

INTRODUCTION TO BOOKBINDING

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BASIC BOOKBINDING TOOLKIT

Not every bookbinding project requires all of these tools, but this is a good basic list.

- *Bone Folder* – Used for scoring and folding paper. You can also use the handle of a pen or pencil, an unridged butter knife, or a wooden tool used for ceramics.
- *Bookbinder's Awl* – For punching holes in your signatures (folded pages) and covers. You can also use a potter's needle used in ceramics (I've used Kemper brand), or an embroidery needle strong enough to poke through several sheets of paper.
- *Scrap Cardboard or Phone Books* – You can use scraps of thick cardboard or mat board to protect the table from being poked by the awl. If you have phone books or thick catalogs available, simply open up the book and nestle your open pages along the inside, then poke your awl directly downward through the paper. The book/catalog protects the table from being poked.
- *Needles* – Embroidery needles or needles with eyes large enough for your thread. You can buy special bookbinding needles, but the embroidery needles work just fine and are cheaper.
- *Beeswax* – Strengthens your thread and makes it easier to work with and tie knots.
- *Thread* – Bookbinding thread is usually made of linen and is quite strong. Wax it yourself with a piece of beeswax or buy pre-waxed thread, which is thicker and useful for decorative stitching. Bookbinding thread comes in different weights, and lower numbers signify thicker thread (for example 12/3 is thicker than 18/3). You can also use embroidery thread, ribbon, etc. to sew with, but test it to see that it doesn't stretch too much or you will end up with a loose book!
- *Glue or Paste* – PVA glue is a white glue that stays flexible after it dries. You can also just use Elmer's glue. If you need your glue to stay open (wet) longer, you can add wheat or rice paste, or methylcellulose which come in powdered form. I also like to use Nori paste, which you can buy at Plaza or online. You can easily make your own wheat or rice paste which requires cooking. Store these in the fridge to maximize shelf-life.
- *Glue Brush* – Basically a brush to spread on glue. You can find cheap brushes at the hardware store. If you want to get fancy, get a nice round brush, 1" or larger.
- *Glue Stick* – This will work for gluing thin papers, but you'll want PVA for anything thicker or if you need a stronger bond.
- *Book Board* – Binder's board comes in various thicknesses. If you're concerned with the longevity of your books, choose acid-free or archival quality boards. Davey Board is very hard and durable, but also harder to cut when you're making your books at home. Mat board also works well, and you can find acid-free mats.

- *Utility knife* – Razors come in handy for cutting down papers. Always use a cutting surface underneath, such as a piece of mat board or a self-healing mat. It protects your work surface and keep your blades from getting dull.
- *Binder or Bulldog Clips* – Used to hold your book block together while punching holes or sewing.
- *Right Angle* – Very useful for squaring your book board and papers.
- *Scissors, Ruler, Pencils*
- *Scrap paper, Newspaper, or Newsprint* – Place this on the table to protect it from glue.

WHERE TO BUY BOOKBINDING MATERIALS

RETAIL LOCATIONS

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Plaza Art Materials | 927 West Grace Street
Richmond, VA 23220
(804) 359-5900
A good art store |
| Lindenmeyr Munroe | 2171 Tomlyn Street
Richmond, VA 23230
(804)-354-9795
You can find a large selection of text and cover weight papers here. |
| Scrap RVA | 119 W Brookland Park Blvd
Richmond, VA 23222
(804) 525-9060
https://scraprva.org/
Ever-changing supply of reused art and craft materials |
| Clayworks Supplies | 2277 Dabney Road
Suite F
Richmond, VA 23230
(804) 918-7722
You can find carving tools which can work like bone folders, and a potter's needle that can be used as an awl. |

Craft stores such as Michael's, AC Moore, and Jo-Ann Fabrics and Crafts will sell decorative papers, needles, threads, and embellishments, though you will have to check how extensive their selection of bookbinding tools is.

ONLINE

Talas

www.talasonline.com

Talas carries a huge range of bookbinding and conservators materials at good prices.

Hollanders

www.hollanders.com

More expensive than Talas, but they have a good selection of tools and decorative papers.

Blick Art Materials

www.dickblick.com

Huge array of art materials at discounted prices, plus low shipping costs. Their bookbinding selection is not extensive, but shop around and see what you can find.

Art Paper

www.artpaper.com

This is where I bought my waxed threads from.

New York Central Art Supply

www.nycentralartsupply.com

New York Central's paper department stocks the most extensive paper selection I've ever seen – decoratives, handmades, printmaking, watercolor, and papers from around the world. Their website is not pictorial, so you must order a catalog and swatchbooks in order to see samples.

French Paper Company

www.frenchpaper.com

Huge selection of 100% recycled text and cover weight papers in a variety of beautiful colors.

BOOKS

Just a sampling of some books that I find to be valuable for the beginning and intermediate bookbinder. There are also many great tutorials and images online to provide instruction and inspiration. YouTube.com has video tutorials, and I also like looking through Flickr.com for different ideas.

Cover to Cover: Creative Techniques for Making Beautiful Books, Journals and Albums by Shereen LaPlantz

The first bookbinding book I bought, and one of my favorites. Covers a variety of structures and techniques for making blank books and artists books and has beautiful photographs.

Creating Handmade Books by Alisa Golden

A good book for a beginner, covers many structures and has lots of photographs for inspiration, plus some ideas for decorating papers.

How to Make Books by Esther K. Smith

A fun and funky book on how to create unique books.

Non-Adhesive Binding: Books Without Paste or Glue by Keith Smith

Great textbook-like primer on basic bookmaking structures (without using glue, hence the title). The text is a bit dry, but it is invaluable for the variety of techniques and very clear diagrams. For those who want to continue with decorative sewn bindings, I recommend *Volume II: 1, 2, and 3 Section Sewings* and *Volume III: Exposed Spine Sewings*. You can also order these books directly from the artist at his website <http://www.keithsmithbooks.com/>

Japanese Bookbinding by Kojiro Ikegami

An easy-to-follow book on traditional Japanese bookbinding and boxes – simple and elegant.

Books, Boxes, and Portfolios: Binding, Construct and Design, Step by Step by Franz Zeier

A good bookbinding primer, with useful chapters on how to make boxes and portfolio cases - particularly valuable for artists who want to store and present their art in a beautiful manner.

Creative Bookbinding by Pauline Johnson

An older book published in 1963, with black and white photographs which covers basic bookbinding structures. I particularly like this book because it goes into different ways of decorating papers yourself using printing, stamping, dyeing, and marbling.

Eco Books: Inventive Projects from the Recycling Bin by Terry Taylor

Re-Bound: Creating Handmade Books from Recycled & Repurposed Materials by Jeannine Stein

These two are great for ideas to re-use and re-purpose found materials to make books.

ONLINE

<http://cailun.info> – Paper and bookmaking blog, good for inspiration and it has some tutorials.

<http://www.tjbookarts.com/otherlinks.htm> - Links to tutorials galore! (some links are broken.)

<http://www.outofbinding.com/index.htm> - Very visual website, lots of unusual ideas

<http://myhandboundbooks.blogspot.com> – Neat books and a few very simple tutorials. She uses a lot of leather and recycled materials.

<http://inward-bound.us> – Tutorials for a case-bound book and clamshell box.