

How to make your own leather sheath

Step-by-step instructions

1



We hope that you will be able to source your materials using recycled items. The instructions provided are for a quite long knife (29cm) and using 2mm plain vegetable tanned leather, they can be adapted so that you will be able to make your own unique sheath. You will need a sharp craft knife, an awl, heavy needles, a hole punch and strong waxed thread.

2



Some simple rules to follow:

Leather can mark very easily always make sure that your work surfaces, tools, and hands are clean and free of grease.

3



1. Draw a line on a plain sheet of paper and lay your knife along it so that the top of the blade is running parallel to your line.

2. Gently roll the knife away keeping the point in contact with the line, hold in position and trace along the edge.

3. Add 1cm to line drawn.

4



4. Fold in half along the straight line.

5. Cut out following the outer line, this will give an even shape, it will be known as the "template".

5



6. Wrap the template around your blade and check the fit you should be able to comfortably pinch the paper together around the handle, if necessary repeat the process adding more in the areas required.

6



7. Trim the top so that it overlaps the handle, if you have a knife with a ferrule guard trim just below the guard. Lay the template flat this will determine what size of leather you will need to buy or find.

7



8



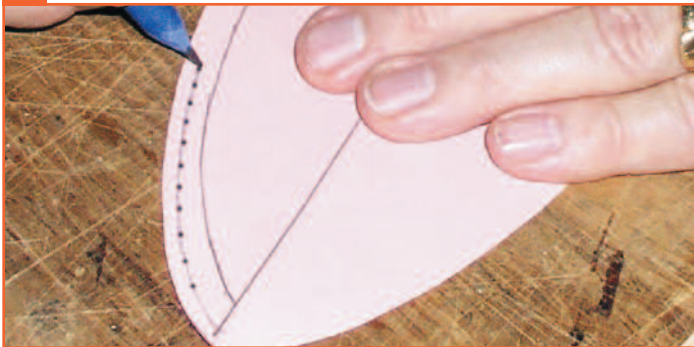
8. Lay the template down on your leather (leather used: plain 2mm vegetable tanned - obtained easily via the internet - do not forget to order enough for your strap) draw around and cut out the shape using a very sharp craft knife, do not let the blade stray from your line.

9



9. Wrap around your knife the piece of cut leather to make sure of the fit. Mark the centre line on the inside.

10



10. Return to your template, it is now time to mark your stitching points, draw a second line parallel to the outer edge and mark off in 3mm spaces with your pencil point. Do this on one side of your template.

11. Lay your template back on the leather and prick through with an awl or a very fine sharpened bradawl. Turn the template over and repeat the process on the other side, using this method will ensure that you will have the same number of stitching points in identical positions. (That's the theory)

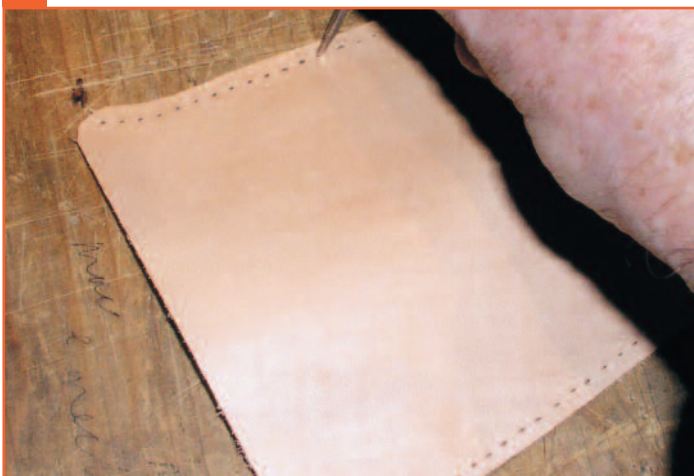
11



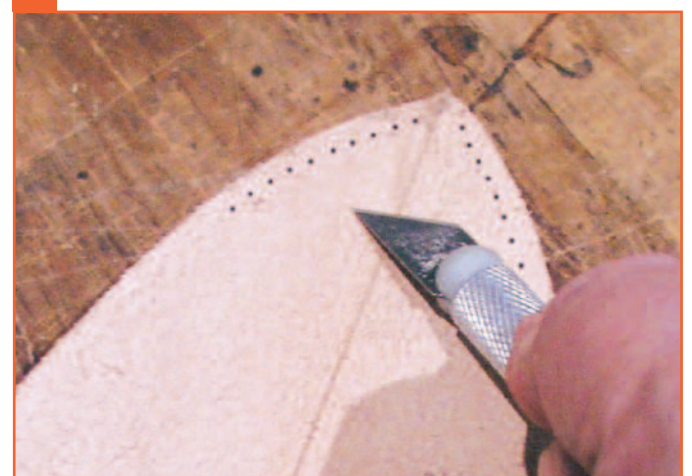
12. It is necessary to prick through the holes a second time this will make the stitching process much easier.

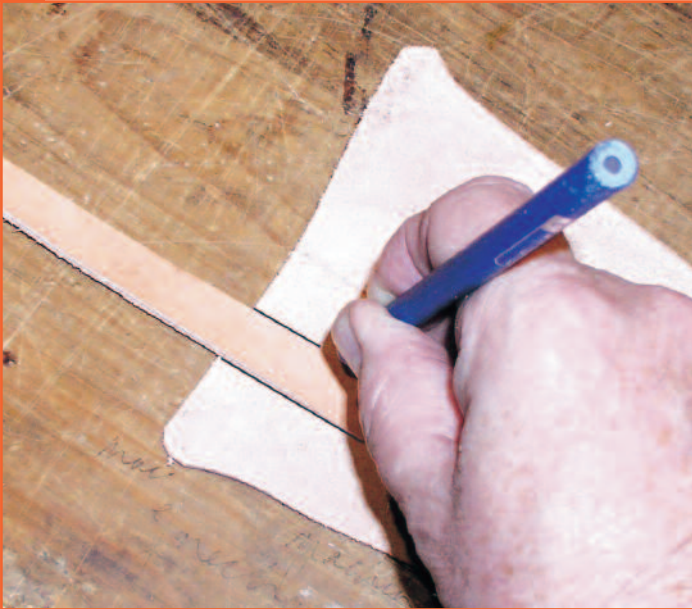
13. Turn the leather over and gently remove at least 1mm thickness of leather from the back at the knife point end, this will allow the leather to close properly when stitching.

12

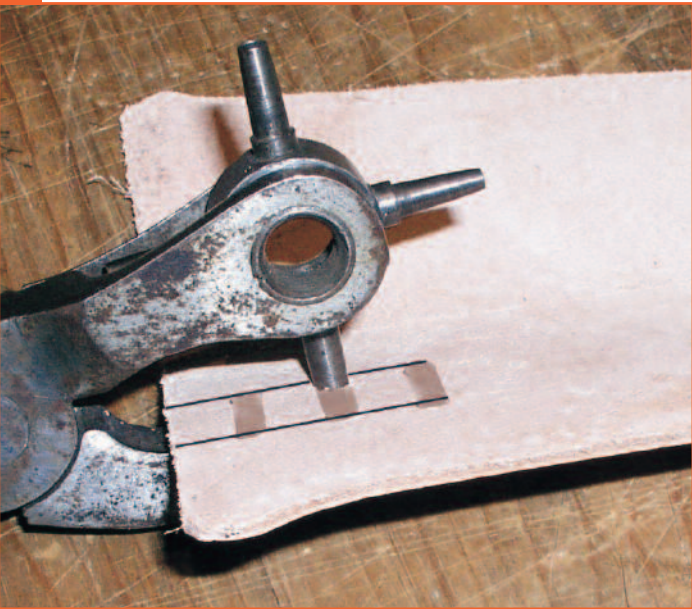


13



14

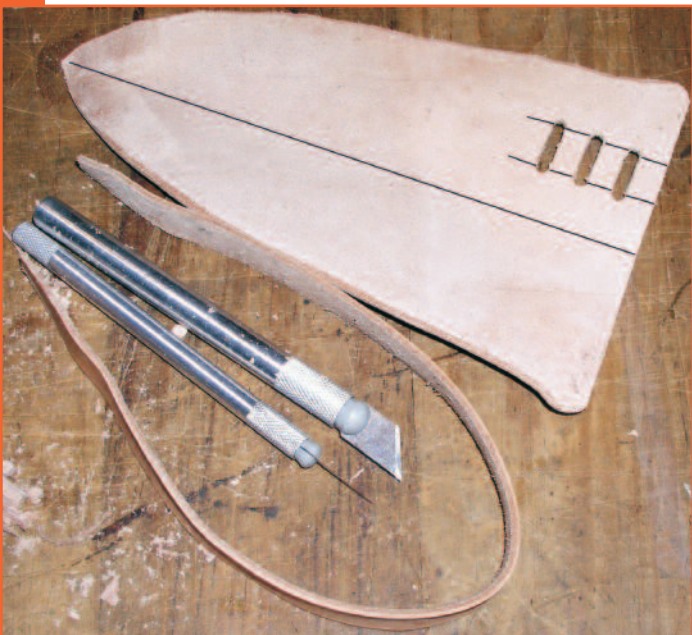
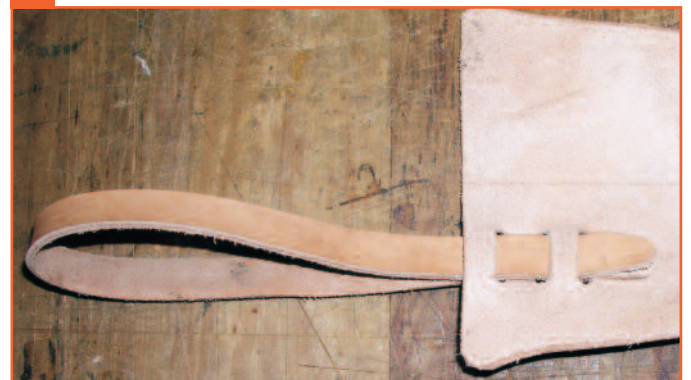
- 14.** To make a strap fitting for use with a belt: Cut a strip of leather 12mm x 2.5 times longer than your handle. Hold this strip on the back of sheath body, position in the centre and mark. (it is possible at this stage to make the sheath for either a left or right handed person at this stage by altering its position to the opposite side.

15

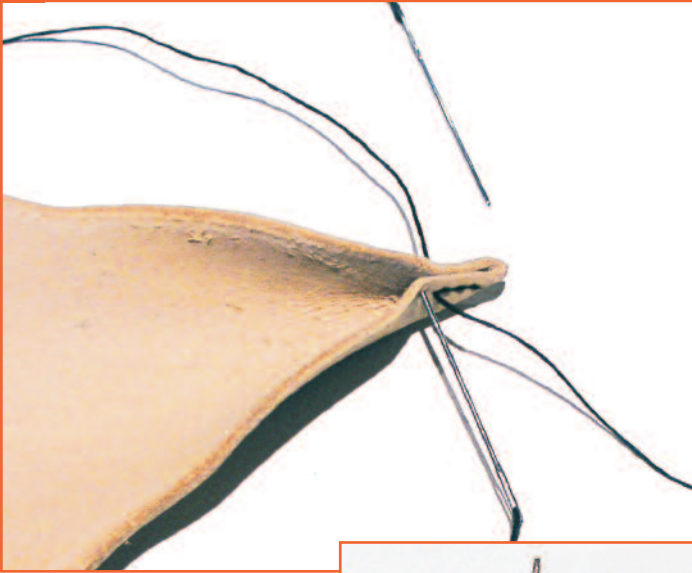
- 15.** Mark three slots 1cm down from the top and 1cm apart, punch through with the biggest setting on a hole punch, make sure you do not exceed the line, otherwise the strap will pull out.

- 16.** Join up the punched holes with your craft knife and shave down your strap 1cm on each end until quite thin. This will allow the strap to pass through the slots you have made.

- 17.** Make the strap into an even loop and pass through the front side of the sheath, then through to the outside again and then back, because the ends have been thinned it will help them to pass through. This will be quite tight to pull through. When you are happy with the position use a few drops of suitable adhesive to hold the ends in place.

16**17**

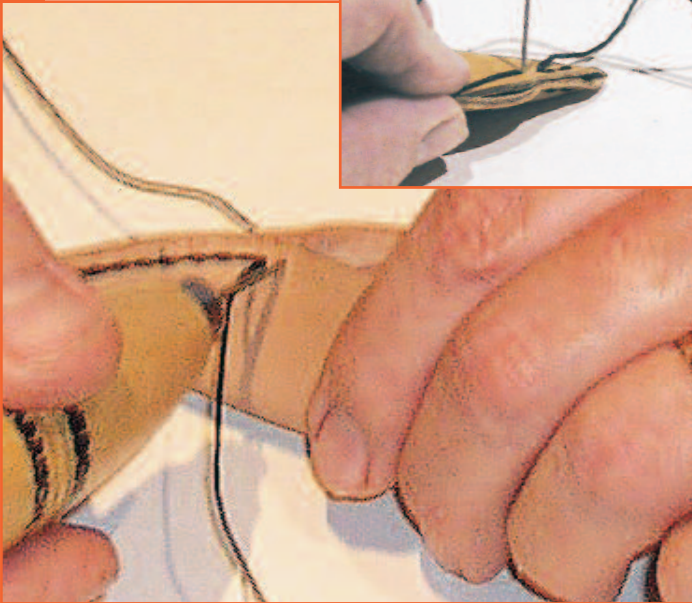
18



18. Soak the sheath and strap in water for 5 minutes, this makes the leather very pliable and much easier to work with. Cut a length of heavy waxed thread or whipping cord 6 times longer than the sheath, this may seem a little long, but with this double stitching process it will easily get used up.

Take two leather or heavy duty needles and thread onto each end of your thread. Pass one of the needles through each side of the first hole, and even up. Now take the second needle and pass through the second hole on both sides. Take the first needle and push through the back of the second stitch back right though and pull both sides tight.

19



19. Repeat this process right along the sheath, it will be necessary to use the awl again to expand the holes you made previously, using the awl makes it easier to find the holes to sew through.

20. Double stitch the last couple of holes and snip off the the thread back to the leather. The sown sheath is ready for moulding.

21. Moulding the sheath to fit the knife: Cover your knife with cling film, this will keep it dry as the leather dries out. Gently push the knife into the sheath, (this will make the leather open) until the knife will go no further. Using a suitable burnishing tool (the shaped end of an old wooden spoon) rub and burnish pushing and moulding the shape.

20



21

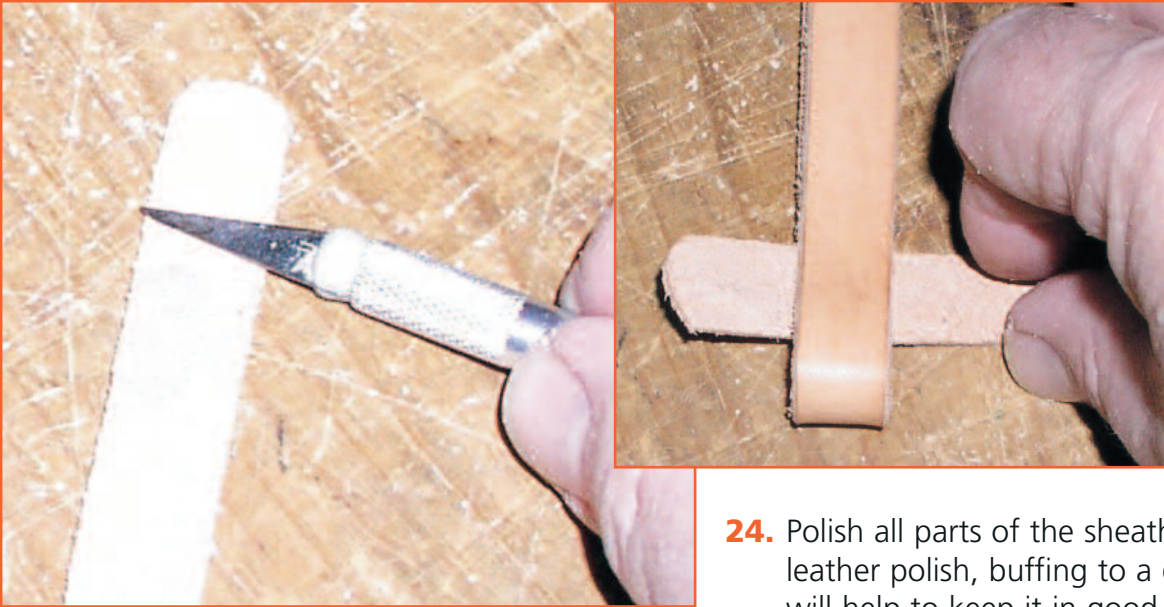


22

- 22.** Leave the knife in the sheath and leave to dry out naturally, do not bake or use any kind of drying device, when dry (about 12 hours) remove the cling film and check the fit. The knife should slide in and out quite easily.

Depending on the design of the handle it may be necessary to make a retaining band, which will help keep your knife in the sheath, using an off-cut from your leather cut a strip 1cm wide and wrap around your handle to get the correct length, make sure you leave enough overlap for gluing (3cm).

- 23.** Carefully remove leather from each end the back of the retaining band, when thin pass through the belt loop and glue together using an appropriate leather glue.

23

- 24.** Polish all parts of the sheath with a good leather polish, buffing to a good shine, this will help to keep it in good condition.

24