

Planner / Journal Tutorial



Sewing your own planners and journals is so much fun! You get to choose every part of the design, and your new book will delight you every time you open it. This method quickly produces a softcover book that is 9" high, about 5 3/4" wide, and about 3/8" thick, with a pocket in the front or back that will hold up to 8 1/2" x 11" paper folded in half. There is very little waste, as the small extra piece of cover paper makes a perfect gift tag, and office paper does not need to be cut down. See Note on Paper below for ideas on using larger papers.

Materials:

8 1/2"x11" paper (see Note on Paper below)

1 12" square piece of decorative paper

1 yard of ribbon (for bookmarks)

glue (such as Ailene's Tacky Glue)

washi tape or masking tape, up to 1" wide

2 charms, or a combination of beads and charms to sew to the ribbon ends

2' of thread for sewing the beads or charms onto the ribbon

3 yards of thread for sewing the pages into the book (these two threads may be the same, or not – see Note on Threads below)

beeswax (for waxing thread)

ink, paints, pens, gesso (optional – for decorating the cover further if desired)

Tools:

scissors for cutting
awl for punching holes in the cover
scorer/folder/burnisher
beading needle for sewing beads to ribbon
crewel needle for sewing pages into book
needle threader (optional)
hole punch (optional – for punching a hole in the bonus tag)
paper cutter (optional)

Note on Paper: You can use regular 20 lb. or up to 28 lb. office paper for any of the planners. The 28 lb. paper will have a lot less show-through from the back of a page to the front. For a year planner, you need 35 sheets and your 5 signatures will have 7 sheets each. (Allow for a few printing mistakes, though, and have extra paper on hand.) Both of these office papers are relatively inexpensive.

Thicker papers are harder to make large signatures of, so do not use them for year planners, but the 3-month version was designed with these papers in mind. These papers are much more costly than office papers, so be careful and double-check when printing. Printers will balk a bit at 90 lb. or 98 lb. paper, and will likely not be able to handle anything heavier, so save the thickest papers for your journal instead. For a 3-month planner, 16 sheets are required.

For a sketchbook or mixed media journal, use any of the heavier papers and 4 sheets per signature. With any of these books, 4 or 5 signatures is ideal. More will not fit well into the cover.

Some nice heavier papers to use are 80 lb. drawing, 90 lb. mixed media, 98 lb. pastel, 90 lb. black paper, and 140 lb. watercolor paper. Usually, these come in 9"x12", 11"x14", 11"x17", and larger sizes. Larger paper can be cut down using scissors or a paper cutter. If you do this, try to think of something else to do with that extra paper.

Paper that is 11" x 17" can be cut in half to make 2 sheets with no waste. 11" x 14" paper can be cut to size with a long thin piece left over (5 ½" wide x 11" long) that can be used to make another, smaller book for on-the-go sketching or painting. Half of a 12" square decorative paper can be used for the cover, and there will be no pocket.

Note on Threads: Many types of thread can be used to make your book. I especially like #5 pearl cotton, hemp thread, and Button and Craft thread. Regular heavy duty thread is not usually strong enough. Waxing the thread will make it stronger and less likely to knot accidentally.

Introduction to simple bookmaking

Books are often made of groups of several folded sheets, called signatures, which are sewn into the binding, then glued into the cover.

Simpler softcover versions have the signatures sewn right into the cover itself. That's the kind of book we will make. Please read through all the steps before you begin. Let's get started!

Step 1

Choose the type of book you want, then the paper for the pages. If you have chosen a planner, cut the sheets as needed, then print the pages as directed in the document for that type of planner. Do not cut down sketchbook pages yet.

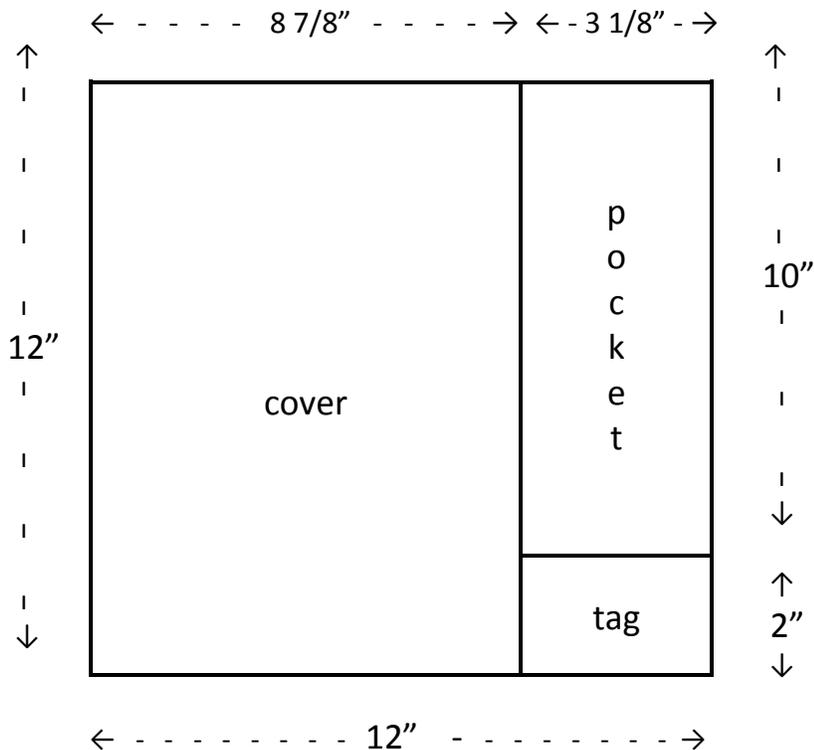
Fold each signature and burnish the folded edges. Check to make sure your planner pages are in the correct order. Cut the larger pages for your sketchbook or journal while they are folded into signatures. This will make the edges more even.

Step 2

Now for my favorite part! Choose your cover paper, ribbon, tape, thread and charms. The possible combinations are endless! Use a tape that will look good against the inside cover, which is usually white, or a slightly different pattern and color that the front side. Try picking out a secondary color from the pattern on the outside of your paper and seeing if you can find a ribbon to bring that out. Next, use a similar color for your threads, or another minor color from the pattern. You want these two colors to show up well against the paper. Choose charms and beads last to match or contrast with the overall look you have designed.

Step 3

Look at your 12" square of decorative paper and decide what corner you like best. You will be folding it in half, so fold it loosely and decide what part you would like to be the front cover. With this in mind, cut $3 \frac{1}{8}$ " off one edge. The larger piece ($8 \frac{7}{8}$ " x 12") will be your cover.



If desired, use stamps, pens, gesso, and/or paints to dress up your cover even more. At this point, you can print a design on it with your printer. You can even do free-motion stitching on it with your sewing machine!

Step 4

Cut 2" off one end of the long, thin piece. The larger piece (3 1/8" x 10") will become your pocket. Set it aside.

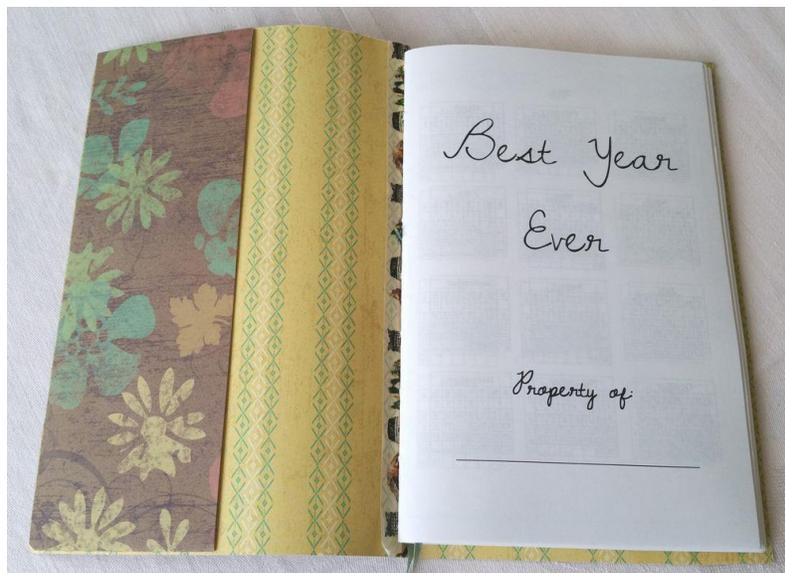
Step 5

The smallest piece will measure 3 1/8" x 2". Punch a hole in a corner or in the center of one edge. Cut 6" off your piece of ribbon, thread it through the hole, tie the ends, and you now have a lovely gift tag!

Step 6

Score and fold your pocket piece 1/2" on three sides. The corners will overlap. Unfold and cut the corners off at a 45 degree angle, from the edge of one fold to the edge of the other. When you re-fold the paper, the cut edges will match up, or nearly so.

Find the part of your large piece of paper that will be the front cover. Flip the paper over, remembering which part is the front of your book. Spread glue on the 1/2" folded area of the pocket piece. Place it on the larger piece, inside the front cover. Weight it down with a heavy book.



Here you can see the pocket on the left and the tape showing from underneath the signatures



Step 7

While the glue dries, sew your charms and/or beads to the ends of your ribbon. These will add weight to the bookmarks and an extra special touch to your book.

Step 8

Check on your cover. After about 15 minutes, it should be dry enough to continue. Run your finger inside the pocket to make sure it is fully open. Gently pull apart any part that has become accidentally glued.

Step 9

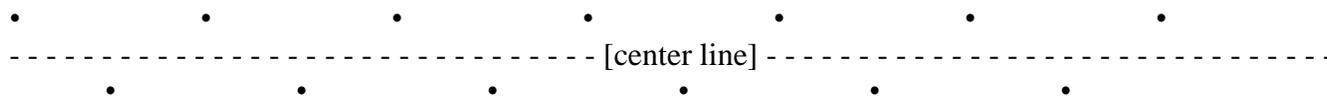
Fold the cover in half so it is $8 \frac{7}{8}$ " high and $5 \frac{1}{2}$ " wide. Unfold. Center a piece of tape on the center of the fold, on the inside of the cover. The paper will be stressed by punching holes and sewing in it. This will reinforce it, helping to keep it from tearing between stitches. Most of the tape will be hidden under the signatures, but some will show on either side. If you use thin tape, layer a couple of pieces to cover the area.

Step 10

Center a ruler over the fold in your cover paper, again on the inside. See the picture. You want the same fraction of an inch at each end. Punch a hole at each inch mark.

Move your ruler slightly forward of the previous line (try moving it so it just covers the holes you just made). A clear ruler is helpful, since you can see the holes. Make a hole at each $\frac{1}{2}$ " mark, but not at the inch marks.

This will give you two lines of alternating holes, each hole in each line will be one inch from the next. One of the lines will have 8 holes, and one will have 9. They will look much like the diagram below, but the lines will be closer together – as close as they can be made without tearing the paper between holes.



Move your ruler slightly back of the first set of holes and make a hole at each $\frac{1}{2}$ " mark; again, your holes will be 1" apart. Move your ruler again and make another line of holes. Make a fifth line if you have five signatures.

You will now have the same number of lines of holes as you have signatures, and they will all be very close to the center fold.

Step 11

This part is a bit tricky. Your cover is meant to be slightly taller than your signatures. Figure out which signatures will go on which lines of holes. Unfold the signature that will be in the middle, or closest to it.

Based on where the holes are on the cover, determine whether you will need to make your holes on the inch marks or on the $\frac{1}{2}$ " marks. Center your ruler on the inside fold, double-check that the first one is going in the right place, and make your holes with the awl. Remember to make them 1" apart.

Use a support underneath. Go back and put the awl all the way through the hole, twisting it a bit to make it nice and big and round. It may seem big now, but may be surprisingly hard to find when you are sewing later.

Make holes in all your signatures, checking to be sure they are right. If you get a signature all wrong, go back and make holes in that one every $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The thread will cover the extra holes when you sew it.

Step 12

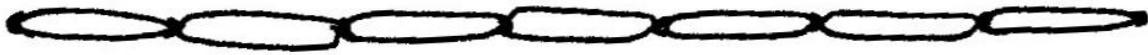
Fold your ribbon not exactly in half so the beads on the ends are not exactly together. Lay 2" of the folded end over the inside fold of the top of the cover at a 90 degree angle. (see picture)

Wax your thread by running it over the block of beeswax a few times. Thread a crewel needle with 1 yard of the thread and tie the ends with a double knot or a surgeon's knot.

Anchor the thread in the ribbon and sew through the ribbon from the inside of the cover, through a hole in the center line, to the next hole in that line. Coming up in that hole, bring the needle through the corresponding hole in the signature for that line.



Continue going up and down through all the holes, incorporating the signature, until you reach the end of that line, then come back the other direction. You will now be coming back through the same holes as before, but if you came out one on the back on the first pass, you will be coming out that same hole on the inside this time.



Continue all the way to the other end of the book and come back the other way again until you reach the hole where you started. Thread will cover the whole line on both sides, except there will be a gap on one side.

Sew through the hole to cover that gap, but don't double it on the other side. Instead, go to the nearest hole in the next line. It will seem odd at first, but will straighten out after the first stitch.

Continue until all signatures have been sewn and there are no gaps in your lines of thread on the inside of the signatures or on the outside of the cover. You will use most of the thread.



See how the stitches are staggered?

As you sew, go through the ribbon as much as you can to anchor it well into the cover. When all the sewing is done, pull your bookmarks down between the pages and admire your beautiful creation!

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