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MAKE / BEADS & WEARABLE KEEPSAKES

Create a Beaded Bookmark with a Ribbon End



Flat ribbon inside • beads outside

14 practical steps · Ribbon folds, cord route and placement beyond page edges. Two original diagrams and two maker records.

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Before you start

A bookmark should mark a page without acting as a wedge. In this design a soft, flat ribbon lies between the pages; the finished folds, cord loop and beads remain beyond the book's lower edge, and the upper fold stays above its upper edge. The design uses a double-fold top hem and a small open-sided channel at the lower end. Two ends of a soft nonelastic cord emerge from opposite sides of that channel, pass together through three lightweight smooth large-hole beads and meet in an approved stopper knot below the last bead. No metal clamp, adhesive, heat sealing or rigid fitting is needed. Make it for an ordinary adult reading copy, not a fragile, rare, archival or tightly bound book. It is not a toy, necklace, lanyard or load-bearing accessory.

Materials: a clean soft woven ribbon, about 15–20 mm wide as a starting choice; matching sewing thread; hand-sewing needle and scissors; ruler, paper, pencil; blunt bodkin if the ribbon channel and maker permit; labelled soft round nonelastic craft cord suitable for a bundled stopper knot; three lightweight smooth beads with holes that freely accept two relaxed cord strands; a lined bead tray. Use a spare piece of ribbon and cord for practice. Work in good light and keep needles, small beads and cords away from children and pets. Avoid metal, glass shards, wire, stiff ribbon, glitter, rough finishes and adhesives near paper.

Plan the ribbon and decoration

Measure the height H of the actual page block, not the book's advertised size. Choose a plain upper allowance T and a lower allowance B, measured from page edges to the finished ribbon ends. Each allowance must keep the entire respective fold and all decoration outside the book when the ribbon is in its intended position. For the example use H = 200 mm, T = 30 mm, B = 30 mm; finished ribbon length L = H + T + B = 260 mm. The top hem consumes 5 + 5 mm; the lower channel consumes 5 + 10 mm. Cut length = L + 10 + 15 = 285 mm. These are illustrative dimensions, not a universal book size. The upper 5 mm folded area and lower 10 mm folded area should remain well clear of page edges; enlarge the allowances for a different book or if the bookmark moves during use.

The lower channel is a double fold: turn 5 mm of the raw cut edge to the back, then fold 10 mm more toward the back. Stitch across the ribbon near the turned-in free edge, not along the bottom crease. Leave both short side mouths open. This makes a crosswise passage between the ribbon body and turned-up flap, with the bottom crease as one wall and the stitch line as the other. The usable channel is smaller than its nominal 10 mm fold. Choose cord that slides freely through this passage and use a suitable blunt threading aid only if needed. The beads need two-strand clearance: for ideal equal round strands with nominal diameter d and hole H_b, $H_b > 2d$ is merely a preliminary screen. Confirm the real two strands, ends and full bore by gentle passage. Allow enough cord to pass through the channel, form the hanging V, pass through all three beads and leave generous knot-working tails. An example 180 mm working length is a starting allowance, not the finished loop length. Make the decorated tail short enough to rest beyond the book without catching.

Steps 01–02

1. Measure the book and choose its place for the bookmark

Choose an everyday book with ordinary sturdy paper and a binding that opens comfortably. Measure the page height on a ruler without bending the book flat or inserting a measuring tool into the spine. Decide where the flat ribbon will lie within the page area, away from the gutter and printed illustrations if possible. Record the measured height, upper projection and lower projection on Record 1. Never add a bead to the part that lies inside the book.

2. Select a ribbon that lies smoothly against paper

Choose a soft, clean woven ribbon with smooth edges and known material. Lay a short sample between two loose plain paper sheets to see whether it sits flat. Check visually for loose threads, rough surface, dye transfer, glitter or adhesive residue; this informal observation does not establish archival safety or colourfastness. If anything rubs, marks or catches, choose another ribbon. Select a sewable ribbon rather than stiff or fragile decorative trim.

Steps 03–04

3. Calculate and mark the cut length

Use Pattern 1. Add measured page height and both chosen projections to find the finished length. Then add the top 10 mm and lower 15 mm fold allowances, or revised allowances appropriate to your actual ribbon. For the example, 200 + 30 + 30 + 10 + 15 = 285 mm. Mark the cut length with a removable pencil mark on the back or use paper guides. Do not add the beaded tail to the ribbon measurement; it attaches outside the finished lower end.

4. Practise the folds on spare ribbon

On a separate scrap, make a small 5 mm turn followed by a second 5 mm turn to enclose the raw edge. Practise a row of short hand backstitches through the folded layers, keeping the stitch tension even so the ribbon remains flat. For the channel, practise a 5 mm first turn followed by a 10 mm second turn and sew only near the free folded edge. Leave both side mouths open. Confirm that the chosen cord can pass through the resulting channel gently. Do not use heat, flame or a sealant to finish the edges.

Steps 05–06

5. Cut and make the plain upper hem

Cut the ribbon cleanly with appropriate adult scissors on a stable table. Fold the upper raw edge 5 mm to the back, then 5 mm again in the same direction. Secure the fold with short hand backstitches across the width near the free folded edge, through the folded layers and body. Begin and finish the sewing thread with an appropriate secure sewing finish on the back; trim loose thread. Keep the fold flat, without tight puckering. The entire finished hem must remain outside the top of the book.

6. Form the lower open-sided ribbon channel

At the lower end turn the raw edge 5 mm to the back, then turn 10 mm again toward the back. Hold the fold with clips suitable for the fabric rather than leaving loose pins in the ribbon. Sew a transverse backstitch row close to the turned-in free edge, leaving the two side openings clear. The lower crease is the outer wall of the channel. Do not sew down the two side mouths, stitch the passage shut or add a hard fitting. Keep stitches away from the crease so the cord passage remains open.

Steps 07–08

7. Check the channel and mark the page boundary

Inspect the stitching, the enclosed raw edge and both open mouths. Gently feed a short spare cord through the channel from one side to the other, removing it when finished. If the cord snags, the channel is too tight or stitches block it, unpick and remake the fold rather than force a sharp tool through. Lay the ribbon against the book's outer edge and identify where the page block will start and end. Both hems and the entire cord attachment must stay outside that interval.

8. Choose compatible beads and a cord finish

Choose three lightweight rounded craft beads with smooth holes and no sharp or chipped rims. Record the exact cord and bead products and the approved way of securing two nonelastic cord ends together. This exercise uses a bundled stopper knot only for a cord whose maker permits that finish; do not improvise a knot on an unknown, slippery or stiff cord. Check both relaxed strands together through each bead and inspect the cord afterwards. A nominal hole greater than twice the cord diameter is only a planning cue. If two strands cannot pass freely, choose different components.

Steps 09–10

9. Thread the cord through the ribbon channel

Cut a maker-compatible working length, leaving generous ends for knotting. On the tray, feed one end sideways through the ribbon channel from one mouth to the other; centre the cord so similar lengths emerge on both sides. Keep the two ends below the ribbon in a shallow V. If a blunt threading aid is used, include its full profile and avoid catching the ribbon stitches. Stop at resistance. Do not pierce the ribbon body or sew through the cord itself.

10. Arrange and thread the three beads

Lay out the beads in the order shown on your paper plan. Bring the two cord tails together below the ribbon and pass both ends through the first bead from the ribbon-facing end; repeat through the second and third. Support everything on the tray. Leave a small free V between the lower ribbon channel and first bead so the ribbon does not gather or distort. If the cord cannot pass freely, withdraw it gently and change the limiting component. Do not make the bead row so long or heavy that it drags against the book.

Steps 11–12

11. Finish the paired cord ends below the last bead

Practise the actual maker-approved bundled stopper knot on spare cord first. For a cord that specifically permits an overhand stopper in two parallel strands, treat the paired tails as one bundle: form a loop in the bundle, carry both ends together through it, then ease the knot into place below the last bead. Retain the maker-specified tails and secure the finish as directed. The finished knot must be visibly larger than the actual exit opening and must not enter it during ordinary gentle placement; do not pull the knot into the hole to check it. If a larger compatible stopper or a different bead is needed, change the plan; do not add glue to compensate. If the approved knot or tail requirement is unknown, stop and consult the cord maker.

12. Inspect the completed decoration on the tray

Look at both ribbon hems, the channel stitch line, cord paths, all bead rims and the knot. Ensure no needle, clip, frayed edge or loose bead remains. The ribbon should lie flat and the cord should not saw through the channel. Look for shifting, visible gaps or damaged fibres during ordinary gentle repositioning on the tray. Do not lift the book by the bookmark or perform a tug, snap or load test. Reject any questionable assembly; the appearance alone does not certify strength or durability.

Steps 13–14

13. Place only the flat ribbon between the pages

Use an ordinary reading copy. Position the ribbon so that the entire top hem lies above the page block and the lower channel, knot and beads hang beyond its lower edge. Check the position before closing the book gently, without pressure. If a fold, cord or bead moves into the page area, remove the bookmark and increase the projections or select a different design. Do not clamp the bookmark, force the book closed, attach it to the spine, or use it in a tightly packed shelf. Remove it before transporting or stacking the book.

14. Complete the records and care for the bookmark

Write the actual ribbon length, fold measurements, cord and bead products, approved knot and observed placement. Record USE AS DECORATION, CHANGE or HOLD; do not record a strength, archival or child-safety claim. Store the bookmark flat in a clean dry container, out of reach of children and pets. Reinspect before use and retire it if the stitching opens, the cord frays, the knot shifts, a bead chips or the ribbon marks paper. Reuse only intact supplies. Keep all hard components outside the book and never use the decoration as a handle.

Fix, care and preserve

The ribbon curls or puckers. Check stitch tension and whether the folds are even. Remake a cramped hem with a suitable ribbon; do not iron unknown materials or use heavy clips to flatten it inside a book.

The cord stops at the channel. Confirm that the mouths are open and the transverse seam is near the free edge, not the crease. Reopen and remake an obstructed channel. Never use a sharp point to widen it.

Both tails do not fit through a bead. Choose a larger smooth hole or compatible narrower cord that still accepts its approved finish. Do not compress, stretch or force two strands through a small bore.

The stopper looks too small or moves. Do not use the bookmark. The visible geometry is only a preliminary screen; remake with a compatible bead and maker-approved knot, or choose another construction. Do not rely on adhesive, a tight pull or a hidden knot to conceal the problem.

A decoration touches the page edge or leaves a mark. Remove it at once, increase the plain projections, or choose a flat undecorated bookmark. Avoid valuable or archival books entirely.

Source & evidence boundary

Original Steadleaf English prose, assembly dimensions, diagrams, cover and maker records. Factual context: Spotlight, Ribbon Bookmark Project (double-fold sewn ribbon hems); Beadalon Learning Center FAQ (selection of compatible bead openings and stringing materials, wire-specific advice must not be applied to textile cord). Consult the exact ribbon, cord and bead supplier's instructions for actual components.

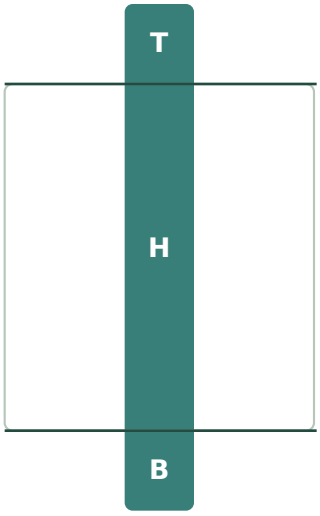
- Spotlight, Ribbon Bookmark Project: https://www.spotlightstores.com/en-au/projects/sewing-projects/ribbon-bookmark-project

- Beadalon Learning Center FAQ: https://www.beadalon.com/products/learning_center_FAQs.asp

No source images, patterns or instructional passages are copied. The publisher has not physically sewn, threaded, knotted, fitted, printed, colourfastness-tested, load-tested or used this bookmark. Examples are planning dimensions only. This is adult decorative craft guidance, not archival, durability, strength or safety certification.

Ribbon length and fold map

Schematic only, not a cutting template. All dimensions are examples; adapt to your actual book and ribbon.



Example measurements

Page block H	**200 mm**
Upper projection T	**30 mm**
Lower projection B	**30 mm**
Finished ribbon L	**260 mm**
Top + lower folds	**10 + 15 mm**
Cut length	**285 mm**

TOP HEM / 5 + 5 mm



Stitch near free folded edge.

LOWER CHANNEL / 5 + 10 mm



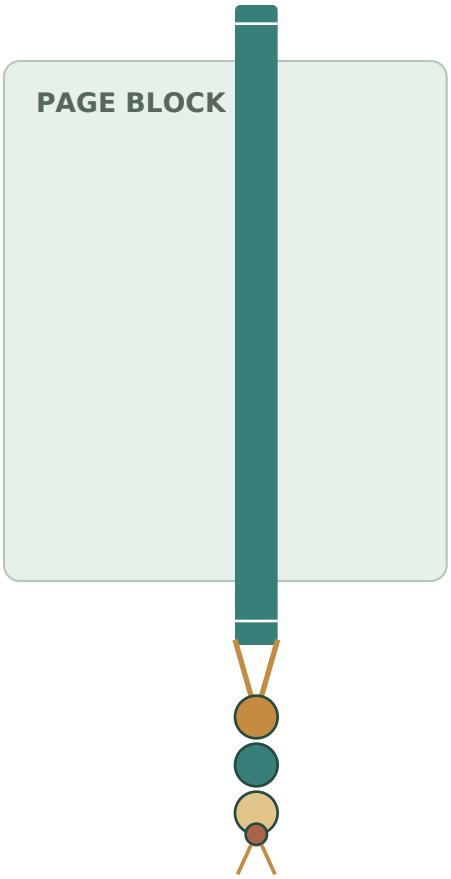
Leave both side mouths open.

Top: enclose the raw edge. Lower: the crease and transverse seam define the passage. Keep the side openings clear and verify gentle cord passage on a spare fold.

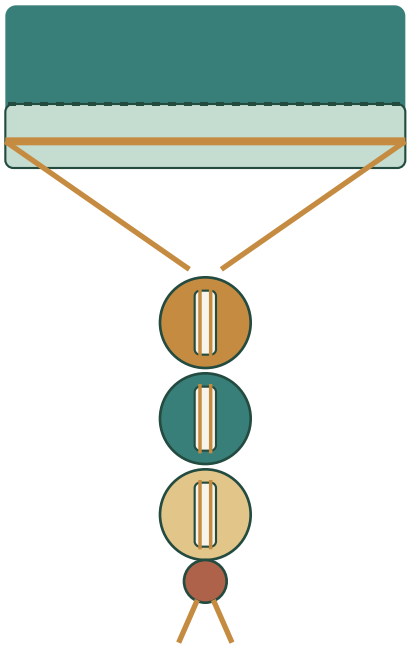
50 mm calibration — print Actual Size

Cord route and page placement

Enlarged illustrations, not to scale. Keep all bulky components beyond the page block.



Only the plain ribbon is between the pages.



Both tails through each bead

BUNDLED STOPPER / IF APPROVED FOR YOUR CORD

Treat both tails as one bundle. Form one loop, pass both ends through together, and seat according to the maker. Leave specified tails. The stopper must be visibly larger than the actual exit hole. Never pull it into the bore to test it.



Loop the paired bundle; pass both tails through together.

Book, ribbon and materials

Record actual dimensions and product guidance. Write UNKNOWN if not verified.

Book / page height H (mm)

Upper projection T / lower projection B (mm)

Finished ribbon length / cut length (mm)

Ribbon material / width / surface condition

Upper and lower fold allowances

Cord product / maker-approved knot and finish

Bead product / two relaxed strands pass freely?

Spare channel observation / side mouths clear?

Decision / reason / changes to plan

Assembly and placement

Record actual visual observations. No pull, durability or archival test is implied.

Actual cut and finished length / fold dimensions

Hem and channel stitches / two side mouths

Actual cord route / bead order

Approved knot / maker-specified tail length

Visible cord, stitch, bead and stopper condition

Upper hem outside the top page edge?

Lower channel, beads and knot all outside bottom edge?

Decision: USE AS DECORATION / CHANGE / HOLD

Reason / adjustment / care instruction