

Start Here: your first bound notebook

This guide takes you from a printed file to a finished, stitched notebook in about an hour. It covers two beginner-friendly bindings: the **pamphlet stitch** (one folded stack, three or five holes) and the **Japanese stab binding** (loose sheets, four holes, visible thread on the spine edge). Everything in the kit is made to be printed on a regular home printer.

What you need

- A home printer and paper (80 to 120 gsm / 20 to 32 lb works well; heavier paper for covers, around 160 to 200 gsm / 65 to 80 lb).
- A needle with a large eye (tapestry or bookbinding needle) and waxed thread or embroidery floss.
- An awl or a thick pin, plus a piece of cardboard or a cutting mat to pierce onto.
- A ruler, a pencil, scissors or a craft knife, and a bone folder (the back of a spoon also works).
- Two binder clips to hold the stack while you work.

Step 0: print at actual size

Open any file in your PDF viewer and choose **Actual size** or **100%** in the print dialog. Do not choose "Fit to page". The punch guides include a 50 mm / 2 inch scale bar: measure it after printing. If it is not exact, change the scaling setting and print again.

Pamphlet stitch (three holes)

- 1 Print the interior sheets (file *notebook-interiors*) double-sided, flipping on the short edge. One printed pack is four sheets, which folds into one 16-page signature.
- 2 Stack the sheets in order, fold the stack in half and run the bone folder along the fold.
- 3 Print the *punch guide*, cut out the three-hole strip, and clip it inside the fold of the stack.
- 4 Pierce the three marked holes through all layers with the awl. Work on cardboard.
- 5 Thread the needle with about three times the height of the book. Start from the inside through the middle hole, leaving a 8 cm / 3 in tail.
- 6 Go out through the top hole, along the outside to the bottom hole, back in, then up the inside to the middle hole.
- 7 Tie both ends in a square knot over the long stitch in the middle and trim to about 1 cm.
- 8 Wrap a printed cover (file *cover-templates*) around the stack before piercing so cover and pages are stitched together.

Pamphlet stitch (five holes)

Same idea with a longer stitch path: start inside at the center hole, go out the next hole up, in at the top, out the next hole, in at the center hole... and so on, covering each space once. The five-hole guide keeps the holes evenly spaced. End inside at the center hole and tie off over the first stitch.

Japanese stab binding (four holes)

- 1 Print and cut the interior sheets to your book size. Do not fold: stab binding uses loose sheets.
- 2 Add a front and back cover cut to the same size, with the decorative paper of your choice (file *decorative-papers*) glued on a thicker card if you like.
- 3 Jog the stack tidy and clip it. Tape the four-hole guide along the spine edge, 15 mm / 5/8 in from the edge.
- 4 Pierce all four holes through the whole stack. Use a drill bit by hand for thicker stacks; take your time.
- 5 Start at the second hole from the top: thread through from the back, leaving a tail, then wrap around the spine edge and go through the same hole again.
- 6 Move to the next hole, wrap around the spine edge each time. At the top and bottom holes, go around the head and tail edges as well.
- 7 Work back along the holes the same way, then tie the two ends at the back and tuck the knot into a hole or between the cover and first page.

Finishing

- Press the finished book under a heavy book overnight.
- Add a spine label from the *labels* file with a dab of glue stick.
- Write the date inside the front cover. Your next book will be quicker.

Troubleshooting

- **Holes do not line up:** clip the stack and the guide together before piercing, and pierce vertically.
- **Thread loose:** pull each stitch snug as you go, then do a final tighten before tying off.
- **Pages stick out at the corners:** fold with a bone folder and press longer; for stab binding trim the stack after binding.
- **Printer shifts the design:** use duplex test with plain paper and a pen mark before printing a full pack.

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