



This pen holder takes up to two hours of hands on work time.

Things you will need.

- About 9cm x 16cm of 2mm Vegetable Tanned leather.
- About 45 to 50cm x 3.5cm of 1.5mm Vegetable Tanned leather.
- A couple of small pieces of 1.5mm leather for the 'keeper' and 'welt' type part
- A box cutter
- A metal or sturdy plastic ruler
- A modeling tool
- Calipers
- An awl
- Pricking irons (5mm pitch)
- A No.2 edger
- Leather dye / applicators

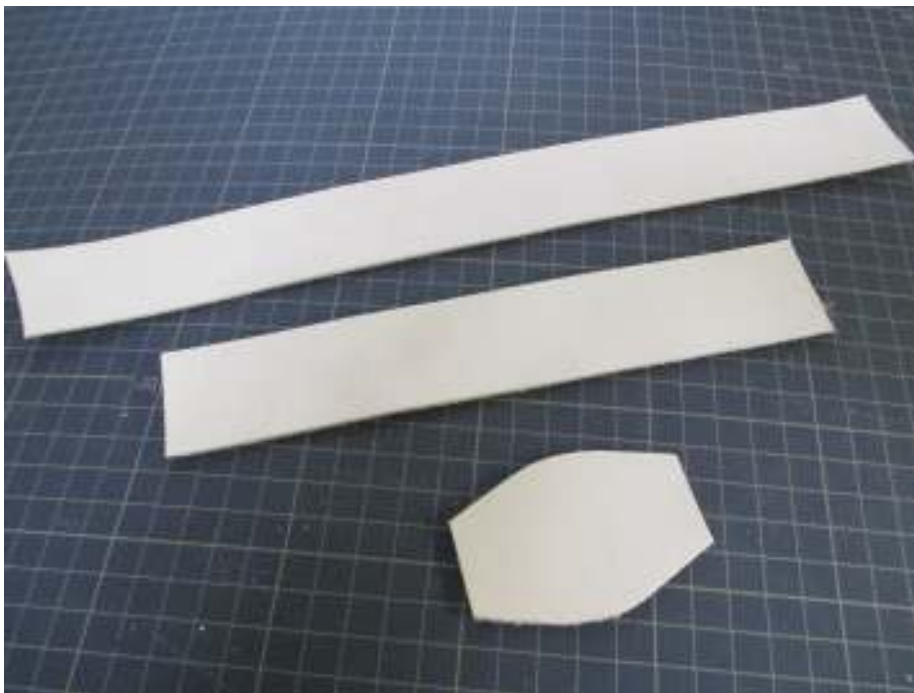
- A skiving knife
- Contact cement
- Polyester thread (about 1mm)
- A couple of leather working needles
- Gum tragacanth or similar product
- Carnauba cream
- Resolene (sealant / finisher)
- Burnishing tool (a pepper mill would do!)



This is a piece of 16mm square wood which I rounded off with a laminate trimmer and sanded round at the end. I used three dowels to fix it to a smooth, level wooden base.



I take a piece of 2mm thick vegetable tanned leather (about 9cm x 16cm) Soak it in water for a minute and then wet form it over the mold. I find a modeling tool is very helpful. Staple or nail the piece down and leave to dry completely.



Take a piece of 1.5mm veg tanned leather, I find 2mm is optimal for the wet formed part but too thick for the other parts. Then cut a long strip 3.5cm wide. You need at least 31cm for the long one and at least 18cm for the short. We will trim down later. This is easy if you have a metal ruler at that width.

For the keeper, I use a custom made cookie cutter which gives me those uniform curves but a rectangle 7cm x 4.5 to 5cm would be fine. I make them to be a snug fit, if you are unsure, go a little extra (say up to 5cm) to be certain the strap part will go under the keeper easily.



Using calipers set at 3mm, score stitching lines. Then, using pricking irons mark and punch the optimal number of holes. The irons I use are at a 5mm pitch. I use a 1cm thick rubber mat from the hardware store under the piece and just push the two pronged iron through the leather, no need for a mallet.



Next take a No2 edger around the edges to take the sharpness off the edges.



The wet formed part now has the staples removed and I put a pencil mark where I will cut the end off square. It is 12.5cm from the tip to top. You could go a little shorter but any longer and the pen will be getting lost inside and be difficult to retrieve!



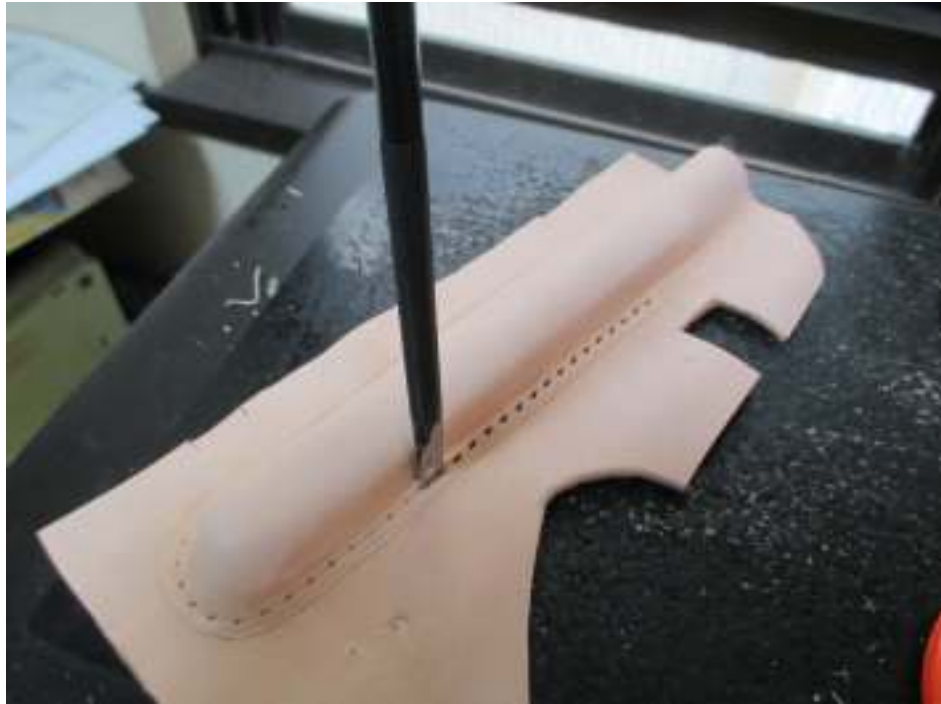
Taking the calipers again (always at 3mm) I score a line as close to the 'wall' as possible. The inner line will be for stitching and the outer will be the edge of the pouch.



As before, I mark the stitching line with the pricking irons and then make the holes. I do this before cutting off the excess because it's easier to pull the iron out without distorting the leather when you've got some mass there.



Note that I started and finished just shy of the cut off line.



With my faithful Stanley knife, I cut the end square at the pencil mark.





With the metal ruler as a fence, I cut the outer scored line.



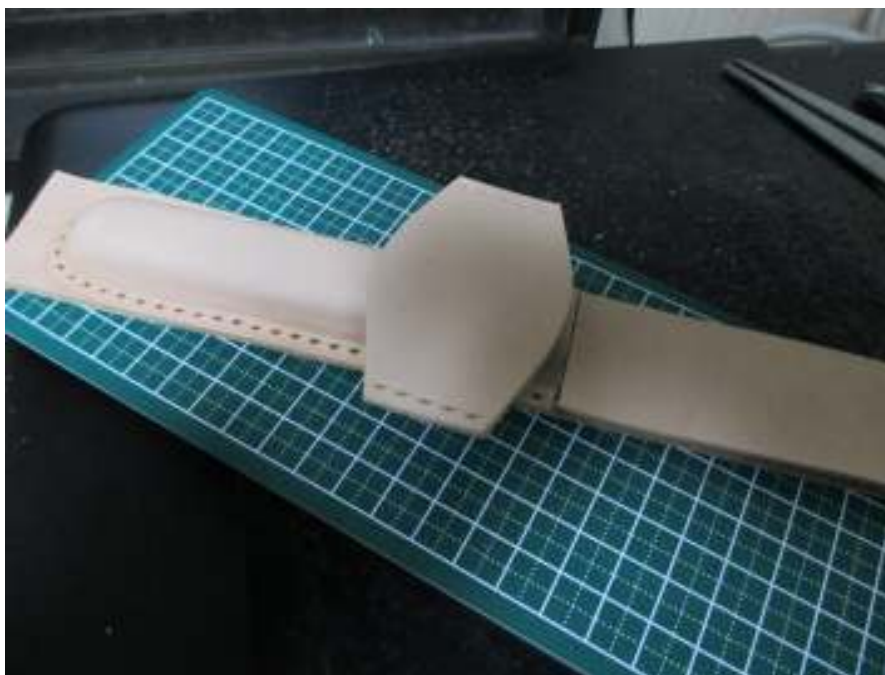
Then take a dab of contact cement and put it on the very end of the wet formed part. Affix the very end of the LONG strip I cut earlier. This will stop it moving about when marking the holes for the strip. Using an awl I push down and make pricks in the long strip which will later match up with the wet formed parts holes.







I then pull the pieces apart and score a line with calipers again at 3mm. I don't mind going just inside the line as you can see here but nearer the edge might become a problem later.



You can see it taking shape now.



With a piece of 3.5cm x 6.5cm, 1.5mm thick leather I want to make the 'welt' part. This makes the product much more rigid and gives me an ideal place for my makers stamp. Use a cup or anything suitably curved and mark with a pencil. Make sure this curve will approximate well with the curve on the tip of the wet formed piece.



I like to cut thin leather with craft scissors; a box cutter can be a little tricky.



Score around the edge, mark and make holes with the pricking iron. Leave the top curve alone as we won't be stitching there



Square the end of the SHORT piece we prepared earlier. Using a skiving blade, thin down to nothing the end (about 1.5cm)



We want it to look like this.



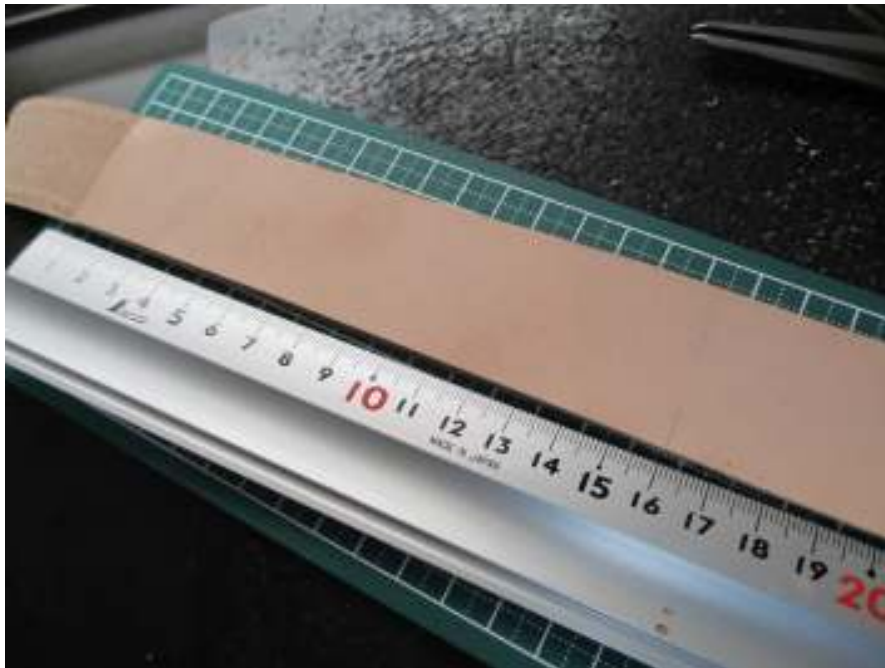
Mark with a pencil where you want this piece to line up. It's good for it to be touching the wet formed part.



Use the awl to hatch the surfaces to give the contact cement a good bond.



Glue it down to the meet the pencil line.



Mark off the glued down piece at 16cm from the skived end.



This is the reverse side. At 16cm from the skived end I mark a curve and cut with craft scissors.

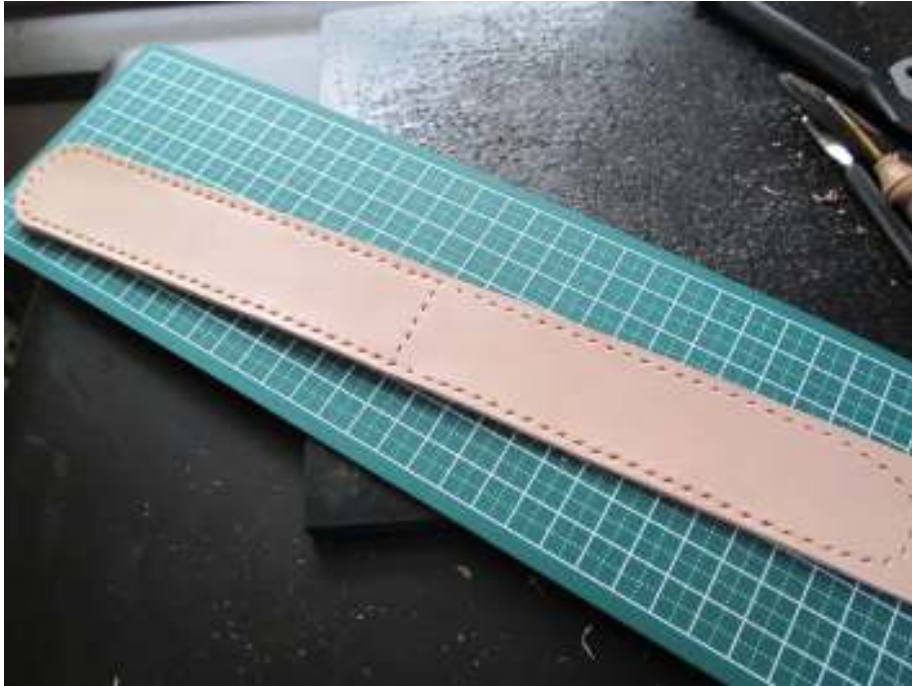


As before, score around the edge, mark and make holes. I like to do this with the skived piece down on the mat as it gives a better looking holes from the top side which will be most seen.



I add two extra holes and a line for stitches which will prevent any fraying of the skived part.



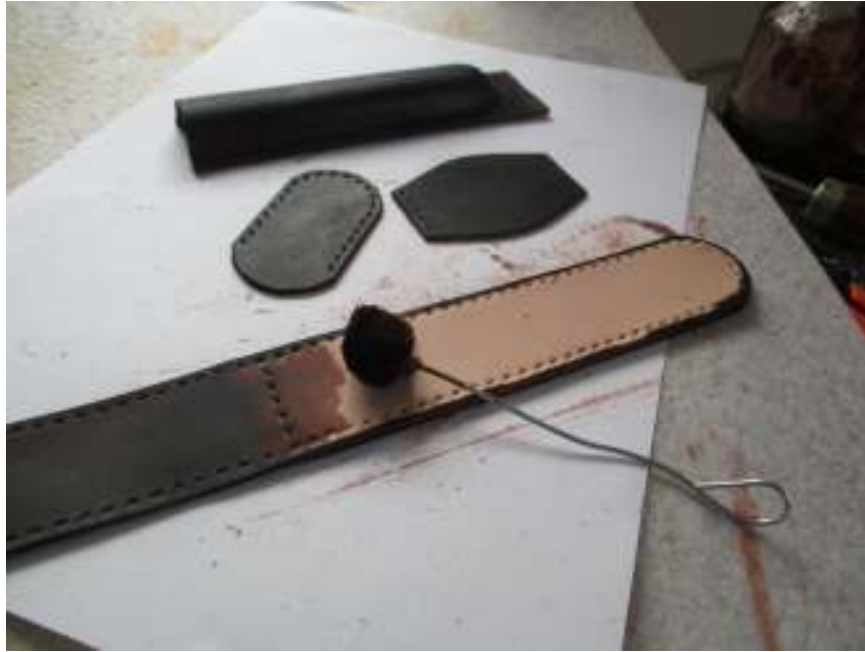


Now all the holes have been made, let's get to dyeing.



I use Fiebing's oil dye, this one is Dark Brown. I use a wool dauber to apply the dye first to the undersides of the leather.

Fairly saturate the leather on the grain side. I may apply three or four coats and add a little extra to the stress points (the parts which will be bent / stretched eg. The keeper)





Before it is totally dry, I stamp my makers mark on the 'welt' piece using an arbor press.



After some light buffing with a cotton cloth (old t-shirt) a nice shine is coming through. I have applied some carnauba cream at this stage to bring out the richness. Also, I blacked up the edges with black oil dye applied with a cotton bud.

I always apply a Gum Tragacanth type product (トコノール) to the fuzzy sides of the leather. This slicks down the leather to make it smooth and prevent fuzzies.

When dry, I lightly added a coat of Fiebing's Resolene to help seal the leather. I use a damp cloth and wipe over the surfaces with a little of the product.

Before stitching I burnished the edges which will be difficult to access after construction.



I start stitching at this point (see pic) and go from left to right around the pouch. Note that the keeper is sandwiched.

For stitching, I use a heavy gauge waxed polyester thread. The length of thread you need is about 4 times the length of the project. The thread I like is by Seiwa. Using two leatherwork needles get on with saddle stitching. There are great tutorials on youtube -- Nigel Armitage's is a very good one.



I like to put a double stitch where the 'welt' joins.





The trickiest part of the stitching is pictured here. It is intuitive what you have to do though and it just takes a little more time. You have to push the needles through one layer of leather at a time and work the needles through at an angle.



Here I have reached the goal. I stitched the line to stop fraying last and then tied off, burying the knot.



I finally burnish the edges with a Gum Tragacanth type product and a piece of canvas and a burnishing stick as seen here. I will also use a ladle handle to stretch it out from the inside and puff it out a bit. Of course you need to trim the tip (I use scissors again) and you'll have to blacken the exposed edges and burnish.

A final buffing with a cotton cloth and it is good to go!