Book Bag Tutorial

The best bags for this process are made from uncoated paper, for this tutorial I am using a small gift bag, approximately *8”w x 10”h x 4.5”d.* If you want to use a coated paper bag you may need to experiment with glues and extend the drying time.

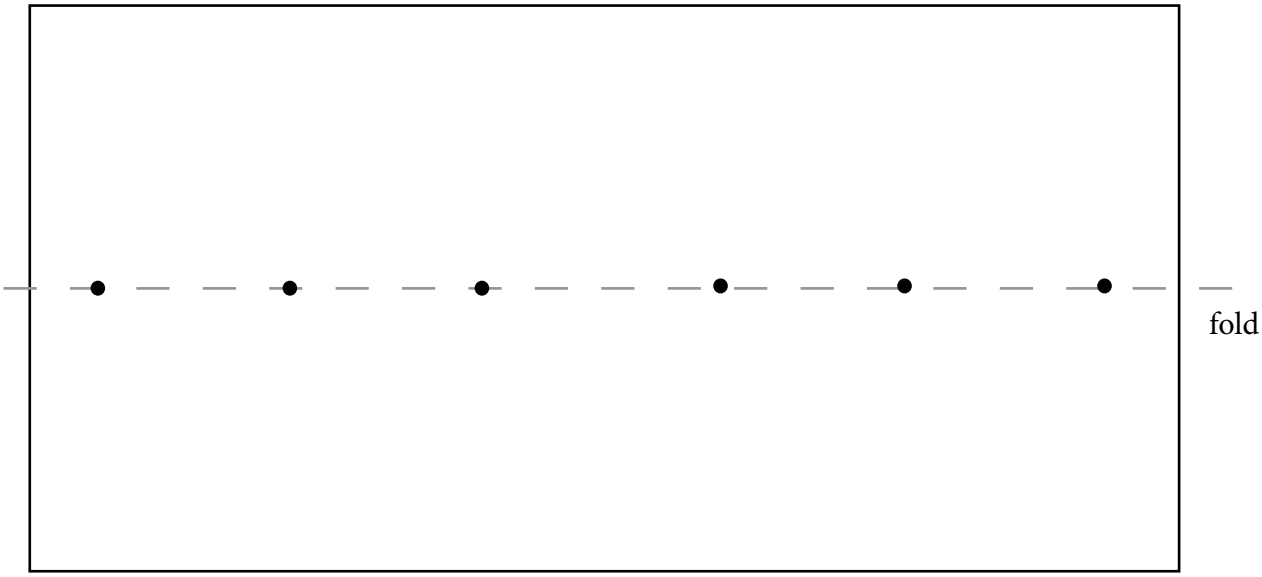
Materials:
Small paper bag with handles,
22 sheets 12x18 paper,
heavy thread (embroidery cotton, crochet thread, linen bookbinder’s thread),
button to match the bag,
paste or glue.

1. Carefully cut along the sides of the bag and gently open the glued bottom until you have two pieces
2. Next measure between the handles to find the center
3. For this size bag I measure 3.125 inches out from the center, mark and then score down this line and fold the edges towards the center. Hopefully there is enough to reach the center, if not I add a piece of plain brown paper (or something that coordinates with the bag) under the edges to add a little more stability, glue this down. Repeat with the other side of the bag; make sure the two pieces end up the same width. (If you use a larger bag adjust this measurement) For gluing I use a mix of half paste - half PVA.
4. Put the bags under weights to dry – overnight is best, but while you cut the paper will suffice.
5. For this size bag you need paper 6x12 inches, folded in half to make a 6x6 folio. I like to make signatures of 8 folios. For this model you need 8 signatures. *(or an EVEN number if your bag requires a smaller/larger spine*). I used 22 sheets of 12x18 drawing paper in the example.
6. Once your bag covers are dry, you need to cut them down, use the diagram as a guide for this: measure from the side with the handles, measure in 6.25 inches for the cover, 1.125 inches (1 and a sixteenth) for the spine, then *at least* an inch more to create the wrap around to the other cover. Cut the remainder off. Repeat with the second side.
7. Score and fold each cover as shown on the diagram, and nest them together. At this point I usually glue the spine together but this isn’t necessary. You can use a glue stick to just tack them together quickly, or use PVA and wait a few minutes while it dries.

8. Next I sew the decorative stitching on the covers. I just hold a straight edge parallel with the seam and measure off about 5mm increments and punch with an awl. Then I sew a running stitch through the pre-punched holes, using a heavy thread – embroidery thread works well if you want color, or crochet cotton, or linen binder's thread. Repeat for both sides.
9. Lay the spine punching template on the inside of the spine and holding securely punch the holes for the binding.

spine punching template

10. Use the signature pattern to punch the signatures – fold it in half and lay in the crease of your signatures, use an old telephone book to create a cradle if you don't own one. Punch holes where indicated on the template in each set of signatures



11. Now you are ready to start binding! I like to work with a thread that is about a yard long, which will require adding thread during the binding. D.o this using a square knot or a weavers knot. If you prefer to work with a longer thread and no knots you will need about 2 yards. Again, you can use a crochet thread, embroidery floss or binder's linen thread; wax your thread before binding with beeswax.
12. Start on the outside of the spine at a head station (you can sew front to back or back to front it doesn't matter) go in through the spine and the first signature, then out through station 2, then in at 3, out at 4, in at 5 and out at 6 (tail station), pick up the next signature by sewing in through the next row, through the spine at the tail station and into the second signature, sew back up the book reversing the procedure for the first signature, exiting at the head. Pick up the third signature sewing into the third row through the head station, into the signature. Continue in this way sewing up and down the spine until you have sewn in all the signatures.
13. The last step is adding the button. Take the thread back through the head station on the previous row but DO NOT sew into the signature, only the cover, cross between the signature and the cover and come back out at the next row. Depending on the size of your button, you may need to repeat this procedure again. Sew through the button, up and back down. Remove your needle.
14. Pick up the tail end of thread from the beginning of the sewing, and thread back through the head rows until you reach the button in the same way, sew through the button.
15. Pull both threads tight to nestle the button against the spine, wrap the threads behind the button and tie, wrap again and tie, trim the ends of the threads so they are hidden behind the button. Add a dab of PVA if you worry about your knots!
16. Enjoy your new book bag journal!!