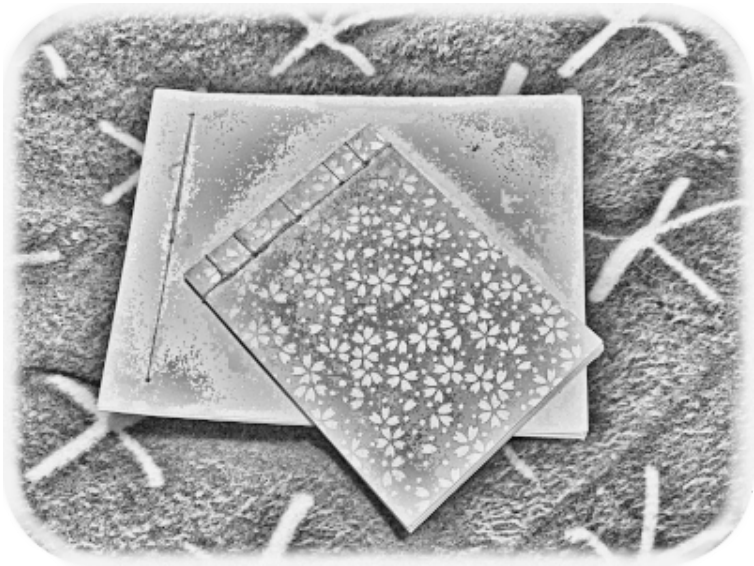


Hand-Stitching Zines



(or other small book things)

a few simple and useful stitches
for binding without glue or staples

Sewing your zine's binding (or someone else's zine that you printed out, or a notebook, or) can be a pretty straightforward thing! And it also looks nifty, if you ask me.

Also you can bind more paper with handstitching than you can with staples, just saying.



We're going to cover three methods in this zine. Caveat: only one of those will let a zine lay open and flat without bending paper and sometimes not even then, but they're all sturdy and reasonable.

Still!

What You Need

Honestly, not a lot. For starting off, you'll want to have the following handy:

- the papers you're working with, of course. (referred to variously as the "signature(s)" or "block" here in this zine)

- > don't forget, you can always use different coloured paper for your cover; or cardstock, or whatever you like

- a needle with an eye big enough for your chosen string

- scissors or snips

- something to poke holes in your paper

- > an awl is ideal if you have one (cheap ones can be found online; I've used the same cheapie for yeeaaaars)

- > other options: darning or tapestry needle, other sturdy needle, nail, small screwdriver (messy), thin knitting needle - something along those lines

- your string. lots of options here! including but not remotely limited to

-> sewing thread (double it up)

-> embroidery floss

-> yarn

-> bookbinding cord

-> dental floss (no really; it's sturdy as hell)

-> thin ribbon

-> twine

* Optional Stuff:

- ruler (but it helps. trust me.)

- a bone folder (a smooth flat beveled piece for folding paper crisply; usually plastic these days) (or just use the ruler or the scissors handle or whatever is handy)

- a cutting mat or cutting board and some corrugated cardboard to protect your work spot from stabs (definitely recommended for chapbook binding and stab binding)

Saddle Stitch

The most straightforward of stitches. I love saddle stitch. It's so useful and neat and convenient and once you've gotten used to it you can do it like instinct ~

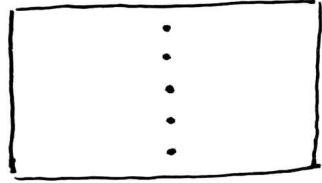
Saddle stitch will leave a row of "bars" of your chosen string down the spine of your zine, with a matching row in the middle gutter. The knot can be inside or outside, whichever you prefer - you need to decide when you start, though.

I find that once you're hitting ~15 sheets of paper it's a bit bulky but alright; 20+ pages of paper, things start getting unwieldy; but that's 80 pages of zine! And you can tinker further. (also you can trim the edges where they stick out beyond your cover, or leave them as-is.)

1. Fold and nest your folios (sheets) for your zine, making sure they all line up neatly, just like preparing to staple a zine. Smooth the crease with a bone folder/ruler/your fingernails/whatever so it's crisp.

2. Open up the zine and lay it flat.

3. Along the spine crease, on the inside, mark at least 3 spots. One should be at the centre of the spine. 3, 5, 7, more; as long as it's an odd number. (this is where a ruler is very useful, especially if you want precise spacing.)



4. Poke through the signature at each mark with your awl or equivalent. Be careful!



- *Tip:* lie the zine on a flat surface, holding the front half of the pages mostly vertical, and poke the awl in

horizontally. it helps keep the holes in the spine crease.

5. Time to sew!

Reel off enough string to equal at least twice the spine height + half again, or thereabouts. Thread your needle with one end, enough to keep the string in place; we're not doubling it up. (unless you want to!) (or unless you're using sewing thread or something else really thin, then it's a good idea.)

- pick up your zine, and thread through the centre hole, leaving enough of a tail dangling that you could comfortably tie a knot in it later.



it doesn't matter whether you start inside or outside, but your choice will also be where the knot and tails are, so keep that in mind.

- bring the needle to the next hole over, and pull through completely until the string is snug against the paper.

- continue weaving back and forth through the holes until you reach the last hole at the



end; then, once through *that* hole, take the needle back through the previous hole. now you're filling in the gaps in the string bars, working back towards the centre hole you started in.



- instead of threading the needle through the centre hole, take the string right past it to the first hole on the other side and then keep on going, just like on the first half, until you've

finished that side and are once again back to the centre hole.

- this time, when you've reached the centre hole, bring the needle through.

You should have, in the centre, two tails (the one you left and the one with the needle on it) and a long centre bar across.



Make sure one tail of string is on either side of the centre bar. (you might need to poke one into place, that's fine.) Set aside the needle, tie the tails into a snug square knot against the paper, and trim them to a length you like.

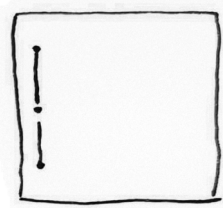


You just saddle stitched a zine!



18th Century Chapbook Binding

To be honest, I don't know what this binding is actually called; I saw period-accurate binding on some cookbooks on Townsend's website and decided to give it my best guess. The test binding worked pretty good! So here's what I did.



-> this uses the exact kind of back-and-forth stitch as saddle stitch, just in a different spot and through multiple signatures.

-> I used 3 holes because the examples I was mimicking did, but you can probably go higher and make things even more secure. (remember, odd numbers!)

This stitch binds multiple signatures of folded paper together. It will not open up flat like saddle stitch - there is a prominent spine rib - but you can always crease pages open.

1. Fold your zine signatures, nesting their pages, and put the signatures into a neat even stack.

2. Down the length of your signatures, on the spine side, mark out 3 spots for your holes. Make

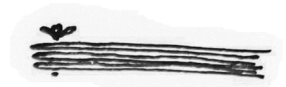
the row at least 1-1.5cm away from the spine crease, and make sure each signature is marked identically.

if you're planning to use this chapbook stitch or the stab stitch that follows, a good idea is to make your zine's gutter margin bigger to accommodate the space the spine rib is going to take up.

3. Make your threading holes. For this, place a layer or two of cardboard (over a cutting mat or cutting board, if you have one handy) under the signatures, and press down with your awl or other tool firmly and gradually. You might be able to puncture more than one signature at a time, but if not, that's okay.

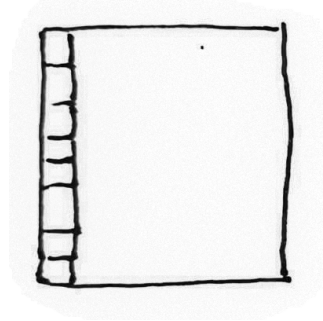
4. Reel off enough string to equal at least twice the spine height + half again, or thereabouts. With your signatures stacked, thread your needle, take it through the centre hole, and stitch in and out of the holes just like saddle stitching. Make sure your string is nice and snug, and trim the tails close when you've knotted it.

A multi-signature zine! Lots of pages. Ooh shiny.



Stab Binding

Often referred to as Japanese (stab) binding or Chinese binding, because there are a lot of variations on this type of binding from many countries in Asia (where, actually, I believe it originated in China). This particular take is a simple version, with the only variation involving where the knot goes - but once you get comfortable, there's a world of fancier types out there to discover.



a useful thing about stab binding is that in addition to binding multiple signatures, it can just as easily be used to bind together many single, unfolded sheets of paper. so it's very useful for full-page zines and unusual cuts of paper, like long strips.

Like the chapbook binding, a stab binding will not lie flat unless you crease the pages, and will still have a raised spine rib.

1. Line up all your signatures/pages neatly in a stack. Make sure they're even.
2. Mark out your puncture spots. Once again, an odd number; one in the middle, and an equal,

even number on each side. (I like to use 7.) You can space them all out equally or bunch some

together, making a sort of pattern, but keep the middle hole mark in the centre.

- the row of holes should be at least 1-1.5cm away from the edge of the spine. the top and bottom holes should be at least 1cm away from the top/bottom edge. (adjust all these if making a very tiny stabbed zine.)
- a ruler helps a lot with this procedure.

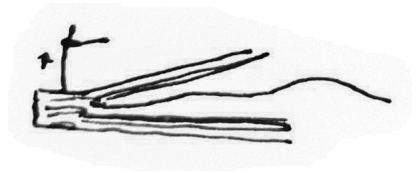
3. Punching holes! As with the chapbook stitch, place cardboard and a cutting mat if you have it underneath, and punch firmly and carefully down through the marks you made.

Don't stress about the paper block being too thick to puncture through completely. If it is, measure and make holes in batches, then put the stack back together. It'll be fine.

4. Reel off enough string to equal at least three times the spine height, or thereabouts.

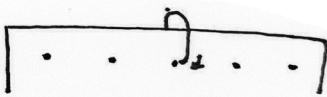
Time for the first stitch! And now, you have two choices:

- if you want to hide the knot/tails, separate your paper block into half and take your string through the middle hole from the exposed middle face, leaving at least 5-10cm of tail. put the other half of the block back in place. you should now have the string coming out of one face of the block, and a hidden tail.

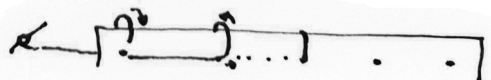


- if you don't care about a visible knot in a string, take the needle through the entire paper block, though the middle hole, and leave the tail dangling.

5. Bring your string up and over the spine edge, then once again through the same hole, so that you have a loop of string around the spine. Make sure it's snug.



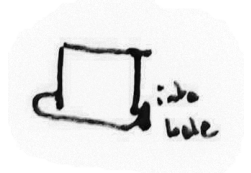
6. Move down to an adjacent hole, along the face of the paper block, and repeat the above. (you'll be working on the opposite side.) Keep going, making a loop over the spine edge and then running the string to the next hole, as you make your way along



the row. You'll see alternating "bars" along each side of your paper block.

*if holding your block together is tricky,
secure it with clips or the like; totally fine!*

7. When you've reached the last hole at the end, after you make the spine loop, wrap the string around the edge of the block completely and push the needle back through the same hole. Make sure the loop wrapped around the edge is snug.



8. Zigzag your needle back and forth back through the holes, "filling in" the missing horizontal bars.

Once back through the middle hole (yes, yet again!), take the string to the next (empty) hole in the row and follow the steps again, working loops-and-bars down the row, wrapping the string around the end of the block, and zigzagging back up until you reach the last-to-the-middle hole.

9. Finishing!

* If you are hiding the knot: bring the needle to and through the middle hole once again, finishing that last horizontal bar – but only halfway

through the block! You need to open up the block and carefully ease the needle down through the middle (a curved needle makes this easier) to bring the end needle and its tail of string to where the first tail is waiting.

Tie the two tails in a snug square knot as close to/into the spine crease as possible. Trim the tails, and tuck the ends up into the spine rib out of sight.

* If you aren't worried about a visible knot: tie the remaining string to the dangling tail in a snug square knot, making sure to pull them snug to the block in order to complete the last horizontal bar. Trim the ends of the tails as you like.

A stab-bound zine!





2025 Fanged Moon

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