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## The Secret Belgian Binding

### The Secret Belgian Binding

#### Instructions by Annette Hollander

These brief instructions show you how to bind a book with an interesting pattern of weaving which laces the front and back covers to the spine. Included is the sewing of the text block (a set of four signatures) which is attached to the inside spine of the cover. (Some binding experience is necessary.)

The secret is in the weave of the cover and in attaching the text block. It is not difficult to do, but requires patience in getting the threads taut so that the book does not wobble.



Hedi Kyle rediscovered this binding attributed to the Belgians, and she solved the mystery of how to make it.

#### The materials and tools needed are as follows:

- thin book board & decorative paper
- colored waxed thread
- 16 sheets of text weight paper to make up the signatures

- a metal edged ruler
  - x-acto knife and blades
  - scissors
  - pencil
  - bone folder
  - sewing thread (unwaxed)
  - sewing needles
  - pva glue
  - brush for gluing
  - masking tape
  - 2 spring clothes pins
  - awl
- 

### Secret Belgian Binding Instructions

Cut two covers out of thin book board or mat board 4" x 5-3/4", and one piece 5/8" x 5-3/4", for the spine. Cover and line each piece with solid or decorative paper.

Cut 2 thirty-inch lengths of colored waxed thread for weaving together the covers and spine. The second length will be attached with a square knot on the inside of the spine when needed.

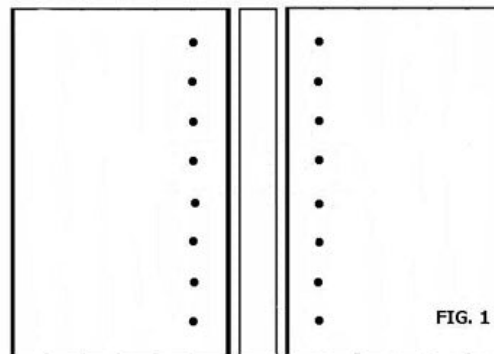
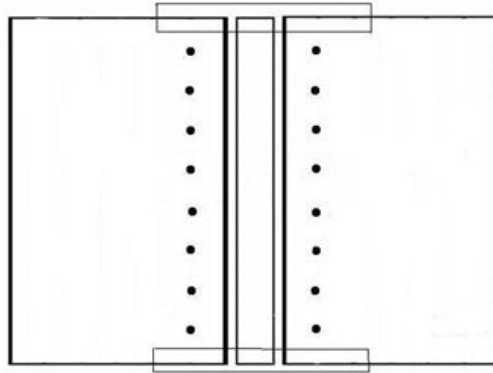


Fig.1 represents the outside of the cover. With an awl punch holes that are 5/8" apart and 5/8" from the spine edge.



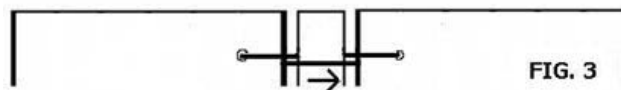
To hold the spine and covers in place while weaving, place masking tape at the top and bottom as shown below. There should be 1/16" space between the spine and covers.

Note: It is best to test the masking tape to be sure it can be removed without pulling the paper with it. Always remove it carefully to prevent it from tearing the paper. After weaving a few rows, the top masking tape may be removed.

Thread the thirty-inch length of the thread onto a needle. With the cover design facing you, start on the inside of the front cover (Fig.2) and bring the thread through the top hole. Leave 2" of the thread and secure it with masking tape. It will later be tied into a knot.



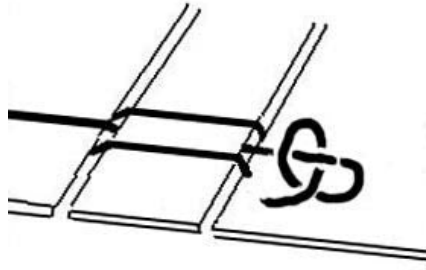
Weave the thread over the front cover and under the spine, then over the back cover into the top hole. Turn over and check that the thread is pulled taut but leave the 1/16" space between the covers and the spine. Weave the thread back under the back cover, (Fig. 3) over the spine and into the back of the hole of the front cover. Keep turning the cover to make sure the thread is not loose.



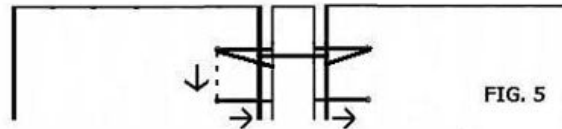
Weave back (Fig. 4) under the spine and into the top hole of the back cover.



Knot the thread at the end of the cover on the other side, as shown above.



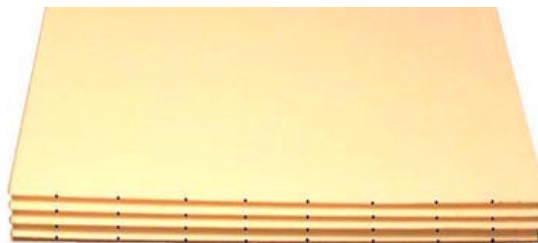
Bring the threaded needle down the back to the second hole in the back cover. (Fig. 5)



Continue weaving the covers together as in Fig. 2, 3, and 4 until you reach the bottom of the book. Knot the end.

### The Textblock

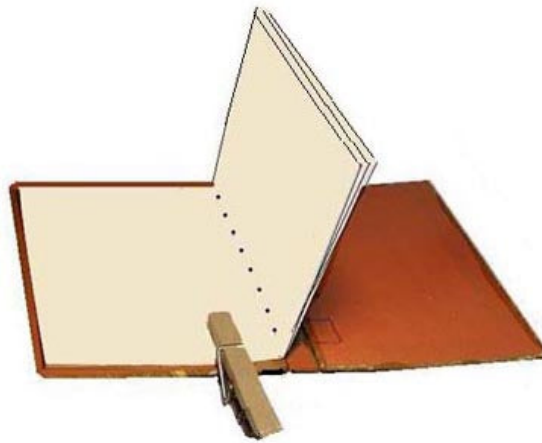
- Cut 16 sheets of paper 5-1/2" x 7-3/4"
- Separate into 4 stacks of 4 sheets each.
- Fold each stack in half and bone the crease with a bone folder.
- Each stack is called a signature.
- Place the 4 signatures on top of one another
- Mark sewing stations on the folded edges.
- The first and last marks are 1/2" from the edges.
- The rest are 5/8" apart to match the weaving on the cover.



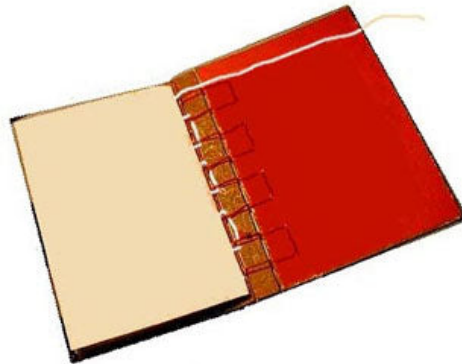
Using unwaxed thread, insert the needle into the first hole of the first signature. Leave a 2" tail:



Open the signature. Use a clothes clip to hold the signature in place while sewing:

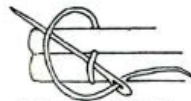
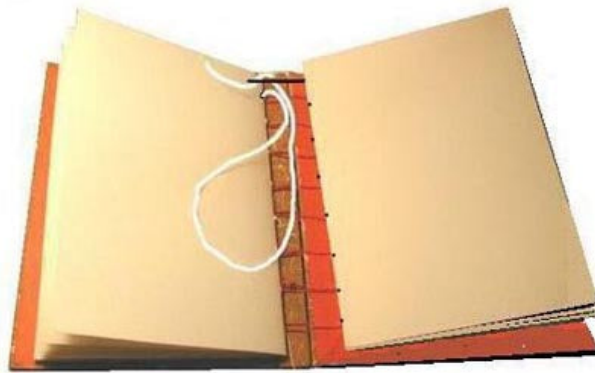


Lay the signature on the left side and weave in and out catching the lacing on the inner spine as it is sewn across the signature:

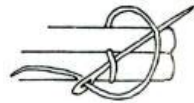


At the end of the first signature insert the needle into the second signature as shown below. Weave in and out of the holes catching the lacing in the spine as before. At the end of the second signature tie the thread to the 2" tail with a square knot. Continue sewing into the third signature in the same manner. At the end of the third signature the thread must be fastened to the second signature or there will be a gap. Do this by making a kettle stitch into the second signature before entering the fourth signature. At the end of the fourth signature do the

same. Be sure all threads sewn from the text block to the spine are taut before securing the last stitch with a kettle stitch knot.

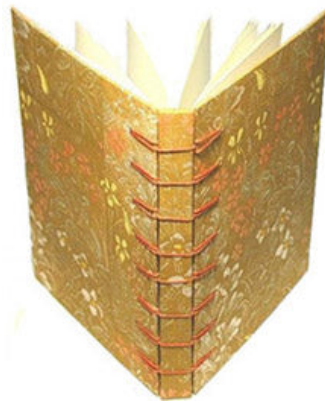


kettle stitch left side



kettle stitch right side

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**The Secret Belgian Binding is no longer a secret.**

*Annette Hollander is the mother of Tom Hollander, who along with his wife, Cindy, own Hollander's in Ann Arbor. Annette was one of the early pioneers of the book arts movement in the 1970's. She remained very active in the book arts until she passed away in 2014 at the age of 94.*

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