
Embroidered Leather Cuffs with Elke Bergeron

Chapter 1 - Embroidered Leather Cuffs

Overview

(gentle music) - Hi, my name is Elke Bergeron, and I'm the owner and designer of a small handbag and accessories company called by elke. In this class we're going to learn how to cut the leather, bevel the edges, paint it, dye it, and finish it. This is a great project for learning basic leather skills.

Materials

- The materials we'll need for this class are natural vege-tanned leather. It's a belting quality. It's about eight to nine ounces, which refers to the thickness of the leather. This is one of the materials that you'd really like to go to the store and touch yourself, because they come in different densities, thicknesses, qualities, and you want something that feels really nice and soft and supple. It is very difficult to buy online, I would say, because you don't really know what you're getting until it comes in the mail. We'll also need a PolyBoard. We have a lot of specific leather tools here. We have a strap cutter, an edge burnisher, an end punch, a screwdriver, an edge beveler. This is a small awl. This is a leather punches that comse with all different tip sizes that will swap out depending on what we're using it for. Here's an extra end punch, leather punch to make a key hole. We'll have an ironing cloth, some leather dye, the acrylic finish for the dye process, paint, water, paintbrush, sponge, a poly hammer, a lighter, masking tape, poly cord, button studs, rotary cutter, wool dabbers, and iron to seal the paint. All these tools may look overwhelming, but don't forget that you can refer to the PDF that's attached for all the details and sizes that you'll need.

Cutting, dyeing, varnishing and finishing leather

- The first step is to take a strap cutter, which we've taken apart here so I can show you how to put it together properly. The strap cutter comes in three pieces. You have your handle, you have this metal bit, and you have the ruler and cutting blade. The first step is to take the metal disc, which has a hole in the middle, and you're going to place it over the screw inside the handle, upside down so it fits nicely. Then you'll take your ruler, the stick that will go inside, which has a blade fit at the end, and that's what's gonna cut your leather. You're going to slide that under the disc. Once you have it in place, you can find your measurement on the ruler, and for this project we're going to use a half an inch. So, the half inch mark, there's a full inch. We're going to move it on the ruler to the half inch place there, and balance it on your fingers, 'cause it's gonna wanna fall out, maybe. And then tighten the top nice and tight. Now it's stuck and it's all one piece. I'm gonna grab my leather in my left hand and I'm gonna pull with my right. But if you're naturally a lefty, you can just swap sides, it doesn't make any difference. You'll fit the leather right up to the edge of the handle and slide it between the two sticks. You have to give it a little bit of, you have to use a little bit of strength to wiggle it through in the beginning, but you'll see the tip is starting to come through and it's split evenly. So, as soon as you pull it, let me move this, pull it enough, you might want to pull it out there, to get a good handle on it... Let's see, we'll pull it down. I like to put the strap cutter on the surface of the table. To me, that's more steady. I then hold it with one hand and you keep it, as you're pulling it or pushing it through, make sure that the edge stays along the side of the strap cutter so you get a really nice clean line of exactly half an inch, and it doesn't get all wobbly. So there we have a nice strap cut. In order to cut your leather and start with your strap cutter, you're

gonna need a nice, straight, clean edge. You can take a rotary cutter and a ruler and make a straight edge on your leather if it's not already straight. Cause you can buy them, also, already in long strips, and then cut them to the length and the width that that you would like. To make any punches or cuts on your leather, you're going to need a polyboard so you don't damage the table underneath. This one was just handmade from a scrap that I had left over, but you can easily go to a thrift store or a secondhand place and try and get an old poly cutting board. They're perfect for doing all your punching for the leather. To make the ends the right length of what we want, we're going to use an end punch. You can do this two different ways. This is a leather tool, these can be pretty expensive. You could also use a rotary cutter in the place. We'll give an example of using both ways. The end punch, you take your strap, you lay it towards you, and you'll place it right in the center. You kind of just eyeball how the shape is because you can see it from this side. For striking the spike on the leather, for either punches or end punches, you're going to want to use a poly hammer so that you don't shatter any metal pieces into your eyes or into your face. So, you very carefully give it a couple whacks and your end now has a really nice shaped pointed on it. We'll give the example of how to use the rotary cutter because this tool is not always available to everybody. I like to make my bracelets eight inches long. Basically, you can take the measurement of your wrist and add a good inch to the end and that will have a nice fit once the ends double over. This is the eight inches, let me move it down one more. There we go, and I'll show you how to use the rotary cutter. We're just gonna cut off the end, really simply, and we'll create the same type of shape by just bevelling off the edges, which comes out really nice. And once it's all finished and bevelled, it will have a great shape to it, as well. If you'd like a natural colored bracelet and you don't wanna change the color, at this point you would go straight into bevelling the edges. Before we're gonna add any finishing of the edges, we're going to dye it. You can take a wool dauber, dip it into your dye, and this one is a blue color, but it comes in many, many different colors, so you can pick any color that you would like. You want to kind of keep your hands a little bit of way and move in directional strokes, just in one direction. And I like to give it a nice couple coats just to make sure it's fully covered. Go ahead and let this dry for a couple of hours. If you want it a little bit darker, you can always add more dye on top until you get the right color. I already have a dry one here, so we're going to take our acrylic finish to seal the dye so it doesn't come running off on your skin or your clothes. We take another wool dauber, dip it into the acrylic, and do the same process that we did with the dye. You don't want it to go on too thick, and you really don't wanna overlap the strokes too much. You're gonna go in one direction and just try and clean up any parts that got too thick and then just leave it alone, and again, let it dry. The acrylic finish dries much quicker than the dyes. Let your varnish dry, it'll take about 20 minutes. I already have a dry sample here. We're going to use a bevelling tool on the edges. The beveller comes in many different sizes. It's referred to by numbers. You have twos, threes, and fours. For the edge bevellers, you're going to want to use a number three or a number four. For a heavier or thicker leather, it'll take out a bigger gouge on the side. And for a thinner leather, you're going to need maybe a number one or a number two. We're going to bevel the edges to give them a more rounded shape, and it also gives it a really nice clean line where the paint is. You're going to want to hold your beveller at a 45 degree angle. We'll start with the straight edge. And you gently put your fingers to hold your strap steady and you push, little by little with your right hand. Sometimes it does not come off all in one go. This step definitely takes practice. If you start seeing a little wobbly bits, you can always go back and kind of put your... And clean it up. And now that's much straighter. The bevelling technique, particularly, takes a lot of practice. You're going to want to maybe find some scrap leather on hand, whether it's from an old belt, something

you can find at the thrift store, put it through your strap cutter and try bevelling the edges before you actually go on to your final project, because it is something that your hand really has to learn. It's a memory skill. You're going to want to just bevel as much scrap or anything around as you can. After you finish your first edge, you're going to keep going around. You'll go around all the points, including the tips. Which sometimes can be tricky, you just have to slow down and just take it easy, and sometimes that takes more than one swipe. So, hold it firmly, press down, move all the way across, and now you have a nice line on the side. Finish the tips up. After you're finished with the front, you're going to need to flip it over and do the same exact thing to the backside. The back is more of a composite, it can be crumblier, so depending on the cut of leather that you have it can come off nice and straight like this, or it can actually come off in a lot of pieces. Don't worry about it, because that burnishing process next will take care of smoothing out a lot of the edges. There we go. When we've finished all the bevelling, take your sponge, dampen it in some water. Squeeze out the excess. You don't want it soaking wet, you just want it damp enough to moisten the edges. Run it along one edge. If you feel like it's maybe a little bit dry just re-dip it. And don't forget your tips as well. I like to do one side at a time so it doesn't dry too quickly. Then you'll take your burnisher, if you have this wooden type like I have, it has a nice handle at the bottom. It has different sized grooves depending on the thickness of your leather. So you can pick whichever one works for what you have. I like this middle one. It tends to work with a lot of things. You can start at the end, and you're literally going to be burnishing it and rubbing it back and forth until it's nice and smooth. And this you can use some muscle, for sure. And you can see it's starting to get shiny on the edges, and that's a really nice finish, and that means you've done a really good job. So I'll just run it over real quickly until we get that same effect on the whole length. The tips are tricky, just do your best. You can see how nice and smooth it is. You can see the shine on it, and you can compare it to the other side which is still really rough. Just go ahead and finish burnishing the rest of your bracelet so it's smooth all the way around.

Painting, embroidery and attaching rivets

- Another way to add color to a bracelet is to paint it with fabric paint. I like to use the blue masking tape. You'll cut a piece of tape long enough to wrap around the end of your bracelet. Let's move this off. I'm going to just eyeball the amount that I like, if you want just a small bit or a long bit, that just depends on where you put your tape. I'm going to try an inch and a half for this example. We're going to press it nice and tight. Make sure that it sticks really well to the top and the sides of your leather. Then, by using a paint brush, we're going to color the tip end of it and leave the back half natural. So, you can do a light coat. It's better to do more light coats than to do one thick, heavy coat. So just like when we were adding the varnish and the dye. You want to stroke in one direction and make it as smooth as you can. For this example we can actually paint all the way around. We're going to do the sides, and we can also do the back, just so there's no seam in the back. Let's see, get all the bits, and then just keep smoothing it out, and then just give it a little color on the back. All the way down to the tape. When your paint is fully dry you can remove the tape just by ripping it in the back, or anywhere you want, it doesn't-- Then gently pull it off and you'll have really nice clean line to start the next step of making this bracelet yours. Because I use fabric paint I like to heat set it. So I've come up with a technique that I do myself. And I just take a lightweight cloth put it over the tip of the paint and apply a medium iron. You're not gonna want steam or anything like that. You're going to want, like, a medium heat, just something enough to set the paint as you would on a t-shirt or something, since this is fabric paint. So I'll cover the bracelet with the cloth, and don't

put the iron directly on to the leather. I think that's probably not a good idea. You're gonna want to just quickly press it. Now we'll work on the final steps of finishing our bracelet. We'll add some embroidery and a button closure and it'll be really to go. You're gonna want to take an awl or a sharp object and mark the spots where you're going to need to punch holes to make your embroidery. We're going to make an X over the painted part. So we'll add two holes on one side and two holes on the other. These I just eyeballed. So now we have our marks, and we can take a really small hole punch, that's used for leather. This hole punch comes with many different size tips for different size holes depending on what you need it for and it's really easy to just screw and unscrew them back in by changing out, to change them out to make different sizes. Put it on your first hole, using your poly-hammer, so you don't smash the metal, you can give it a nice, whoop, and if it doesn't come out the first time just, you know, keep working on it until-- Let's see, there we have a nice hole. We're going to go around the bracelet and punch all four holes. This punch does not come in the small punch set. You buy it separately and it's for, it's called a stitching hole punch, because it makes a really nice small hole compared to the others. Now that we have our four holes I already have my poly wax thread threaded onto a needle. This is a leather needle, but by all means you can use any needle you have around the house as long as your thread fits into the hole of the needle. By starting on the back, you can start on any hole but I like to do a double thickness for the stitches, but by only using one thread. So you're going to go down on the opposite side to make my X. And because I like a more substantial stitch I'll go up and do that exactly one more time. And then on the back your just gonna go next to it, drop it in, and crisscross, doing it twice again. There you go, when you finish, to finish you can just tie your two ends together, and do it a couple times, make a nice knot. Maybe three times would be plenty. You're gonna want to just take some scissors to clip the ends, maybe an eighth of an inch from the knot, not all the way to the end. And then we're going to grab a lighter and very carefully burn the edge of the knot without actually making it come undone. Press it on to a hard surface and you'll see that it all melted together and it will not come undone. As with the painting, you can take the embroidery and make any design that suits you and that you like. I just like the simple stitch with the paint for this style, but we change it up all the time. So next we're going to add the button. To add the button on the end of the bracelet I changed out my tip for a wider tip so that the post can fit through the back. So I'll measure about a half an inch away from the tip. I'll take our hammer, again, and knock a nice clean hole right in the middle. There are many different kinds of button stud attachments. The one we're going to use has a thread on it, is the male piece. And it screws in to the little button on the top with the hole. When you have your button stud closure make sure the post on the back is thick enough to go through your leather, that it's long enough, so it sticks up the other side and can be attached by the top. So the male side, with the screw, is going to fit into the female side. And the male side will go in the bottom of the bracelet and come up and then be attached with the button. You can see here that the post is higher than the leather which allows the button to have something to attach to. You're going to screw it on as tight as you can with your hands and then you're going to want to come back with a screwdriver, very carefully, and make it as tight as you can. You might find that the screw studs can loosen and come apart, which means you'll lose your pieces. I recommend, sometimes, to just put a little drop of glue on the thread of the male part, and then screw the top on, and that will hold it in place and keep it much more permanent so you don't lose it. We've switched out the tip so that we have a larger hole so hopefully it can get the button through it. But before you apply it to your bracelet you want to make sure that it's actually the right size because all the buttons will be different sizes. So I suggest you take a piece of scrap. We're going to make a

hole on the scrap using our hammer, and we'll just test it and see how much bigger or smaller we need it. This hole is way to big. It came out right away. So I'm going to switch out the tips to the next smaller size. And we'll try it again. This one is too small, but that's perfect for us because I have a special punch here that has just a line, and I can expand my hole. If you don't have this you can easily take a scissor and snip a slice on the end of your hole to give it that, kind of, keyhole effect. So I'm going to add a little room, which makes it able to expand, and let's try it again. Now it fits through, it's perfect. So now we can apply this size, with this cut onto the bracelet. So let's punch the hole onto our bracelet. I'm gonna go about a half inch down, same as on the other side. We're going to do-- Well, let's try one more time. And do the hole, and you're gonna take the line and do it facing inward. I think I'm going to try to take one of my bevelers, or anything that has a little bit wider hole, and I'm just gonna smooth it out a little bit. The first time you put in your button sometimes it can be stiff and hard. This one seems to work out pretty good. Let's see, that comes in and out. That's it. I took the blue sample that we painted earlier with the dye and added some X's and made a different variation of that same kind of bracelet. And here you can see, once you get the punch, and you have some floss, you can, kind of, make any design or pattern or color combination that you would like. Tape can also be used in different ways. You can tape off the center and make stripes. And sometimes they're just super simple with a spot of color. And here's our original sample. Just by using those simple tools that we introduced you to, the strap cutter, the beveler, the burnisher, the paint, the floss, you can create any thickness, any size, any design that you would like. So you should go off and have a lot of fun with it. You can also make them as gifts. The reason these make such great gifts is each one can be personalized for the person you're giving it to.