How to Sew a Chapbook
By Arielle Hessler, Bookbinder

You Will Need...
- Awl: for punching holes
- Needle: for sewing
- Bone Folder: for folding/creasing paper
- Beeswax (optional): for easier sewing
- Sharp Blade/Scissors: for cutting
- Printing Templates
- Text Weight Paper: for pages
- Heavy Paper: for cover
- Cotton Thread

Step One - Create a Punching Template
Decide on your sewing design, and create a punching template from a thick, tough paper equal in length to the spine.

ONE HOLE

Advantage: Quick and easy. Punching template only needed if you want the hole dead center.
Disadvantage: The thread puts constant pressure on the outer edges of the folded pamphlet, causing accelerated wear and tearing.

THREE HOLES

Advantage: Quickest and easiest to sew without sacrificing longevity. Sewing in the middle, head, and tail of the pamphlet makes it secure.
Disadvantage: Not as artistic or ‘pretty’ as other types of sewing. More noticeable knot in the middle of the work.

MULTIPLE HOLES

Advantage: Greater artistry is possible with more complicated stitching patterns. It also can look more professional.
Disadvantage: More time-consuming, and more skill is needed for it to look pristine.

Punching Template Tips
- Cut the templates after the signature is completely folded. Punching template should be the same length of the spine.
- Use a scalpel or X-acto knife to cut tiny triangles out where the holes will be punched. The triangles will guide and hold the awl in the correct place when punching the holes.
- To create equal spacing quickly, use a piece of scrap paper the length of the spine and fold it multiple times. Open up the folded paper, and mark a spot on the template where each fold is—these will be the punching holes.
**Step Two**

Lay the folded paper signature in a punching cradle or on its side. Use the template to punch the holes in the spine.

**Step Three**

**WAX THREAD**

Run thread between thumb and beeswax twice.

**Simple Pamphlet Sewing**

1. Enter the middle hole from the outer spine, towards the inner spine. Leave a few inches of excess thread.

2. Go up and push the needle through the top hole from the inside, to the outer spine.

3. Pass the middle hole and reenter the spine from the bottom hole.

4. Go up and exit the book from the middle hole, taking care not to pierce the thread already there.

5. Separate the two loose strands so the long outer stitch (step 3’s stitch) is between them. Make a knot around the long middle stitch, so it’s at the knot’s center. Secure with a double knot.

Tie a bow, add beads, or simply cut the loose threads.
Single-Sheet, Folded Chapbooks

By Arielle Hessler, Bookbinder

SINGLE-SIDED PRINTING

1) Orient sheet into Landscape. Use textboxes to evenly space content into 8 sections.

2) Pages 1-4 are right side up, from left to right, across the top half of the sheet.

3) Left to right on the bottom half of the sheet, the pages are: Front Cover (F), Back Cover (B), Page 6, and Page 5.

4) Flip any content on pages F, B, 6 and 5 upside down; content should represent the location and orientation of the numbers and letters in the diagram.

TIP
If you are using a separate cover, F becomes the first page and B the last page. Adjust the other page numbers up by one.

DOUBLE-SIDED PRINTING

1) Follow the instructions for single-sided printing, but divide content into pages according to the below diagram. For example, the Front Cover (F) content would go upside down on the bottom left corner of Side A.

2) If there will be a separate cover, F becomes page 1, B becomes page 16, and the other numbers go up by one (eg. 3 becomes 4).

3) Once folded and sewn, double-sided printed chapbooks will need to have the outer edges of the book sliced open with a letter opener or paper knife.

TIP
Check how your printer produces double-sided items— make sure the front and back pages are lining up right!

Stony Brook University Libraries Preservation Department Workshop Series
**Folding the Paper**

**Step One: Creasing the Folds**

1. Fold in half
2. Open and fold in half again
3. Fold sides back again to create quarter folds

**Step Two: Slicing the Center**

1. Cut the designated middle fold
2. After cutting, fold the sheet in half lengthwise
3. The paper should be folded with the folded and cut edge facing up.

**Step Three: Making the Signature**

1. Pop the middle section open by pushing the two uncut sides towards the center. Re-create any incorrect folds so that the bend in the correct direction.

Use the labeled corners to keep track of the movements.
2. Push corners A and C towards the middle, until the center diamond flattens to form corners B and D.

3. Fold the pages around, with corners A and D as the front and back.

TIP
After it’s folded, you may have to flip the booklet to have the pages right-side up.
Half-Fold Method
By Arielle Hessler, Bookbinder

DOUBLE SIDED PRINTING

Double sided printing on single sheets, and then folding the printed pages in half once to create a signature.

Note: The pages will not go 1, 2, 3, 4... they will need to be organized so that when a stack of sheets are folded in half, the pages are correct.

1) Page organization for printing changes based on the total number of pages you have. Determine how many pages you will need for the chapbook before moving the text around.

2) The first sheet is organized so that at final printing, the first and last two pages are on the same sheet. The first and last pages are on the 'back' side of a sheet, and the second and second to last on the 'front.'

EXAMPLE: 20 PAGE CHAPBOOK

Sample organization of the first two pages in a Word Document before printing.

SHEET ONE

20
1

SHEET TWO

2
19

flip horizontal

NOTE

As the first page, page 1 will be on the backside of the paper. When folded in half, it becomes the first page.

FINAL PRINTED PAGE

TIP

Check how your printer does double-sided printing. Some flip it vertical, some horizontal- make sure your pages are coming out correctly.
3) Follow the format of the first example sheet, with the odd numbers staying on the same side as 1 and 19, and the evens the same sides as the 2 and 20. Count up or down by odds or evens for each side (the first half of the pages going ‘up’ in page number, the second half of pages going ‘down’) until the numbers meet in the middle- in a 20 page chapbook, those pages are 10 and 11.

4) After printing, stack the completed sheets in order and simply fold in half as a stack, not individually. If using a separate cover of thicker paper, fold that in half with the stack too, if possible.

**TIP**

If using an odd number of pages, choose the first or last “page” on that first sheet to be a blank page. For example, for a 19 page chapbook, you could make page 1 or 20 blank when you organize the text.

**COMPLETE 20 PAGE CHAPBOOK**