

GETTING STARTED IN LEATHERWORK

A great thing about leatherworking is that you don't need a lot of kit to get going. You can start with a few items and add to them as and when you find you have a need.

Instruction book When I start a new activity the first thing I do is buy a book and for a starter book in leatherworking I would strongly recommend "Leathercraft Tools" (order code 1960) This gives a drawing of most of the common tools and a short explanation of how they are used. It forms a good catalogue of methods and possibilities.

Cutting To start with I would suggest a classic Stanley Knife or one of the modern ones with snap off blades.

Cutting surface. You will need a surface to cut onto that will not blunt your knife. A plastic vegetable cutting board from a kitchen is ideal or you can use hardboard for larger areas. Don't use wood with a grain because this can command the blade and throw your cutting out of line.

Hole cutting. Many people like pliers with six cutting tubes set like spokes on a wheel (order code T06) I prefer the mini punch set (T118) This is used with a hammer and is a lot less work.

Slot cutting. If you need to cut a slot to put a buckle onto a strap the best tool is an English crew punch (order code T113) no 39 is the most popular. A cheaper option is the imported slot punch (order code T129) It is also possible to cut two round holes and cut between them with a wood chisel.

Edge finishing On heavier Veg-Tan leathers it is common to take a chamfer off the edges. An edge beveller no 1 or no 2 (order code T46) would be good choices.

Riveting The most popular rivets are the two part tubular ones. These are used with a riveting tool. The correct size for the rivet you chose is listed on the chart of rivet sizes. The basic method is to bash the rivet cap with the rivet tool and hammer which causes the rivet stem to mushroom inside the cap and form a permanent bond.

Eyelets These are fixed with a hammer tool. The correct size of tool for the eyelet you choose is listed on the chart of eyelet sizes.

Sewing The cheapest starter kit for sturdy leathers would be an awl handle T10 + awl blade T11 2" and a packet of T26 needles. Life would be a bit easier if you add a stitch punch T176 and much better if you could stretch to an English pricking iron T171 or T172. More detailed info is available on our "How-To" page.

Thonging can be used to produce many decorative effects. Flat 3mm (order code L2) is often used with a flat spring thonging needle (T23) and holes made for this with any of the 3 mm thonging chisels or a round hole punch. Round thonging can also be used and you might like to use a round thonging needle (T80 or T81) for this.