Bind a Tiny Notebook with a Pamphlet Stitch

Three correctly placed spine holes and a simple single-signature sewing route

These are original printable digital plans for adult paper crafts. Dimensions are calculated; every finished size is nominal. Paper thickness, printer scaling, adhesive, cutting accuracy and folding technique can change the fit. There has been no physical printing, cutting, folding, gluing, fit test or durability test. Work at a clear table, keep sharp edges and wet adhesive away from children, and use only materials and adhesives that are suitable for the intended craft according to their labels. Keep food, flame, heat and electrical loads away from these objects.

A small sewn book, not a folded zine

This project makes a modest hand-bound notebook from folded paper sheets held together along a spine by a simple three-hole pamphlet stitch. Unlike the one-sheet zine of F036, it uses multiple separate sheets and a needle-and-thread binding. The result can hold brief sketches, a personal checklist or field notes. The whole project is designed as a small adult handcraft with limited materials and a legible sequence; it is not a claim about professional bookbinding durability.

The original finished page size is nominally 70 mm wide by 100 mm high. Each individual open sheet, called a folio before folding, measures 140 mm wide by 100 mm high. Fold a sheet in half at the central x = 70 mm score and it becomes a four-face folded folio. For an introductory example use three lightweight interior folios nested inside one cover folio. That makes four folded sheets and 16 page faces when every outside, inside-cover and interior surface is counted; the cover faces need not all carry writing.

The guide includes a full-size open-folio template, a three-position spine hole map, an original sewing route graphic, and a printable binder record. Every hole and folded size is calculated from its pattern, not taken from an actual punched sample. Real card thickness, needle diameter, paper grain and thread tension will affect how a first book closes. Do not treat this as binding for irreplaceable records, valuable artworks, protected legal documents or thick signatures.

Choose materials and manage puncture risk

For interior leaves, ordinary clean paper around 70–110 gsm can be explored; for a cover, light foldable card around 140–200 gsm is a starting comparison rather than a guarantee. You will need a millimetre ruler, ordinary scissors for trimming, a blunt folding tool, roughly 350–400 mm of suitable bookbinding thread or a similarly smooth sturdy cord, and a blunt-tipped tapestry or bookbinding needle that passes through the holes without enlarging them unnecessarily. A flat work surface and clips that do not damage paper will help keep the signature aligned.

To make the initial holes, an adult needs a controlled paper-piercing tool appropriate for bookbinding, such as a hand awl, with a protective piercing mat or a firm sacrificial support. Piercing and needle points can cause injury. Never punch or sew while holding the folded stack against a hand, thigh or lap; place it on the protected worktop and keep

the other hand completely out of the tool's path. A young person should not carry out the piercing portion without competent adult supervision. If you cannot control a sharp piercing tool, pause or use pre-punched materials prepared by a suitably equipped adult.

The instructions do not require a craft knife, rotary cutter, power drill, heat tool or metal staple. Keep loose needle and thread away from pets and children. Choose clean materials that will not fray into the moving page edges; if thread sheds heavily or cuts into a score, change the material instead of tightening further. The original handouts from the Library of Congress and University of Utah Book Arts Program describe three-hole pamphlet stitching as a basic binding technique. Neither source verifies the particular measurements chosen for this edition.

Understand the 140 x 100 mm folio and three spine holes

The open full-size blank measures 140 mm horizontally and 100 mm vertically. Its single main score is x = 70 mm from bottom to top, dividing it into two 70 x 100 mm leaves. When the book is opened flat, the three stitch positions lie on that line: Hole A at (70, 82) mm near the top, Hole B at (70, 50) mm in the middle, and Hole C at (70, 18) mm near the bottom. Measured from the top edge, A is 18 mm down; B is 50 mm down; C is 82 mm down. The distance between A and B is 32 mm, and between B and C is also 32 mm.

Print the original Letter or A4 pattern at Actual Size / 100% and check the 50 mm calibration bar with a real ruler. Transfer one full-size blank to each of your four sheets if the printer paper is not the intended craft material. A dashed green line means a fold, not a cut. The three small red circles are HOLE MARKS, not round paper windows to cut out with scissors. They are positions to pierce carefully only after the sheets have been folded and nested. The exact hole diameter is not a substitute for checking the chosen needle and actual layered thickness.

The accompanying stitch-route diagram has two explicit surfaces: INSIDE (the open centre of the notebook) and OUTSIDE (the visible outer spine). It uses B, A and C letters to separate hole identification from stitch order. Starting inside at B, take the thread to outside B; enter A from outside to inside; go from inside C to outside C; and return from outside B to inside B. Finally, tie the two tails on the inside around the long centre-spanning stitch, leaving the tie safely flat and clear of page turning.

Cut, fold and prepare a single signature

1. Print the A4 or Letter guide with Actual Size selected. Check the 50 mm bar on every template page. If scaling or cropping is wrong, stop using that print and redraw a 140 x 100 mm blank and measured marks with the ruler.

2. Prepare three interior paper rectangles and one cover rectangle, each 140 x 100 mm. Choose a cover sheet with a different colour if desired. Mark the spine at x70 rather than assuming a slight misprint is acceptable.

3. On each sheet, gently score the x70 fold using a blunt tool. The score is a crease guide, not a cut. Fold right and left leaves together, matching their outer edges rather than compressing the fold aggressively.

4. Open the interior folios, nest the three one inside another, and position that group inside the folded cover. This nested four-folio set is a single signature. Use a removable paper clip near the top and bottom edges to prevent sliding; insert small scrap-paper pads if metal clips could dent the surface.

5. Open the assembled signature to its centre spread. Align all folded spines visually at x70 and ensure no inner folio is unexpectedly offset. Trimming a stack while held is not necessary; if an inner leaf projects because of thickness, record it rather than cutting with a sharp blade.

6. Mark Hole B at the vertical midpoint, 50 mm from either top or bottom. Mark A 32 mm above B and C 32 mm below B, leaving an 18 mm margin from the nearest short edge at both ends.

7. Place the fully opened fold into the protected piercing support. If the stack is too resistant, carefully punch smaller groups separately with the same guide and reassemble them, keeping marks aligned. Never push a sharp point toward a body part.

8. Confirm three neat openings exist on the common spine. A tiny opening needs to let the needle and thread pass without tearing. If an edge splits, make a new blank rather than concealing a failed hole with adhesive.

9. Cut approximately 350–400 mm of thread for the 100 mm spine as a starting length, and thread the needle. Maintain a manageable tail of roughly 60 mm while stitching. Actual thread needs vary; a shorter piece may not permit a secure tie.

10. Hold the open centre spread facing you. From the INSIDE pass the needle out through B. Leave the starting tail inside the booklet and keep it from sliding through while making the next stitch.

11. On the OUTSIDE of the spine travel upward to A and pass the needle IN through A. The working needle is now back in the inside centre spread.

12. Travel on the INSIDE down past the middle B position to C, without putting the needle into B again. Pass the needle OUT through C. This makes the long visible span inside between A and C.

13. On the OUTSIDE travel from C upward to B and pass the needle IN through B. Avoid piercing the starting thread as you pass through the centre opening.

14. Your two free thread ends are now INSIDE at B. Adjust the loops gently, then tie the two tails around the central long stitch so it sits between them. A firm flat knot is enough; do not pull so tightly that paper puckers or holes elongate.

15. Trim the thread ends using ordinary scissors away from the page surface, collect the needle into its protective storage place and close the notebook gently. Write down thread material, hole measurements, knot location and any binding issues in the maker record.

Read the thread route and diagnose real problems

The sequence may be written compactly as INSIDE B to OUTSIDE B; OUTSIDE A to INSIDE A; INSIDE C to OUTSIDE C; OUTSIDE B to INSIDE B; tie inside at B. It deliberately skips the middle hole on the second long run. If you inadvertently enter B halfway through, the binding may wrap different segments and leave thread ends on different surfaces. Instead of improvising a new knot outside, remove the thread carefully from a disposable trial and retrace the map.

A crooked signature does not become straight merely because the thread is pulled tighter. Check that the four folds are aligned at x70 and that Hole A is near the same top margin through every layer. If a hole falls outside the fold, it can tear toward the edge under use. If a fold splits, do not reinforce it with an unknown adhesive: use sound paper and a gentler crease on a fresh sheet.

Needle and piercing-point safety matters more than making a flawless stitch. If you drop the needle, locate it before continuing. Keep all needles and punch tools accounted for and stored in a protected container when not in use. Do not continue when tired or when children or animals can disturb the work surface. Adult craft instruction is not an assertion that an object is suitable for unsupervised children.

The book is sized for brief pen notes and sketches. It is not a heavy-duty journal, weatherproof record, child-safe play object, archival binding or medical record storage. The publisher has not pierced, stitched, load-tested, opened repeatedly or measured thread retention for a physical sample. Your maker record is the appropriate place for any actual observation you make on your own paper.

Improve the page experience and adapt only with care

Try one clean title on the front cover and number the interior page faces after binding. A single word, a small botanical drawing or a location name may suit the pocket format better than a full-page collage. Avoid gluing bulky objects near the hinge or covering the visible thread with adhesive; the stitch needs space to move as the book opens.

If you choose an extra sheet, remember that the stack gets thicker at the fold and may need a different piercing method. A folio is not a single page: one folded sheet gives four faces. Do not promise a fixed leaf count after changing sheet sizes or trimming. Make a new hole template when the spine height changes; proportions such as 18 / 50 / 82 mm belong to a 100 mm spine, not every book height.

You may prefer an exposed exterior knot as a personal decorative variation, but then the needle route and tail positions differ. The pattern printed in this edition is for an INSIDE knot; follow one sequence consistently rather than mixing the two. If a knot rubs against writing, try shorter thread tails, carefully tucked away from the centre spread while maintaining the actual knot.

A small original stitched notebook can be meaningful without looking factory-made. The aim is a traceable, understandable process: one sheet size, a three-hole map, a precise thread route and a record of what the reader actually did. Report uncertainty in the record rather than converting an untested measurement into a promise.

References and original-work boundary

Library of Congress, Pamphlet Stitch, https://www.loc.gov/preservation/resources/educational/bookarts/pamphlet.pdf . Its educational instruction sheet establishes the conventional three-hole path and the practical idea of tying around the spanning stitch. Steadleaf Press uses an independently written explanation and newly drawn measured templates rather than reproducing its artwork.

University of Utah Marriott Library Book Arts Program, Pamphlet Stitch Lesson Plan, https://lib.utah.edu/collections/book-arts/community/Pamphlet%20Stitch%20Lesson%20Plan.pdf . Consulted as additional background for folios, signatures and hole alignment, not as endorsement of the exact guide measurements.

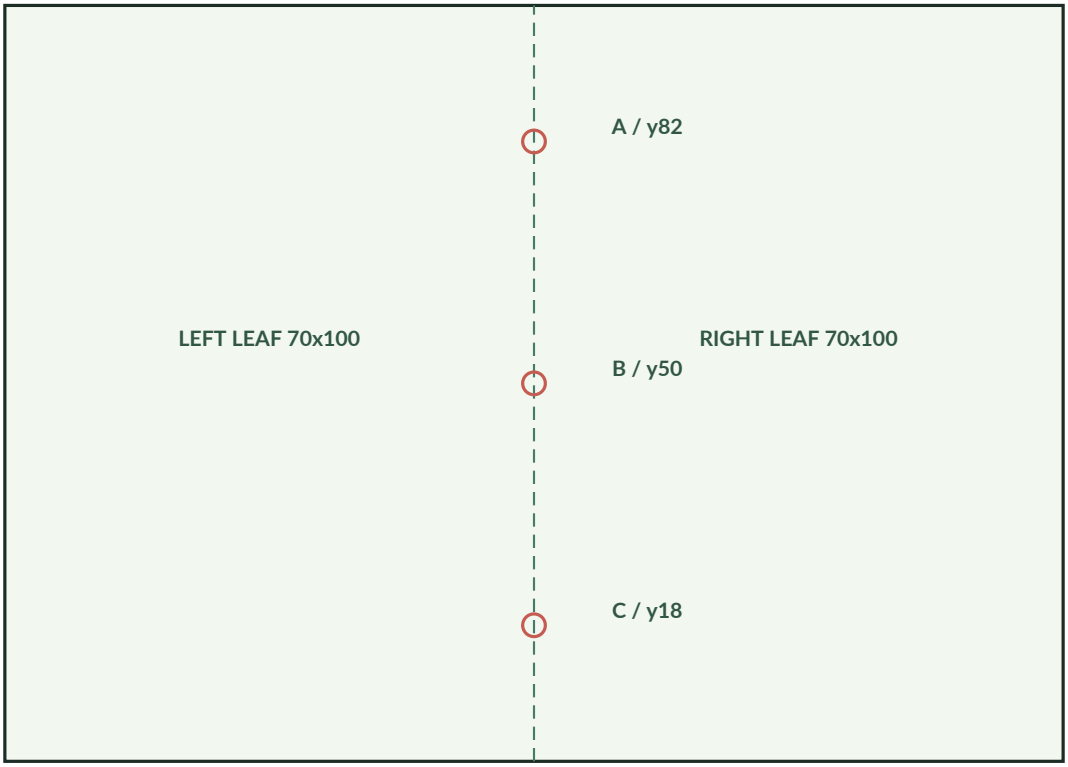
Adobe Acrobat Help, Adjust page size for printing PDFs, https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/desktop/print-documents/set-up-and-print-pdfs/page-size.html . Actual Size guidance does not certify a printer's accuracy, a needle technique or the durability of the finished binding.

All writing, hole-map vectors, thread-path symbols, original cover and two printable records are new Steadleaf Press educational assets. No third-party template artwork is reproduced. No physical cutting, piercing, stitching, tying, repeated-opening, thread-strength or safety qualification has been carried out by the publishing team.

Printable diagrams and build record follow on the next pages.

STP-MAKE-F037 / FULL-SIZE FOLIO AND HOLE MAP

140 x 100 mm open blank. Centre x70 is SCORE. Small red circles are hole marks, NOT cuts.



One sheet 140 x 100 mm; score x70. Holes on common spine: A y82, B y50, C y18. Spacings A-B 32 mm, B-C 32 mm. Adult with safe piercing support only.

50 mm SCALE CHECK - measure with a ruler; must equal 50 mm

STP-MAKE-F037 / THREE-HOLE STITCH ROUTE

Inside = opened centre of signature. Outside = outer spine. Do not confuse a thread route with cutting.

INSIDE CENTRE SPREAD



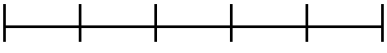
OUTSIDE SPINE



1. From INSIDE B -> OUTSIDE B
2. From OUTSIDE A -> INSIDE A
3. From INSIDE C -> OUTSIDE C
4. From OUTSIDE B -> INSIDE B
5. Tie both INSIDE tails around the long stitch

Use ~350-400 mm thread as a starting length for a 100 mm spine. Check physical holes, thread movement and safe needle management yourself; no physical trials by publisher.

50 mm SCALE CHECK - measure with a ruler; must equal 50 mm



STP-MAKE-F037 / MAKER RECORD / PAGE 1

Write your own readings and decisions; no physical trial was performed by Steadleaf Press.

Folio and cover cut size 140 x 100 mm

Actual Size 50 mm ruler reading and page format

Spine x70; Hole A y82 / B y50 / C y18 mm

Four folded sheets and alignment observations

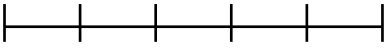
INSIDE B / A / C / B thread sequence

Thread and needle, knot position, safety return

Observed folding / binding issue or NOT TESTED

Record an actual observation only if you perform it yourself.

50 mm SCALE CHECK - measure with a ruler; must equal 50 mm



STP-MAKE-F037 / MAKER RECORD / PAGE 2

Write your own readings and decisions; no physical trial was performed by Steadleaf Press.

What changed from the full-size original?

How was each score/cut location measured?

Where did the paper bind, crack, wrinkle or slip?

What would you change for the next copy?

Date, version and initials

Safety or handling concern noticed by reader

Record an actual observation only if you perform it yourself.

50 mm SCALE CHECK - measure with a ruler; must equal 50 mm

