
DIY Traveler's Journal with Faith Hale

Chapter 1 - Traveler's Journal

Overview

(bright music) - Hi, I'm Faith Hale. I'm a writer, a book artist, and an avid journaler. And while I have dozens of empty or half filled notebooks all around my apartment, the one I find myself reaching to most often is my traveler's journal. This features a really nice leather cover and interchangeable inserts that I can take out when I finish a project. It's also very customizable if I want to use different papers or different mediums. We'll be working with veggie tan leather and we'll be burnishing the edges using readily available materials. We'll also be using a five hole pamphlet stitch to make the booklet inserts. I'll also show you a few variations so that you can customize this to your preference. It's surprisingly easy to make. Once you finish your first one, I assure you you're gonna wanna make a dozen more. (bright music)

Materials

- The most important material for this project is the leather, you'll want a two to three ounce weight leather. It needs to be thick enough to hold it's shape, but thin enough that it can bend in half. So if you're purchasing online, buy two to three ounces, but I would recommend checking it out in person so you can feel it for yourself. If you use a lighter weight leather it'll be a little bit floppier and if you use a heavier weight leather it'll be too hard to bend in half. So if you are going to use a recycled material I'd say go for lighter rather than heavier. We also used a vegetan leather, which has less chemicals and is easier to manipulate. Be sure you have a piece at least nine by ten inches, we'll be cutting it down from there. You'll also need a piece of paper the size of your leather that we're going to use as a punching template, a light weight sandpaper and a heavyweight sandpaper, you'll need a paintbrush and some water, a bone folder, a poly hammer and a leather punch, but if you don't have access to this, use a sharp awl, you'll need a pencil, paper that is eight and a half inches wide by eight and a quarter inches tall, make sure the grain is long, you'll need twenty sheets for two booklets, for each additional booklet you'll need another ten sheets, and you'll have two pieces of card stock, you'll need a binding needle, a tapestry needle, and a pin tool, this can be found in the clay section of your local craft store, you'll need binding thread or you can use a waxed linen thread, beeswax, elastic cord that's one eighths of an inch, two yards, a utility knife with a fresh blade, a pair of scissors and a ruler, I prefer clear quilting rulers so I can see the squares, but you might want to use a metal ruler because you're working with a metal blade. You'll also need a scrap of canvas and don't forget your cutting mat. These are basic bookbinding tools that you should be able to find at any art or craft store.

Making the leather cover

- One characteristic of this notebook is that it has covers that are a little bit oversized so you can add additional inserts into it without them poking out of the front. I found a good size that works for me is 10 inches wide and eight and three quarters of an inch tall. I've already cut the height and now I'm going to cut the width. And because your knife will be very sharp it shouldn't take too many draws to go through. But I still recommend going slowly and not applying too much pressure. Your aim is to cut it in four or five strokes. Make sure everything is nice and squared off. Now we're going to sand all the edges with first a rough grit sanding paper. And then a fine grit sanding paper. This is

gonna fluff up the fibers so that when we lay them down it's extra slick and smooth. Grab your sanding paper, or grab your sanding block. And just buff the edges. Now we're gonna switch to our fine grit sand paper and repeat that process. You can round it slightly at this point, if you want. The first one straight up and down this one will be a little bit of an edge. But it's not necessary we'll buff that out when we're using our (mumbling) folder. Repeat on the other three sides and now we'll begin varnishing. We'll use our paint brush and the water. And we'll dab it along the edge. And I like to work about three inches at a time. So instead of going across the whole edge I go three inches and then I grab my bone folder and vigorously rub it along the edge. And you're gonna do it for a couple seconds before it gets slick and shiny. And also, as you're doing it it will be pushing the fibers into the top and the bottom. You'll see this burr here. So you want to just fold it right down and continue varnishing. And after a few strokes of applying fair amount of pressure you'll see it starts to get shiny. And that's when we know we're ready to move on. So we'll continue along the edge repeating varnishing. Tamping down the burr and then varnishing again. Check to make sure that you haven't missed any spots. So it's a little less shiny right here. I'll just repeat that. Repeat this on the other three sides. And then take a look at the piece you've made you might notice some water spots along the edges. That's totally fine if you want an aged (mumbling) it's gonna get a little bit roughed up anyway that's part of the charm of this leather notebook. But if you want it to be a little bit more consistent and take the attention off the edges you can cover the entire surface with a light coating of water. And it will kind of even out those water blemishes. So just take a paper towel. Dip it into your water. And, apply to the cover. You don't want to soak it and you want to be doing it in the same direction each time. And just do a light even coating that extends all the way to the edges. And make sure your hands are dry before moving onto this next step. Our last step for finishing the edge will be using beeswax and canvas cloth to varnish it to an even brighter shine. So we're gonna rub it along the edge. Once again, I like to do a couple of inches at a time. But you can do the whole edge, if that's your preference. And then we take this canvas cloth, or any other kind of gritty cloth and we rub it on. So when you hear that squeak that means it's working. Repeat this on the other three sides. And this is a semi-permanent finish so if you find your edges becoming dull after a year, or so, you're welcome to go back and do it again. Next we'll be punching holes in our spine and our back cover. And I prefer to use a paper template to mark these out so that I don't have to draw on my leather. So I've cut a piece of paper to the size of my leather. And then I'm gonna fold it in half to find the center spine. I'll be marking three eighths of an inch down from the top and the bottom. And a half an inch apart to find out where we punch those holes. I'm gonna mark it three eighths of an inch down. And three eighths of an inch from the bottom. One, two, three. And then I'm gonna do half an inch apart on either side. And repeat that on the bottom. And I'm also going to find the center of the back. And for this, I'll just fold it in half. It's easier for me than measuring. You can fold it in half. Just right there. And here is our center point. For this particular binding, we'll have an elastic cord running up through the bottom and out the top, and back down again. So we'll have two cords holding it in two separate notebooks. We won't be poking in the center hole just these two on either side. This is a hole on our back cover in which we'll put through the circular loop that holds the whole thing together. We're gonna be using our leather punch to make these holes. If you don't have a leather punch you can use an awl. It will just take a little bit more force. Also make sure if you are using a leather punch you have a poly hammer with a plastic head and not a metal one. Because you can bang the metal against the metal it could make shards that will go in your eye. So we lay our template on top of our leather. If you're concerned about it shifting you can put something heavier on top of it. Or you can just hold it in place. And place it

where we can make the mark. Pull it up firmly and whack it, I do it four times. And so that didn't go through the back, it went through the front. So I'm just going to place it again, and hit it a couple more times. And that went all the way through. So that also lets us know that when we do our next few holes we should be whacking it maybe five times. So reposition this. Once you've punched all your holes you can go back with your awl or your pin tool and insert in the hole and swirl it around just to make sure it's as big as you need. We're using an eighth of an inch thick elastic cord in this fabulous pink. I've threaded it onto my tapestry needle. The needle should be about the same width as the holes you've punched in your leather and no thicker. There is a little bit of give to it so there's negotiation, but don't make it too much bigger than the holes, or else the elastic won't make it through. We'll also need about four times the height of your book worth of elastic. So that it can go up and back down again. And then you have enough left for two bookmark-like tails if you so choose. So there we have four times the length. Snip it. Starting on the bottom on the outside we bring it through. And we're going to go to the half way point. And we go up the top one. And out. You want this to be taut but you shouldn't be stretching it. And then it will go back in. Then we take the needle off of this one and we'll thread it onto our other end. And then repeat that same exact process with this side. And here, we'll be crossing it over so I'll have a double length on the outside. And a single length on this side. This part's a little finicky. So take your time. Also, if you have difficulty pulling this through a pair of needlenose pliers might help you to get a good grip. Be careful not to pierce your cord. Here we're going to loosen this up again. It got a little tight there. Then we'll go back in. So at this point, make sure everything has an even tension. This is too tight and this is too loose. So I'm going to balance them out. And when we finish it with a simple knot. What's great about this is after the elastic has been used a few times it's gonna loosen up. So you can just untie this and retie it to tighten it up so it's in as tight as you need. And then you can cut these tails short if you want. Some people like to leave them long so you can use them as a bookmark or whichever one you're choosing. With the remainder of your elastic you'll be making a loop that holds everything together and that's anchored in the back cover. So we're going to need about 14 inches. You'll thread both ends onto your tapestry needle. And then we'll be inserting it from the outside. You might want to wiggle it around first it will widen that hole. This is gonna be a tight squeeze. I knew pliers might come in handy here. Take the needle off. Then we're going to make a custom measurement. Folding it in half. Anchor these down on the inside with your fingers. And wrap it around. So you can see this is kind of loose. Obviously, when we have the book material inside it will be a little bit tighter. We want it to be as snug as possible. So pull the ends from the inside until it fits snugly. So it's not straining. Then go back and anchor them down with your fingers. Take the elastic off. Be really careful with this part. Here, we're going to make another square knot. And we'll trim our ends to about an inch and a half. That's it for the cover and now we'll move onto the booklets.

Assembling the text blocks

- Before we move on to sewing our booklets, we're going to have to talk for a moment about grain. It's important to have the grain of the paper running parallel to the spine. If it's running the other direction, it's going to buckle in weird ways. It's not gonna last as long, and it's not gonna be as strong. So when you're cutting your paper, first determine the grain. The way we find this, is by doing a bounce test. So we'll take the full sheet of paper, and we'll press down. We're not folding it in half, but we're measuring the resistance. And then we'll rotate it 90 degrees, and feel the resistance the other way. So this folds over a lot more easily this way. This indicates to me that the

grain is running up and down. So I've already cut our stack of paper. We have 20 sheets. And they are eight and a half inches wide, and eight and a quarter inches tall. Because we're making two booklets, we'll also have two sheets of cardstock that are also eight and a quarter inches tall. But these will be eight and three quarters of an inch wide. Because when we're folding over the paper, we want to make up for the ends that might end up poking out. If you want to make any additional booklets, and this journal will hold up to four, you'll need 10 sheets of paper and one sheet of cardstock per booklet. Divide your stacks into piles of 10, and make sure they're knocked up. And then we'll fold them in half, again with the grain. I know this paper is kind of squarish looking, so if you ever forget which direction the grain is, you can do your bounce test again. And it folds better this way. I like to fold with the fold edge at the bottom. And you match up the corners. And use your bone folder to make a sharp crease. And you'll repeat the process with your cardstock. This crease can be a little less sharp. We'll just use my fingers. Now we're gonna slip it in to see if it fits. And, it looks like it butts up just against the edge. Maybe sewing will fix this. Otherwise we'll just trim off the edges before we move on. We'll be binding this together using a five hole pamphlet stitch, so our next step is to punch the holes. But first we're going to make a template that shows us where we need to punch the holes. I have a piece of scrap paper that's the same height as our booklet. And I'm going to fold it in half to find the center point. I'll mark a half an inch down from either end. And then I like to fold these back to make getting the next two measurements even easier. So it's all folds and marks at this point. So you have our center point. We'll mark it just in case we lose those folds. We could also determine this by measuring, but I find this way a lot more simple and intuitive. And then plus it gives us a punching guide physically to use for the next step. So here are five punching points, located equidistant apart. And now we're going to put it on the inside of our booklet, that is also nestled in the cover, and we're going to punch using our pin tool. Make sure the top and bottom are lined up. We're going to begin poking through the center hole, and we want to be sure we're doing it at a 45 degree angle, so that it goes out through the spine, not above or not below. I like to twist it a little bit as I punch it out, and you can see it's right on that spine crease. Continue holding it firmly in place. If you're finding this part tricky, you may want to use binder clips at the top and bottom. But I find those just kind of get in the way. Also be careful for your fingers on the spine edge. You don't want to spear yourself. Remove your guide, and now we're going to measure out approximately two and a half times the height of the book. So one, two, with a little bit left over. This is book binding thread. You can also use a waxed linen thread. But this is pre treated to be very smooth. And we're gonna thread it onto our book binding needle, which is pretty slender all the way throughout. The hole is not too much bigger than the needle, and this works because it doesn't widen the hole too much. We begin by sewing out through the inside center hole. And then leaving about a two inch tail, we jump down to this one. Then we go out here. We'll go back in this one, making sure not to pierce the thread. I actually find this easier to avoid if this is a little bit slack. We'll be tightening it up in a minute. If you're having trouble getting it just so, you can use your pin tool to stick it back out. And then you'll follow the exact path of the pin tool back in, holding that pretty tightly in place. So we've done three of our holes. We skipped this center one. Go out the second to the top. And we're basically repeating on this side what we did here. Go back out here. And then the final stitch will be to go back in through this center one. And we're going to make sure that it comes up on the opposite side of this center bar, as our initial tail. This is exactly what you want to avoid, it's piercing this thread will make it impossible to make it as tight as you need to be. So you just have to back out and start again, and maybe pull your tail a little bit to this side, so that it gives you room to go in on the other side. There we go. Do it up, so it's on

the other side of this one. It's straddling it. Then we systematically tighten all the stitches we've done. So holding this taught. We make sure this is firm. And pull this, this. We're just following the path we already stitched. And when we have all these tight, we will tie a double knot. Trim your tails so they're a half an inch long. And then we're going to re-check out that fore edge of the booklet, to see whether or not the paper is poking past the cardstock. It is extending a little bit beyond the edge, so here's a point where if you want a really professional look, you would go ahead and trim that. I'll show you how to do that now. We line up our booklet on our cutting mat. Have our ruler. I'm gonna do it a quarter of an inch past our mark. And also if you're doing this one on of your booklets, make sure you right a note for yourself, so that you're sure to do it on your second booklet. For this, you'll make several long, straight, firm strokes. But it's going to take a couple of cuts to get through all the paper so don't rush it. And if you push too hard, it will crinkle the pages, so just go nice and easy. And look at that. A really smooth, nice edge. You're going to make a second book in exactly the same way, and now we're ready to put it in our cover. So we insert it underneath this strap, right in the middle. And center it. We insert the second one. And, we're done. Look at that. If you want to make a third or fourth book, because this notebook can handle two more, you'll make the booklet in exactly the same way, and then you'll tie your leftover elastic around, with a knot in the middle. And this gets looped over one of the existing ones. So look at that. It fits perfectly. Also because this is brand new, it's still a little fluffy. But the more you use it, and the more you work with it, the more it will flatten out. And it should have a beautiful patina that ages over time. Let me show you one I made previously. This is the same leather, but this has been out in the sun a little bit more, so it's a bit darker. Also, if you don't feel like working with leather, this one is made out of a three millimeter wool felt. It's a little less secure, a little bit more floppy, but it's the same basic principal. And it works really well. It looks terrific. It comes in great colors. And then we even made a teeny tiny one. This is a passport size notebook. And this leather is a lot floppier. I was able to cut it with scissors, and I rounded out the edges a little bit. And one of the advantages of this size, is I just use staples to make the booklets, because it was so small. But this could also hold one or two more. These were so easy to make, and I loved making them, but I love even more using them. You can swap out the notebooks on the inside, you can change up the paper. Make these for all the writers in your life. They'll be absolutely thrilled.