Paper is measured by weight, in either pounds or grams. As you work with your favorite papers, it will become easier for you to tell what works best. Think about the project and what would be the best characteristics to have in the paper.

Is it text paper or for the cover? Should it be able to fold? Is it good for writing in ink, pencil, or fountain pen? Choose paper that suits the book's needs. Is longevity an issue? Look for something that is archival so that it will not degrade or have an adverse effect on the items within. A medium-weight paper might be best. Are you making a sketchbook? Try watercolor paper. Text paper around 70 lb. text (measured by pounds per ream or 500 sheets)/90 gsm (grams per square meter, the actual weight of the sheet) for the interior of the book, or text block, is a good all-around paper weight. We use Mohawk Superfine 70 lb. text (104 gsm) for most textblock paper.

For cover papers, keep a variety of decorative papers on hand. These should also be able to fold and should not crack or break. Very thick paper might be hard to glue down, and papers that are too light allow the glue to come through and stain. Try a medium-weight paper to start. Canson Mi-Teintes is a good all-around paper that comes in many colors and is easy to find.

There are so many patterns available in decorated papers that there is something for everyone. Some even have inclusions—bits of things like flowers or colored fibers embedded in them. Papers also come from every part of the world. It is fun just to look at all the possibilities and imagine what you can make with them. In the beginning, try not to get paper that will be difficult to handle when glue is applied. They are very pretty and hard to resist, but since they are *very* lightweight they turn into something like a wet paper towel once glue is brushed on.

Keep a variety of undecorated colored papers around as well. It is nice to have a solid color to complement something decorated. A medium weight is the most versatile.

The best way to choose a paper is to go to the store and touch it. Will it do what you need it to do for the project?

And finally, stock up on waste paper: newsprint, old photocopy/printer paper, and the like. Use it to glue on, so as not to make a mess in your work area.

BOARD

Most board is labeled as archival, which is good in terms of longevity. If it is not labeled archival or acid-free, assume it is not. Consider the project to decide whether something that is not archival is appropriate. Board is measured using the point system; each point is one one-thousandth of an inch. In binder's board, a thin board would be listed as .067 or .070 pt. A thick board would be more like .098 pt.

The projects in this book use these boards:

- .040 pt. or 4-ply mat board (easy to find, comes in a variety of colors, and nice on thinner books)
- .070 pt. board (light binder's board with a good all-around thickness)
- .010 pt. board (folder stock)
- .020 pt. board (2-ply or card stock)

BOOK CLOTH

Book cloth is either starched, so it's forgiving and easy to work with, or it can be backed with paper, which means it's easily stained but very good looking. It is also possible to make book cloth from regular fabric and to back it with a Japanese paper or iron-on fusible interfacing.

ADHESIVES

You have two primary options for glue: PVA (polyvinyl acetate) and wheat paste. PVA is a white glue that dries clear. It's acid-free, and it *stains*. It will come off tools, but not the book or your clothing. (The reversible type does come out of clothes.)

Wheat paste, which you can get in instant or cooked form, dries clear, does not stain, and is reversible with water. It is slow to dry.

You will also need some double-sided tape.

THREAD

Unwaxed linen sewing thread, which you will see in many projects, is measured by the number of strands that make up the cord and the number of twists per inch. The larger the number, the more twists, and the



Book cloth is starched or paper-backed and ideal for bookmaking, and available in a variety of colors and patterns.

thinner the thread. A thread made up of two strands or regular sewing thread is not strong enough for bookbinding. The projects in this book use these threads:

- 25/3 (three strands, twisted 25 times per inch; a medium-thin thread)
- 18/3 (three strands, twisted 18 times per inch; a thicker thread)

OTHER SUPPLIES

Other supplies used in the projects in this book include hemp or linen cord, beads, buttons, Velcro buttons, and ribbon. Be creative!



A selection of awls, most often used for punching holes

Basic Equipment to Have on Hand

Here are some of the tools you'll need to get started. Keeping these tools in stock and organized is the first step toward creating professional-quality books.

APRON

Some bookbinding techniques can get messy, and as mentioned earlier, PVA glue does not come out of clothing. A bib-front apron will ensure that your clothing does not get dirty. And an apron pocket is useful for tucking away frequently used tools so that they do not get lost on your workbench.

BOOKBINDING AWL, CERAMICS NEEDLE TOOL, OR PIN VISE

You can use your bookbinding awl to punch sewing stations into a textblock. You can also use it as a marking tool. Choose something thin and tapered, and with a sturdy point. The point can often be adjusted or changed on these tools depending on how you will use them.

BEESWAX

Beeswax is used on thread to discourage it from fraying, twisting, and knotting. It is also used to create a sheen and to smooth out hand-decorated papers when burnished with a bone folder. To wax a piece of thread in preparation for sewing, run the thread over the beeswax once or twice, sliding it under your thumb while pressing it to the wax. Microcrystalline, a synthetic wax, can also be used.



There are a variety of bone folders available—find the one that's right for you!

BONE FOLDER

Bone folders are made of cow bone, though you can also find versions made of antler, agate, or horn. Teflon folders are also available, and they are more flexible than the aforementioned types. Bone folders are used for many purposes, such as scoring a fold, making a crease, or folding paper over a board edge. Your bone folder will become almost an extension of your hand. Modify a real bone folder with wet/dry sandpaper to make a sharper point or a creasing edge as desired.

TIP Modify Your Bone Folder

To give your bone folder a sharper point or edge, which will allow it to make sharper creases, we recommend that you modify it using wet/dry sandpaper. Align the edge of the folder to your sandpaper and drag it toward you in a smooth motion, as shown here. *Do not* modify a Teflon folder with sandpaper. Those can be carved to a desired shape instead.



Keep a variety of glue and paste brushes on hand so that you always have the size and type you need.

BRUSHES

It is good to have a variety of glue and paste brushes in assorted sizes: round, flat, big, and small. Use the largest brush possible in comparison to the size of the item you're gluing; that way the glue will not have dried by the time you have covered the surface of the item with adhesive. Use a synthetic brush for synthetic adhesives and a natural brush for natural adhesives.

Keep the brushes very clean or they will not last very long. Brush soap is available at art stores; it nourishes the bristles. However, any mild soap will work. Keep the brushes in use in a jar or glass with water just up to the top of the bristles. To prevent spills and drips from getting on your work, put the water jar in a cake tin or on a tray.



A collection of dividers for measuring and marking

DIVIDERS

Dividers are useful for measuring without a ruler. You can also use them as marking tools.

ERASERS

Pink Pearl or white vinyl erasers are good general-use erasers. If you're erasing on black paper, consider using a black eraser so that there are no streaks. Always use erasers with care on fragile papers, as they may cause pilling or streaking. And always test your erasers on a waste piece of the paper you will be using them on. Stroke your eraser from the inside, not up and down.

FENCES

Fences are moisture barriers that you can put between anything that has been glued and the rest of the book—for example, between a cover and the text-block, or between pages. A fence is necessary so that after gluing or pasting, the rest of the book does not get wet and warp because moisture was introduced

to it. Just slide a piece of .010 or .020 pt. board (light board or folder stock) between what was glued and what should be kept dry. Let the item sit under a weight with the fence in it until it is dry. Waxed paper or butcher's paper can also be used.

GLUE CONTAINER

Use a plastic or glass container with a tight-fitting lid to store small amounts of glue dispensed from a larger container. For screw lids, put a layer of waxed paper on top of the container before putting on the lid. When the glue is used up, leave the container open to let the remaining bits of glue air-dry. The dried glue will then peel off the container.

HAND DRILL

A hand drill is not used often, but it is helpful for drilling through board, or through a large stack of paper.

MAT KNIVES

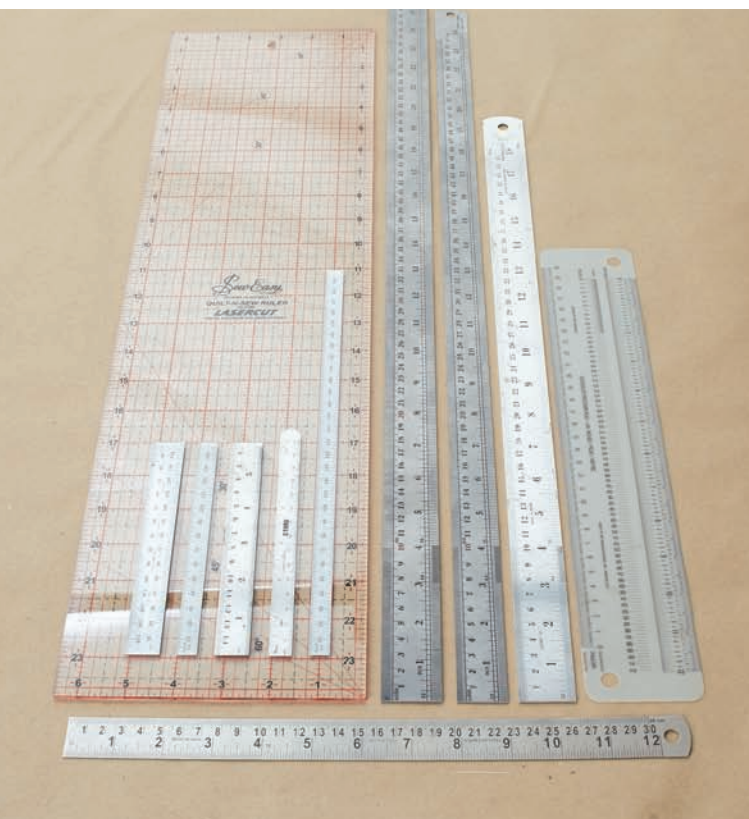
You'll need both big and small knives. We favor Olfa brand knives because each blade has multiple segments, so you can break off the top segment to form a new edge. You should do this quite often, as a sharp blade is much more efficient than a dull one. Also, these knives have a flat profile, so the handle does not get in the way of cutting, thereby skewing your measurements. We also recommend X-Acto brand knives, which are easier to manipulate when doing delicate work or cutting curves.

PENCIL

A mechanical pencil is best, as it is always sharp. Mark lightly so that the lines are easy to erase.

RULERS

You will use your ruler as a measuring device, and as a straightedge along which to make cuts. It should be rather rigid. Get a ruler without cork backing. Although cork backing may be a useful slip guard, the point of the knife can slip underneath the gap between the metal and the paper, skewing your cuts.



ABOVE TOP Stock both large and small knives.

ABOVE BOTTOM An assortment of rulers of different lengths and widths

When choosing a ruler, get one that has the increment lines engraved; that way, if the ink wears off, the ruler is still usable. Also, make sure the measurement starts at the end of the ruler. It becomes confusing very quickly when the increments are inset.

The metric system is easier to use in the long term than the imperial system. Although it might seem confusing at first if you aren't familiar with it, the metric system is really as easy as counting up to ten. There are ten millimeters in one centimeter. The small increment lines are millimeters; the large ones are centimeters. The measurements provided for the projects are not exact conversions between metric and imperial. We have provided numbers that make sense.

NEEDLES

Stock up on #8 milliner's or #18 sharp bookbinder's needles; they have large eyes and can fit the most common bookbinding threads. Crewel or sharps can also be used. Look for needles with an eye that is close to the size of the shaft of the needle.

90-DEGREE TRIANGLE

Make sure your triangle has a cutting edge and a grid. This is a great tool to use to align and cut papers, while making sure everything is square.

PAPER TOWELS

Keeping everything clean is a constant challenge. You can use a damp paper towel or cloth that you won't mind getting messy to wipe off sticky fingers.

PRESS BOARDS

Press boards are used with a weight to keep items flat while drying. Make your press boards out of plywood, and cut them into either rectangles or squares, that are larger than the item you are making; 12" × 12" (30.5 × 30.5 cm) and 12" × 14" (30.5 × 35.5 cm) are useful sizes. Line your press boards with clean, smooth binder's board and masking tape. Replace your press boards whenever they get messy. They are for pressing only; do not cut on them, because any cut mark on the lining will emboss on the work you press.