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Leathercraft Tutorial

Forest Animals Keychains

REQUIREMENTS

Skills

[ ] Leather dyeing
[ ] Edge burnishing
[ ] Saddle stitching

Tools

[ ] 0.5x4mm stitching prong / 0.5mm hole punch
[ ] Stitching Awl
[ ] Scissors or X-Acto knife
[ ] Applicator for the dye
[ ] Edge slicker
[ ] 2 leather stitching needles
[ ] Hammer or mallet
[ ] Cotton rag

Bill Of Materials

[ ] 2/3 oz veg tanned calfskin
[ ] 1 keyring / keychain
[ ] Thread
[ ] Polyester stuffing
[ ] Leather dyes
[ ] Leather finishing product
[ ] Oil
[ ] Beeswax
[ ] Sandpaper

WALKTHROUGH

1 Printing and cutting-out the pattern

Print it on A4 paper and cut-out the pieces of the project.

Make sure that the pattern is not resized in your print settings. You can check if it was printed properly by measuring the reference found at the bottom of each page.

> ℹ Print on thick paper to make it easier to trace the shape on the leather. 200g/cm2 and above is ideal (as long as your printer can handle it).

2 Tracing the outline of the pattern onto the leather

Using an awl, trace the outline of the pattern pieces onto the leather.

Each keychain is composed of two pieces of leather stitched back to back. The corresponding element of the pattern will have to be traced twice. However the back is a mirrored version of the front. You will thus have to turn the pattern over to trace the pair matching the front.

Two options are available for the key-ring tab denoted A1 and A2 on the pattern. I initially only included A1 which accommodates for the dimension of a key-ring and added A2 after starting the project to accommodate for the smaller ring of a chain which I wanted to try out.

Don't forget to mark the positions of the holes that we will need to punch through later on. You can use a bit of masking tape to hold the pattern pieces in place while you are marking

Checklist of all the pieces to trace for:

- Each Keychain
  [ ] A1 or A2 (see explanation above) x1
- The Rabbit
  [ ] B x1 regular and x1 mirrored (pattern turned over)
  [ ] C x1
- The Wolf
  [ ] D x1 regular and x1 mirrored
  [ ] E x1
- The Fox
  [ ] F x1 regular and x1 mirrored
  [ ] G x1
- The Deer
  [ ] H x1 regular and x1 mirrored
  [ ] I x1 regular and x1 mirrored
  [ ] J x1
- The Bear
  [ ] K x1 regular and x1 mirrored
- The Horse
  [ ] L x1 regular and x1 mirrored
  [ ] M x1
  [ ] N x1

3 Punching the stitching holes

Use stitching prongs or a hole punch to punch the stitching holes for all the pieces.

4 Cutting-out the pieces of leather

Using a pair of scissors or an X-Acto knife, cut-out all the pieces of the scene.

> ℹ A reminder to make the cuts that will represent the mane of the horses.

5 Dyeing the leather

For this project I used different colors for each keychain, ranging from black to different browns to orange for the fox and white for the rabbit.

I left the ring tabs natural to keep a reminder of the natural color of the leather on the final keychain.

> ℹ Once the leather is completely dry, apply a light rub of oil to re-hydrate it and protect the dye.

6 Stitching it all together

We will use the saddle stitching technique to stitch the two opposite sides of the key-chain together.

Have your keyring handy as we will have to set it up once the keyring tab is stitched between the two body pieces.

The pattern indicates where to start the stitching line and where to add the different other elements of the keychain.

Add some stuffing as you stitch the perimeter of the animal.

The keyring tab and if applicable the tail or mane will have to be positioned in between the two opposite pieces of the body before being stitched in.

The same procedure applies to all the animals.

7 Burnishing the edges

Bevel the edges of your leather pieces with your edge beveler (size n°1 in my case).

Use ~200 grit sandpaper to smooth-out any irregularity, then use progressively finer grit to prepare the edges for burnishing. The finer the grit, the smoother the edges will be which will make the actual burnishing a lot easier and the result look a lot cleaner.

Burnish the edges using the method of your choice. I usually apply some tokonole to the edge and use a wood edge slicker to create the friction necessary for burnishing. You can also use a cotton rag and simply dampen the edge, it works quite well (often better than a low quality wood slicker).
friction and melt the coat of wax evenly.

8 Finishing touches

To finish your work, nourish and protect the leather by applying the conditioning product of your choice on the keychain and polishing it with a cotton rag.

I use a leather balm that I make by gently melting together "au bain-marie" 1 part beeswax and 6 parts olive oil.

I hope you enjoyed following along this tutorial.
Please don't hesitate to contact me [alexis@nomadecrafts.com] if you have any question or feedback regarding this project.

Happy crafting!

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Alexis