

## MULTISECTION BOOK

The multisection book (*retchōsō*) is unusual in that it has no Chinese prototype and appears to be uniquely Japanese. Like butterfly binding, it developed in the Heian period (794–1185). Refined in appearance, the multisection binding was widely used for works of native literature, including narrative tales, Noh chants, and poetry. It does not appear to have been used for Chinese or Buddhist texts.

Because there is no binding margin, Japanese multisection books can be opened perfectly flat, a fact that makes for easier reading. In many respects, the multisection binding is actually closer to the sewn bindings of the West than to other styles of Japanese books.

The stitching may be done with either one or two needles. The single-needle method is the one described here. A double strand of fine binding thread is used for the stitching, but for practice a single strand may prove easier to manipulate. When a stitch doubles over a previously sewn portion, the new thread will cross over the original stitch rather than lie alongside it. The procedure for binding a multisection book is so complex and time-consuming that there are few binders today who know how to do it properly.

### Finished Dimensions

150 × 180mm / 5 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 7 $\frac{1}{16}$ "  
(w × h)

### Materials

**Text:** 15 sheets of thick Japanese paper, 300 × 180mm / 11 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 7 $\frac{1}{16}$ "

**Cover:** 2 pieces of backed fabric or 2 sheets of Japanese paper of heavier weight than that used for the text, cut 15mm /  $\frac{3}{8}$ " larger than the folded text all the way around

**Cover reinforcement:** 2 additional pieces of cover material, cut slightly smaller than the completed cover

**Endpapers:** 2 sheets of Japanese paper cut 15mm /  $\frac{3}{8}$ " wider and 30mm / 1 $\frac{3}{16}$ " longer than the folded text

**Title strip:** 1 strip of gold- or silver-flecked Japanese paper, 30mm / 1 $\frac{3}{16}$ " × two-thirds of book height

**Silk binding thread:** 2 strands, each about 1200mm / 47" long

**Paste**

### Tools

Needle

Awl

Knife

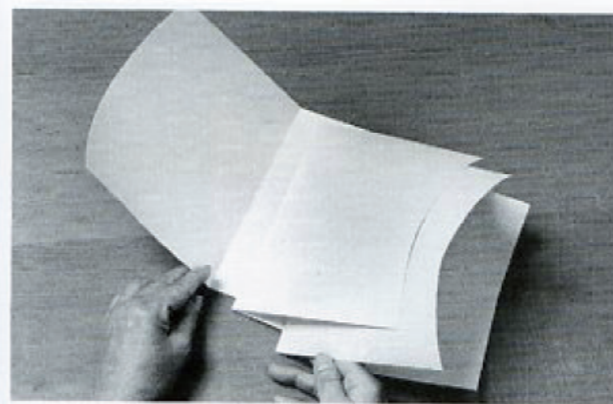
Scissors

Bamboo folding tool (or bone folder)

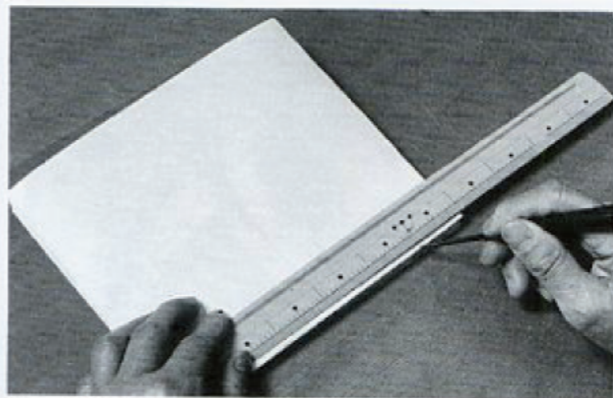
Ruler

Paste brush

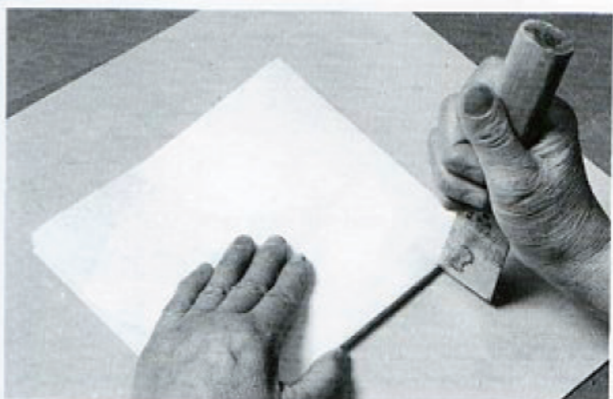
Paste dish



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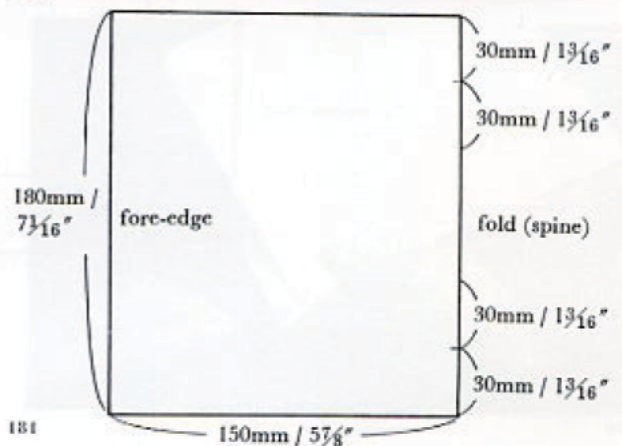
178. Fold the text papers in half. Arrange the papers in five sets of three sheets each, inserting one sheet inside the next as shown.

179. Assemble the five sections in a neat pile with all the folded edges facing the same direction. The fore-edge is left untrimmed.

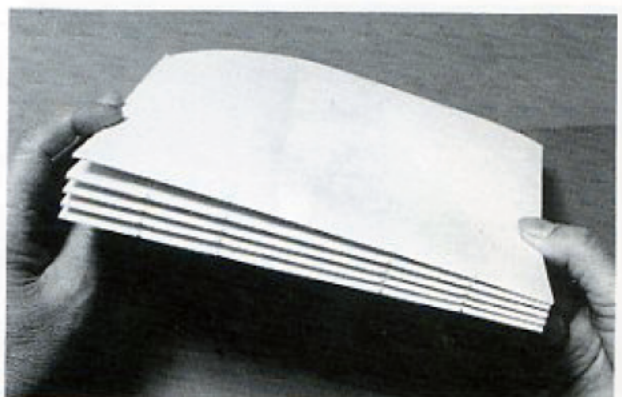
180. With the ruler, measure off the four points



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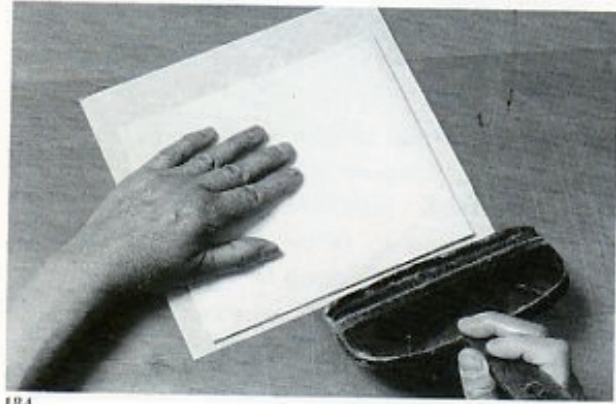
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along the spine where the cuts for the stitches are to be made (see Fig. 181).

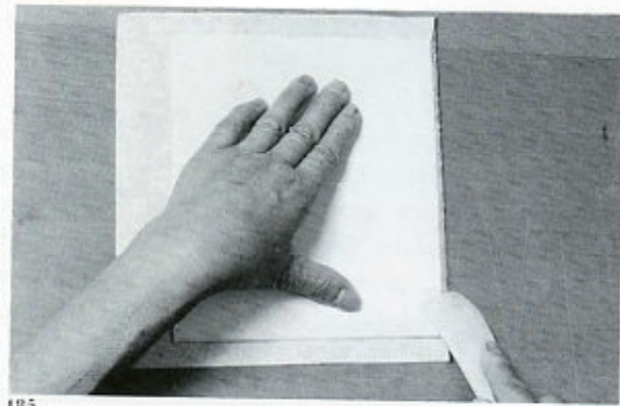
181. Placement of cuts for stitches.

182. With a knife, make notches about 3mm /  $\frac{1}{8}$ " deep at each point marked.

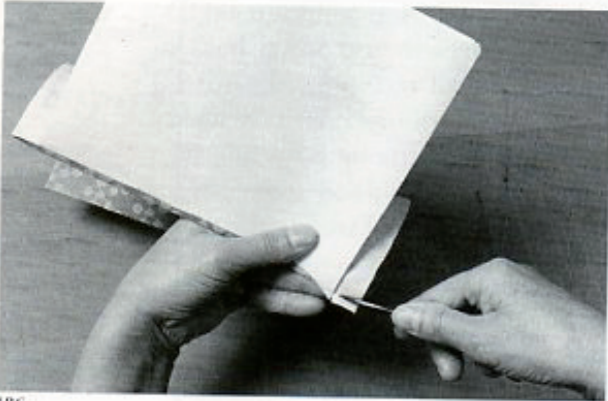
183. View of the spine with cuts.



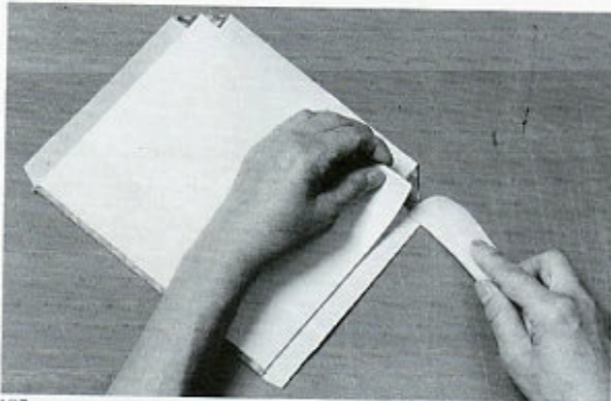
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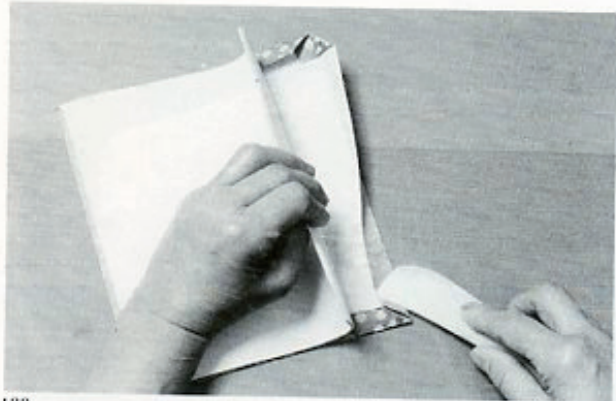
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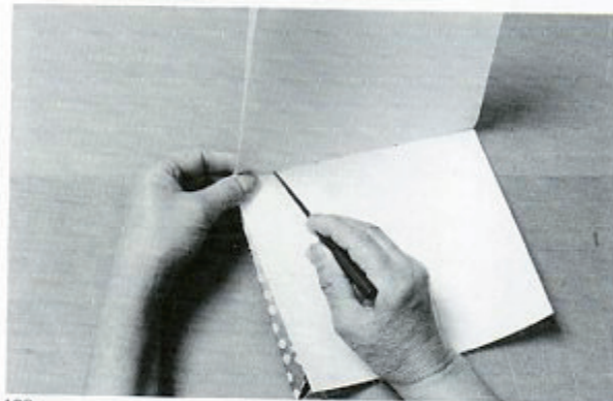
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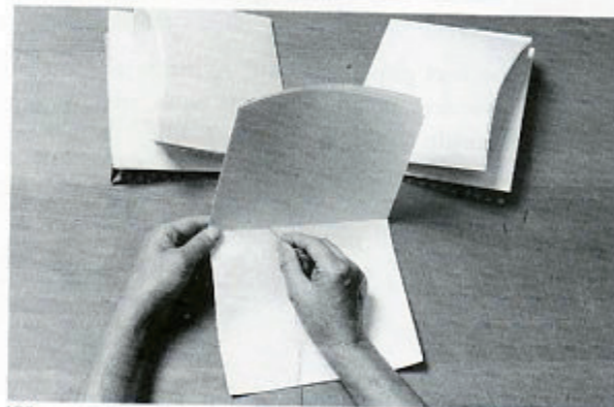
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184. Place one of the five sections on the inner side of one cover sheet, centering the head and foot and leaving only a narrow flap along the spine. Brush paste on this flap.

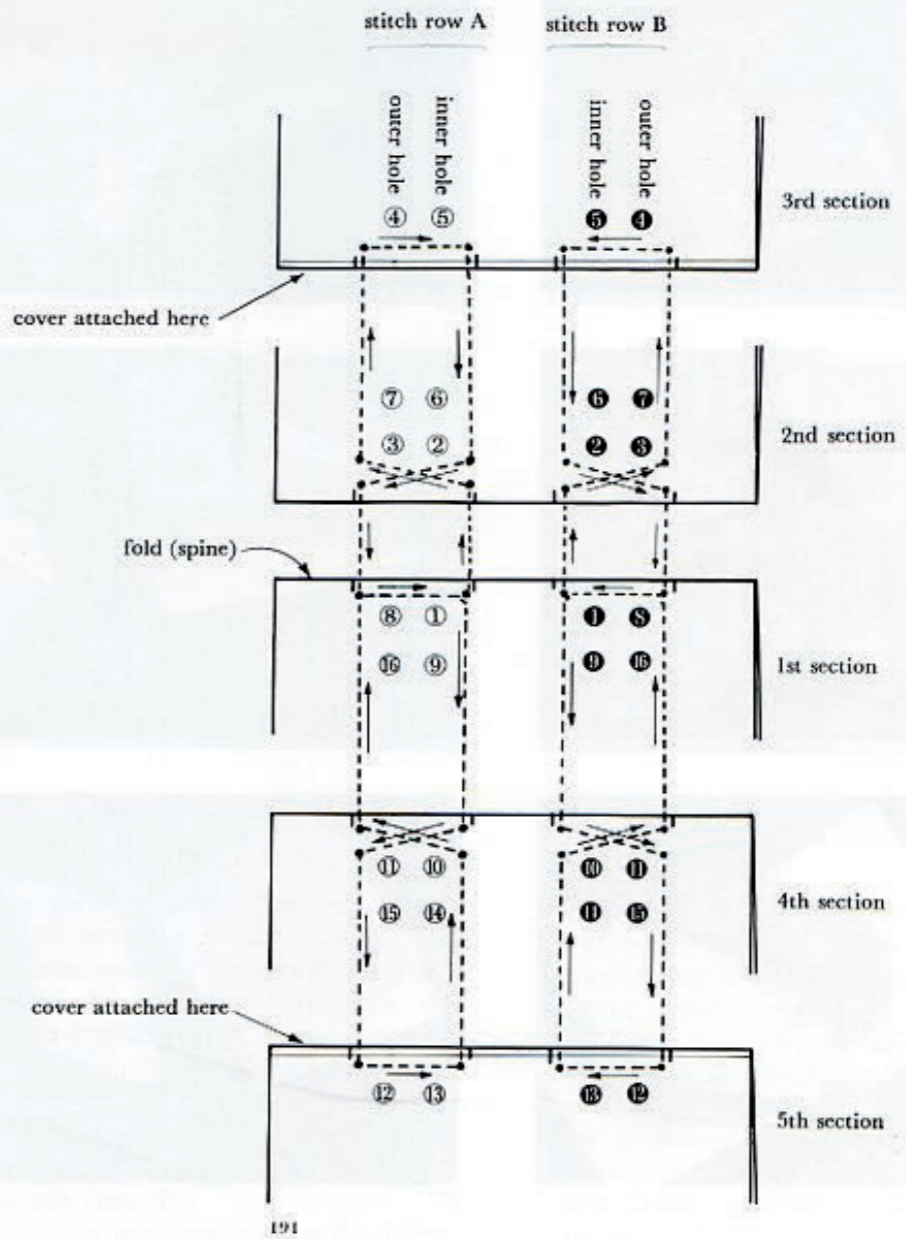
185. Fold the flap around the spine of this section of text. Paste down well by pressing with the folding tool.

186. Before folding in the top and bottom margins, trim away the excess from the cover sheet at the top and bottom corners of the spine.

187. Fold in each corner at the fore-edge of the cover to form a triangle.

188. Fold in the head, foot, and fore-edge of the cover (in that order) to match the dimensions of the text. Press the creases in well with the folding tool.

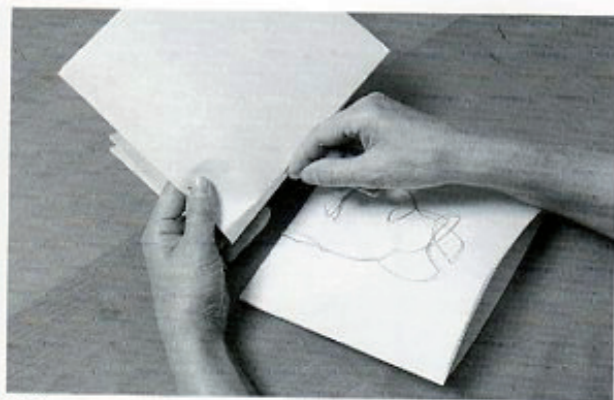
189. Pierce stitching holes in the spine of the cover by inserting the awl through the cuts made previously. Repeat steps 184–88 on the opposite side of a second section of text to produce a second cover that is a mirror image of the first.



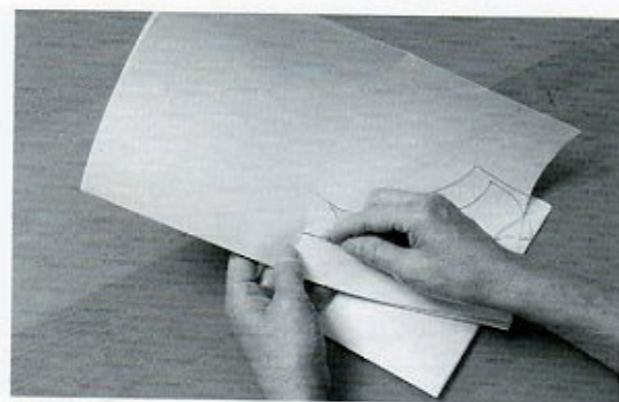
191

190. Thread the needle with a double strand of thread. Taking one of the remaining three sections of text, insert the needle into the inner hole of stitch row A (see Fig. 191) from the inside of the fold. Draw the thread through to the outside, leaving a tail of about 200mm / 7 7/8" inside the fold (step ①).

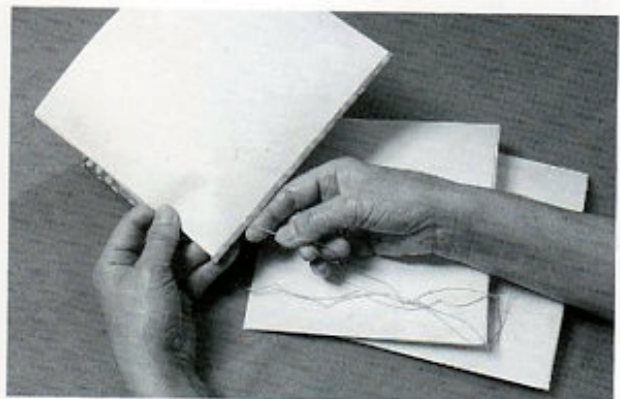
191. Stitching procedure.



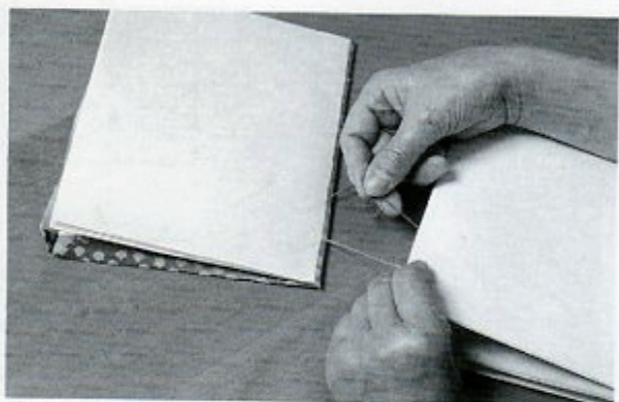
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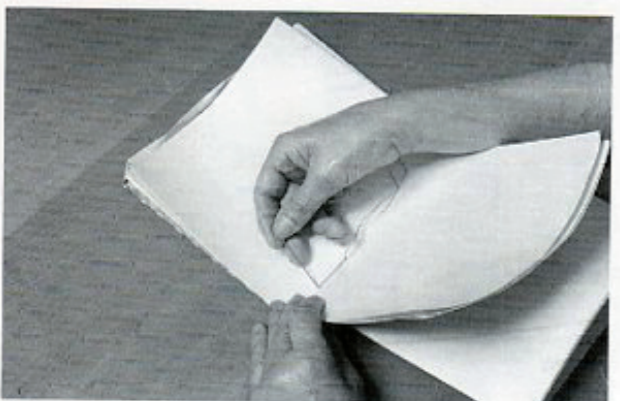
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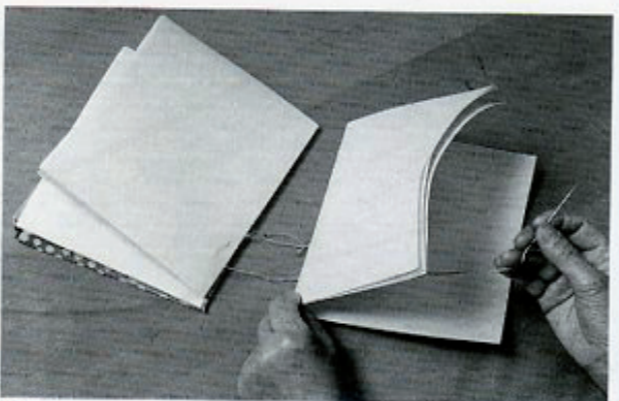
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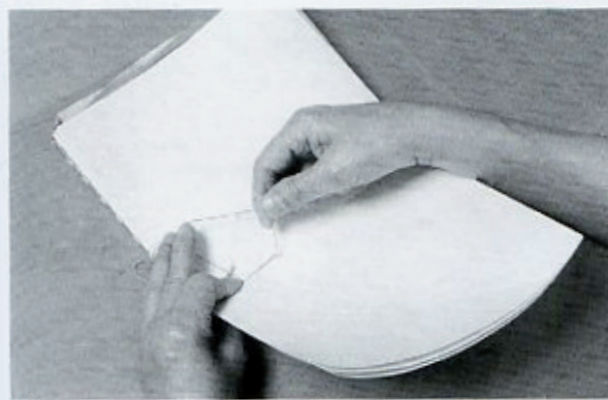
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192. Taking one of the two remaining sections without covers, insert the needle from the outside to the inside of the inner hole of stitch row A (step ②). Draw the thread through.

193. Working from the inside of the fold, insert the needle into the outer hole of stitch row A of

the same section and draw the thread through to the outside (step ③).

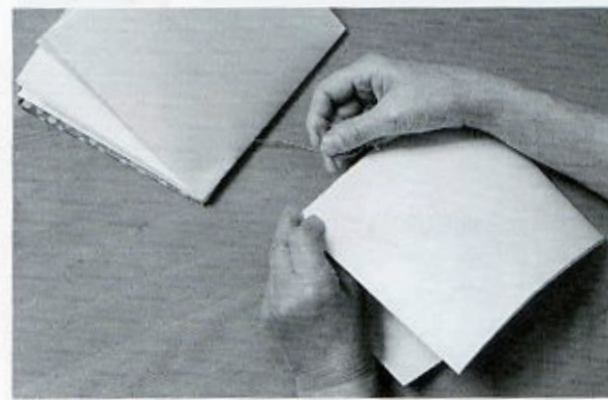
194. Taking an end section (with a cover attached), insert the needle in the outside of the outer hole of stitch row A and draw the thread through to the inside of the fold (step ④).



198



199



199



201

195. Insert the needle through the inner hole of stitch row A in the same section, drawing the thread from the inside to the outside (step ⑤). Going back to the second section, draw the thread through the inner hole of stitch row A from the outside to the inside (step ⑥). Pull the thread taut.

196. Next, draw the thread through the outer hole of the same section, crossing over the stitch made previously (step ⑦).

197. Returning to the first section, draw the thread through the outer hole from the outside to the inside of the fold (step ⑧). Pull the thread tight to take up any slack.

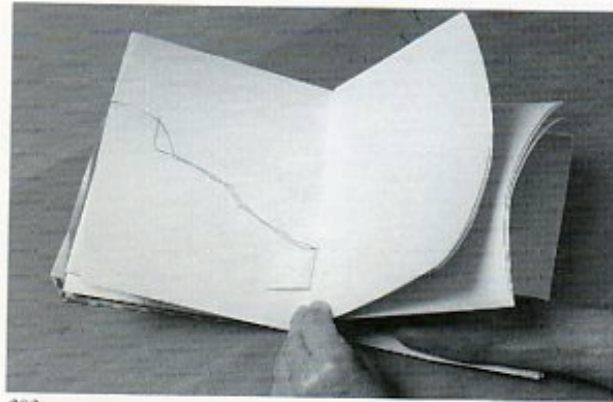
198. You have now completed one-quarter of the binding process. To secure the text while binding continues, tie the tail end of the thread remaining inside the book to the binding thread, making a temporary knot. (For beginners, it

helps to leave a needle inserted in the knot to aid untying later.) Now proceed to stitch through the inner starting hole from the inside to the outside (step ⑨).

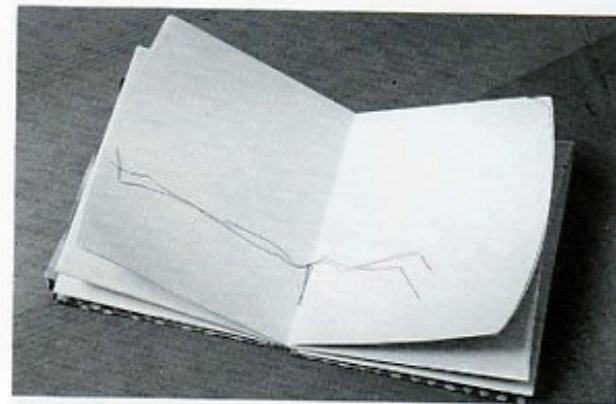
199. Continuing to stitch, take the fourth section and draw the thread through the inner hole of stitch row A from the outside to the inside of the fold (step ⑩).

200. Draw the thread back out through the outer hole of the same section (step ⑪). Then stitch through the outer hole of stitch row A on the remaining cover section, working from the outside to the inside of the fold (step ⑫).

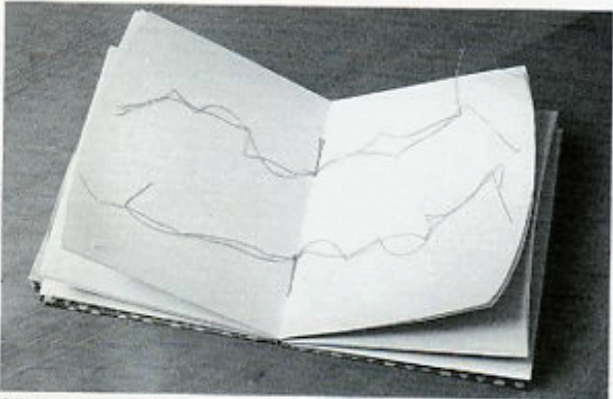
201. Attach the cover section by drawing the thread first through the outer hole of stitch row A from the outside to the inside (step ⑬) and then through the inner hole of stitch row A from the inside to the outside (step ⑭).



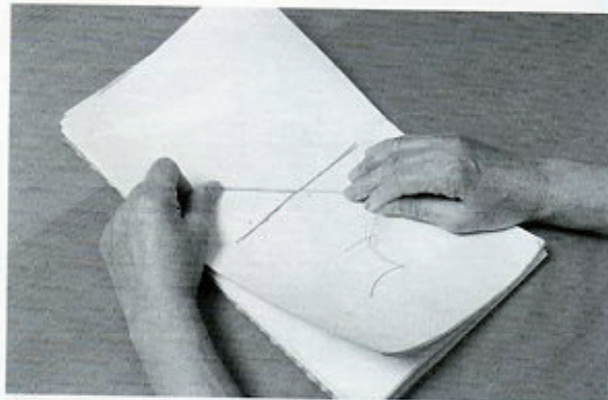
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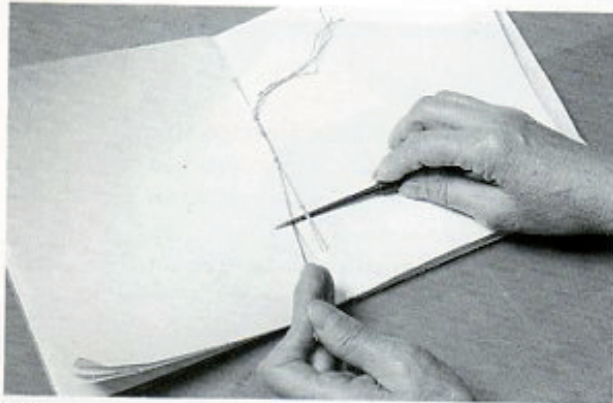
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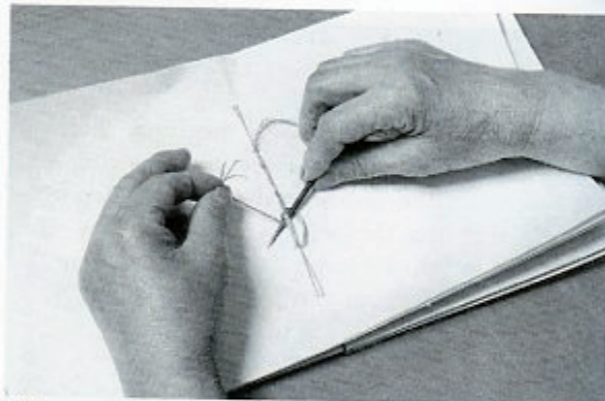
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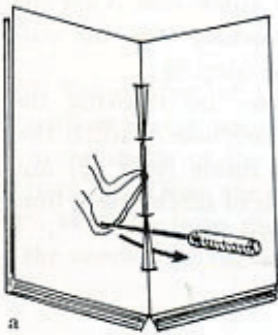
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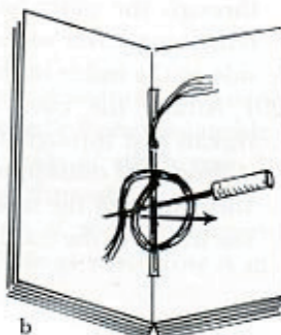
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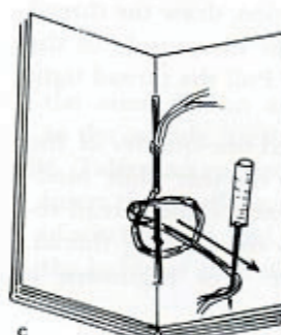
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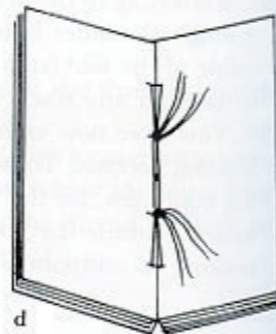
a



b

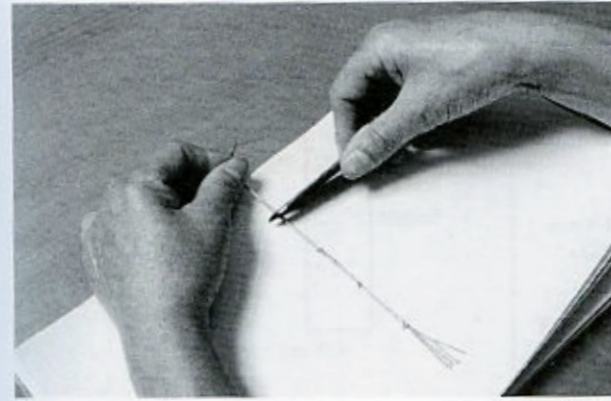


c

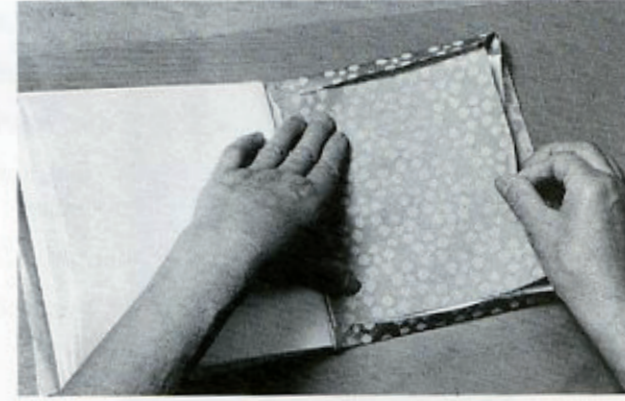


d

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211



212

202. Stitch back to the original (now the middle) section, following the path given in the accompanying diagram (steps 14-16).

203. Undo the temporary knot tied when the stitching was one-quarter complete. Secure all the stitching threads by tying a knot at the inner hole of stitch row A.

204. Repeat the stitching procedure with a second doubled strand of thread for stitch row B, keeping the thread pulled taut (steps 1-16).

205. Taking the thread ends from both stitches (four strands each), tie a square knot halfway between the two stitches. Have someone hold the thread in place as you tie so the thread will stay taut.

206. Using the awl, draw one set of thread ends back through the stitch formed at stitch row A.

207. Again using the awl, tie the thread ends as shown (see Fig. 208). Tie the remaining set of thread ends in the same manner through the stitch formed at stitch row B.

208. Tying off the threads: *a-c*, use the awl to help knot one set of thread ends through the stitch formed at stitch row A; *d*, knot the other set at stitch row B.

209. Trim the thread ends to equal lengths.

210. Reinforce the covers by cutting two pieces of cover material to dimensions slightly smaller than those of the cover. Apply a little paste in the center of each of the reinforcing pieces and adhere one to the inside of each cover under the flaps as shown.

211. Fold the head, foot, and fore-edge of the endpapers to dimensions slightly smaller than those of the cover. Brush thick paste on the three flaps as well as along the fourth unfolded edge of each endpaper.

212. Immediately attach the endpapers to the inside of the covers. Cover with a sheet of clean paper and rub the pasted sections well to ensure a good bond.