Make Leather Napkin Rings with Cobrina

Chapter 1 - Make Leather Napkin Rings

Overview

- Napkin rings are a timeless way to elevate any table setting. Perfect for dinner parties, host gifts, or even just dressing up a weeknight meal. These leather napkin rings are both decorative and functional. I'm Cobrina. I'm an artist coach and creative producer here at Creativebug, and I thought that leather might be an interesting material to make custom napkin rings with. Of course, you don't have to use leather. Faux is a great choice, and I'm gonna show you nine ideas for creating your own custom set. They're fully customizable. You can engrave names or initials, and you can even shorten the length to fit paper napkins. Historically, napkin rings were used in family dinners to identify each person's cloth napkin for reuse. Today they're more commonly featured in celebration meals, bringing a cohesive and polished look to any gathering.

Materials

- I'm gonna show you many variations of this napkin ring, some with hardware, some without, but for both you'll need leather. This of course, can be a leather alternative as well, faux leather, and I would encourage you to upcycle leather if possible. An old bag or belt would be a great alternative. You could also use non leather materials at all if you wanted to use cork paper or even a waxed card stock could be an interesting idea. Some of these shapes will work for all of those materials. If you are working with leather, we're gonna look for something between two to four ounces, and often that's kind of tricky for us to eyeball. And so essentially what that means is some of it's gonna be quite thick and some of it's gonna be kind of loose. I'm gonna show you different styles that will work great with both. We'll be using a leather punch. You can also use an awl. Please make sure that it's a tapered awl, which means that the holes will be big enough to accommodate our hardware. We'll also be using scissors. A circular item for tracing, I'm just gonna use this washi tape. The end of a glue stick would be a good idea too. A pencil, any marking tool would be fine. A craft knife, a cutting mat, and a ruler. And I also love to use my sewing seam gauge for this project. For our hardware, we're gonna be using snaps, and the toolkit comes with the snaps, some rivets and button studs. If you are using hardware, you'll need a hammering surface and a hammer. This can be any hammer that you have on hand. It also could be a nice idea to have the napkins that you're gonna use nearby so that you can think about color and style.

Make leather napkin rings with hardware

- Let's begin by adding some hardware to a leather strap. I'm using this gray nubuck, and what nubuck means is that it's top grain leather that's brushed a little bit like suede. I wanna cut down a piece that is six and a half by one and a half inches wide. I want to square up my piece of leather. Fortunately this is cut into a straight line already. You'll want to cut a straight line off the edge of your leather if it's an irregular shape and I'm matching up the bottom and the side. And then I can find an inch and a half wide and cut down that similar to cutting paper. Don't expect to do it all in one pass. Just slowly go through a couple of times until you feel it separate. There we go. So there's my one and a half, and I want six and a half inches long. Find that line. Actually can see that this end is a little untidy, so I might even just do a little squaring up here. This also has a mark here on the leather. Just gonna line that up on my mat and trim that end off and then use this as my clean end

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and cut that kind of jaggedy part off. Okay, six and a half. All right. There's our nice simple shape and we want to add some hardware to it and I need to figure out where those snaps are gonna go. This is where I love using my seam gauge. On one end, I'm gonna measure half an inch in and actually to make sure that this is centered, I wanna line this up on my cutting mat and you see that I'm at a dot here on a dot here, and I can use my seam gauge right along that and lined up down those dots, which tells me that I'm in the very center. And take your marking tool and just make a dot. Do that same thing on the other side, except for we're looking for three quarters of an inch. So move that up, make sure everything's straight, line up your ruler and make a mark there. Then I am gonna be using this leather punch tool. What it's set on right now is far too big. I'm looking for about the size of this snap and that's one way you can do it honestly, is just hold it up and that looks like the right size. Okay, great. So I'm gonna put this in there right on my mark, punch. And I usually like to twist a little bit to make sure there's no extra fur in there. On the other side I'll show you how you can do this with an awl. Just press right down in that spot. Might need to do a little work to pull it up. And once you get through, I actually like to go through from the front because we're not taking out any of the material. You're gonna end up with a little pucker. So I like to send that towards the back and try to make that roughly the same size to fit your hardware. Next I wanna add my snap. I'd say the trickiest thing about adding snaps is just figuring out what all the pieces are. So I recommend when you open your package start just by laying everything down and sorting it. I've got two sets here and I wanna separate them into the cap and the cups and then the funnel bits and then the other littler cups. So those are the four pieces that you'll find in your set. And these two are gonna be the top, the bigger cup and the cap and the funnel and the little cup are going to be the back. Hardware comes in lots and lots of different sizes. And you may be wondering, What size should I choose? And I really encourage you to pick whatever looks good to you, what you think will look good on your dinner table and use that flexibility to make this project your own. We only need one of these, so I'm gonna put one set back and let's start with the top cap. The half inch hole is the one that I'm going to put my cap into and this will have the cup on top of it. The tool that came in your set has two sides, a side with a little button on it and a smooth side. This cap fits right into that smooth side like that. Then we're gonna take this little piece and nestle it right in that hole and hammer two or three times nice and hard. You can feel your snap. Is it moving around? Is it jingling a lot? It's gonna jangle a little bit, but this isn't moving. It's nice and tight. So I'm happy with that. For the placement of the second half, you need to think about this over the other one. And so this time I actually want the funnel part to come from the back to the front rather than the front to the back like we did with the cap. This might be a little bit more finicky because we used the awl here. Maybe need to make that hole a little bit bigger. Push just a little bit further down that awl and press. The tricky part about the awl is it doesn't remove the material. So there's a little bit more to fight through. And then this cup goes on top and before you hammer it, just make sure and check your work. So we're usually pretty familiar with a snap and those two pieces go together and that looks correct. I wanna flip my tool over, place that in. And again, three hammers. All right, those are nice and secure. I can snap them together. And we have a simple but elegant napkin ring. The next style I wanna show you is made from a thinner strap of leather. It's going to be 10 inches long and only half an inch wide. Again, I'm going to align the vertical and the horizontal to make sure it's square. This piece of leather happens to be exactly 10 inches, so I want to make sure that it's even and nice all the way through and find half inch mark like so. And cut it down, one more little bit. There we go. I wanna point these ends to just give them some interest. And one way to do that is you can use your seam gauge if you want, is about a half inch down. So make that a half inch, find

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the center and just mark those little edges and find the center at the top here. So we're kind of making a little triangle. And then with a pair of scissors, I'm just gonna cut from this point to that point. Slightly rounded so it's not a triangle, but it's a nice rounded point. Same thing on the other side, that looks pretty good. It's a little uneven, so I can go back and point that better and repeat on the other side just so you're doing something about the same distance. All right, scissors are a great tool here because they can really get nice and tight. Then I wanna measure two inches up from each end here. Let's use the ruler for this two inches up and make a mark, and on the other side two inches and make a mark. I do want this to be nice and centered because we're gonna be doing our punch here. So if keep in mind that if you haven't centered your mark, center your punch. This is a pretty big size for the size of this stud button. So I actually wanna take this down one, I think that looks good, and I'm going to punch. Finding the center, looks good. Little twist. And then on the other side, I want to fit the stud part through. So this is a much bigger aperture and I think I'm gonna have to go all the way to the biggest one and we may even need to accommodate more from there, but do still center yourself. All right. And then through the smaller hole, place the bottom piece. And then this is just a screw, so you actually just screw that top end on. I'm usually pretty happy with finger tight, but you're welcome to get a screwdriver if you'd like. So it looks something like that. And what we're doing is putting this hole over that button, but this doesn't quite fit. So what we need to do is with our knife, add a small slit, a very, very small slit, just cut it just a tiny, tiny bit, just enough to give it a little bit more space to open. Press that across there. And another classic simple napkin ring. There are lots of fun things to do with hardware. All of these are totally customizable. The lengths that I've given you can be shortened or lengthened depending on what kind of napkin you're using. Here's the one we made together. Just a simple leather strap with a tidy snap closure. I also made a couple with rivets. These cannot be opened. They are just hammered shut and held together. I've also rounded the edge, but it's exactly the same as this one. Here's the other style that we made together and I decided to experiment and see if I could get any more variations out of that. And I came up with this one, which is the same length and the same width. I just added the holes at the very end and in the middle instead of two inches in. And the way that you use it is by crossing over the button in the middle, going around the back and closing it up on the top. And that's sort of a fun X variation on this ribbon style. Just a little bit of hardware can elevate a simple piece of leather.

Make leather napkin rings without hardware

- If hardware isn't your style, there's lots of fun ways to construct napkin rings, just by putting a couple of cuts in a few places. I've already cut out my strap. This is seven by one and a half inches. From here, I want to round the end softly, and I want them to be really uniform, so I'm gonna use something to trace. This little washi roll will be a good guide. Repeat on the other side, and then you can use your scissors or your craft knife to cut this out. I find scissors feel like they have more control. Go nice and slow and check it from the front. I've got a little bit of an edge there, see if I can soften that. Okay, repeat on the other side. Leather is surprisingly forgiving. Just go slowly. Now we have a rounded bit and I want to make some cuts in it. I wanna go three quarters in from the end. You just make a mark on both sides, three quarters of an inch in, make a mark. And then on one side I wanna make a one inch mark at that line, the whole inch, so from top to bottom. And reverse that so that it's on the opposite side. You don't want the cuts on the same side, on the opposite side. Square it up, start at the point and draw down. Again. You can use your knife or your scissors and cut all the way to that point. Just check. Make sure you went far enough. That looks pretty good.

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Let's give it a test by slotting those two pieces together and making sure that you're able to go all the way down to the bottom. So I cut those deep enough that they fit nicely together. You can cut these ends into any shape. You could make them triangles, you could make them hearts. This style is modern and fully customizable. The last example I wanna make with you is done by cutting a slit inside the leather. To make it act like a belt loop, I'm using a piece that is eight inches by one and a half inches. You might have noticed that I think one and a half inches for the most part is the sweet spot of widths. But again, that's totally up to you if you wanna make them narrower, wider. And from here we're gonna create this little belt loop on one end. On the backside, I'm going to make a line at one inch and then another at one and a half inches. And from the sides just a quarter inch right between those two. So I'll just draw that line and repeat for the other side. And then essentially, you can kind of close your little rectangle off here. And we're gonna be cutting these two vertical lines. It should be one inch, so you can use your ruler. I'm gonna be cutting from the three to the four, and you should have a quarter inch on either side. Press nice and firmly. Start right at the top. Can feel the leather moving a little bit, move nice and slow. And four, looks like I can give it another pass. Okay, repeat for the other line. Line everything up. Make sure it's open. You can turn it over and check and see that your lines are the same length and that they're fully open. On the other end, we're gonna take it back to an inch and find center. That looks pretty good to me. You can also do that trick where you find two points and line it up right down the middle. See how close I was? Ooh, spot on. Nice. What I'm gonna do from here is fold these top edges, these top two corners together. And I'm gonna cut from this point to the corners. So take your time, make sure you're holding everything steady. It's a little finicky and cut. Now we have a nice little forked tongue at the end. The way we put this together is by folding the forked tongue, going under one belt loop and out the other and pulling it through. Oh, I lost a point. There it is. And this one's really fun. I think maybe it's this color. It reminds me of Esprit in the 1980s, and that's when I was putting napkin rings on the table. You end up with something that looks like a bow, maybe it looks a little like a fish, but I really enjoy this shape and I wanna show you some others that I've played with. One cute idea for customization is to add stamps to your leather, so you can add a name or initials and make seating placements for everyone. Here's the one that we just made together. I think that looks really fun, but I also love this variation that I came up with, which essentially is exactly the same except for instead of cutting the forked tongue, I cut down three inches and then little forked tongues for the other two pieces. I think that looks really, really nice. This is great for soft leather. These styles won't necessarily work in this heavier body leather, but if you have really stiff leather, you could do something like this. This is punched with five holes and then laced up with some leather lacing and some other ideas for really modern, but for very stiff leather as well, is just to do something completely flat. This is a three inch square that I cut a hole out of, and also a four inch triangle. I think those look really cool too. If you wanna learn more about napkin folding, Courtney has a class here on Creativebug. Another nice feature of these leather napkin rings is that they can store flat, so they can stay right in the drawer with your napkins and you can easily set yourself a beautiful table any time you want to.

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