

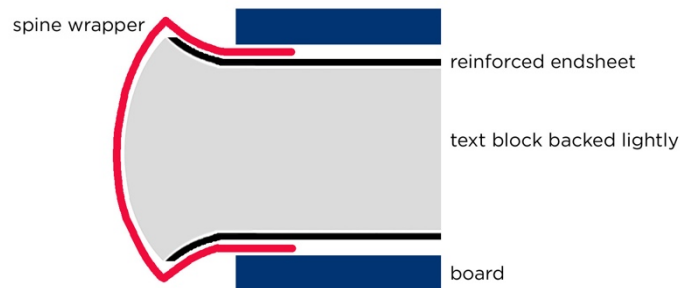
**The Even More Simplified Binding:
Laced-on spine wrapper with flange board attachment
Guild of Book Workers Standards of Excellence in Hand Bookbinding Seminar
October 9, 2021**

INTRODUCTION

Elegant and much leaner than the Simplified or Bradel bindings, the Even More Simplified binding is stripped down to only the essential elements: boards glued onto the flange of a separate spine wrapper. Unique to this structure is lacing the sewing supports through the spine wrapper to provide both an adhesive and a mechanical attachment to the text block. The structure is inspired by a binding by Jen Lindsay.

The spine wrapper is cut flush at the head and tail. The lacing ensures that the wrapper is crisply and evenly placed. There are no endbands. The boards can be laminated sheets of colored paper left uncovered; book board covered in leather, parchment, decorative paper, or book cloth; thin wood boards; or some experimental material. Joins between materials are neat but no more paring, sanding, lining, or infilling need be done than is necessary for the book to function. This leaves the structure of the completed book easily discernible.

It might be tempting to think of this binding in terms of the features and tasks omitted. But it would be a mistake to view the Even More Simplified as merely a time-saving option. Every operation must be executed with the greatest care, as the structure's minimalist nature calls attention to details that may otherwise be overlooked.



PROCESS

Construct boards

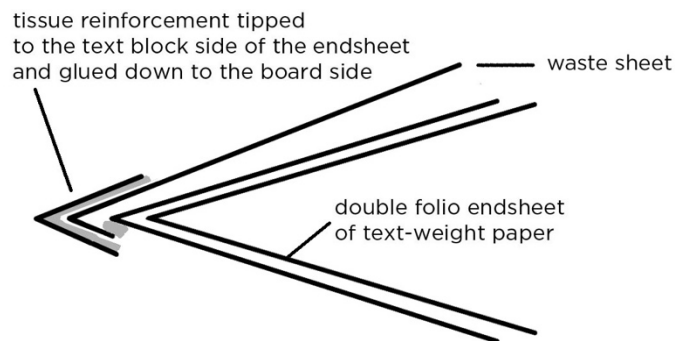
The boards for the model are made of multiple sheets of heavy paper laminated to the thickness of the shoulders of the backed text block. Using paste for the lamination results in a stiff board with a secure bond between layers. Drying takes several days. The model uses four layers of Fabriano Murillo paper. Make the boards oversized and trim to fit the book at a later step in the process.

- Paste together the four sheets of paper in pairs.
 - Apply a thin, even coat of paste on both sheets.
 - Let the paper relax for a moment.

- Place one sheet carefully on top of the other; any paste on the outer surface of the boards will leave a stain.
- Place between boards and nip for a few minutes while you are preparing the next pair.
- Paste together the pairs.
- Press between boards for at least 30 minutes and up to a few hours.
- Remove boards from the press and stand them up leaning against one another for a few hours until they just begin to warp to allow some moisture to dissipate.
- Place the boards between blotters, between wood press boards, under weight.
- Allow boards to dry fully over several days, changing blotters and boards frequently, especially for the first 24 hours.

Construct endsheets

- Begin with all materials a little taller than the height of the text block.



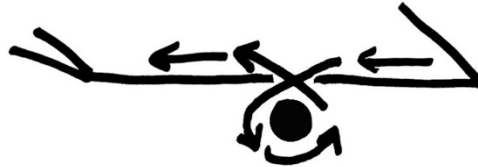
- Make a double folio of plain paper with an additional single leaf hooked around it.
 - Later in the forwarding process the outermost leaf will become part of the flange used for board attachment.
- Reinforce the hooked leaf with a 1"-wide tissue guard just covering the small hooked portion on the inside and the remainder glued to the outside of the endsheet sections.
- From this point forward, the hooked outer leaf of the endsheet with the larger portion of the tissue guard will be referred to as the "waste sheet."
- Trim the endsheet sections to the height of the text block.
- Trim front and rear waste sheets 1/8" from the spine to the fore edge at both the head and tail to ensure none will be visible in the finished binding.

Prep for sewing

- Mark up for sewing stations.
 - Mark up between the head and the tail kettle stitch (not between head and tail) to center the stations visually.
- Punch sewing stations in text block.
- Punch endsheets in the center of the double folio.
- Keep in mind the orientation of the hinges when punching endsheets. The waste sheet should be facing out at both the front and rear of the text block.

Sew

- Set up the sewing frame with very thin, strong cords.
- Select sewing thread.
 - Choose a thread thickness to balance the need for limiting buildup of bulk on the spine against creating adequate swell for easy backing of the shoulder.
- Position the endsheets at the front and back of the text block.
 - The wide portion of the tissue hinge faces out, the narrow portion towards the text block.
- Sew with this pattern. Do not pack the sewing.



sewing on single cords

Shape spine

- Glue up the spine.
- Take care that no adhesive is applied to the supports where they exit the text block. This will hinder fraying at a later step.
- Round.
- Place the text block in a finishing press or job backer just beyond the swell.
- Back to 45 degrees.
- With the long edge of a folder, smooth the spine edge of the sections.
- Rub paste into the spine to set the shape.
- Before the paste sets, add the spine lining.

Line Spine

We are aiming for a reasonably smooth spine without any excess fuss. The spine linings will not be sanded. A light lining across the entire spine will protect the sewing. One additional lining between the supports may be adequate depending on the size of the text block and the lining paper chosen.

Lining #1

- Apply a first lining of medium weight Japanese tissue or lightweight handmade Western text paper across the entire spine, head to tail, peak of shoulder to peak of shoulder.
- Apply adhesive to the lining and also to the spine if the paste there has already dried.

Lining #2

- Select a heavy text-weight handmade paper or paper that does not mind moisture.
- The second lining will be applied in pieces, right up to but not covering the cords and between the outermost cords and the head and tail.
- This lining is the full width of the spine, peak of shoulder to peak of shoulder.
- Apply adhesive to the lining and also to the spine.
- Apply the linings to the spine.
- Rub down well.
- Let linings dry fully.

Evaluate lining

- You are aiming for the spine to open in a gentle arc.
- If the spine opens as a sharp “V” shape, add an additional lining.

Construct spine wrapper

The spine wrapper for the model is leather backed with a paper lining of heavy text-weight handmade paper or any heavy text-weight paper that does not mind moisture. It could also be lined bookcloth, a laminate of several layers of handmade paper, lined parchment, or any material that will take the curved shape of the rounded spine and shoulders and be strong and flexible enough for the board attachment.

- The spine wrapper will be made oversized and trimmed later.
- Dimensions for both the leather and the paper lining are:
 - Height of the spine plus 1"
 - Width of the spine plus 2" (a 1" overhang on both sides)
- Apply a thin layer of paste to the leather.
- Allow the paste to penetrate.
- Apply a thin, even layer of PVA to the leather and to the paper.
- Apply the paper lining to the leather.
- Rub down gently and fully.
- Dry under weight between blotters.

Trim boards #1

Only trim boards to height for now. They will be trimmed to width later in the binding process. Trimming laminated boards in a guillotine or with a knife may produce a crisper edge than a Kuttrimmer or board shear.

- Trim two perpendicular edges of both boards to form a 90-degree corner, leaving the boards oversized.
- Set one board in place at the shoulder, just off the 90-degree corner, at the distance of your desired square.
- Mark the position of the second square.
- Flip the text block over to confirm that this height works for both sides of the text block.
- Cut both boards to the identical height.

Trim spine wrapper

- Measure the width of the spine.
- Trim the spine wrapper to the following dimensions:
 - Height equal to the height of the boards
 - Width of spine + 3/4" on either side

When you become comfortable with this structure, the flanges (excess on either side of the spine) can narrow. The book will look more skillfully crafted.

- Mark the width of the spine in the center of the spine wrapper.
- Round the spine wrapper—*without creasing*—over the edge of the bench or around a dowel roughly equal to the thickness of the text block, a brush handle, or other cylindrical object.
- Place the text block back in the spine wrapper.
- Confirm that the lines you marked on the spine wrapper at the width of the spine are in the correct positions.
 - Remark as necessary.
- Score and fold the spine wrapper along the marked lines to define the width of the spine.

Mark lacing stations on the spine wrapper

- Re-round the spine wrapper.
- Place the book flat on the bench, with a board supporting the shoulder.
- Place the spine wrapper around the spine, making sure that the squares are even at head and tail.
- Make pencil marks at the intersections of the creases/pencil lines defining the width of the spine and where the cords exit the spine at the shoulder.
- Flip the book over and repeat on the other side.
- Remove the spine wrapper and confirm the marks at both creases are reasonably square with their partners on the other side of the spine.
- If they are not, the spine wrapper may have moved when you were marking.
 - Replace the wrapper around the spine and confirm or remark as needed.

Lace on the spine wrapper #1

- Round the spine over a dowel again.
- Roll PVA onto the very tips of the sewing supports to stiffen them to ease lacing.
- When the PVA is dry, trim the tips of the supports to a point.
- With an awl, poke tiny holes at the marked stations of the spine wrapper inside to outside.
- Poke larger holes from outside to inside.
 - The goal is to finesse any bulk or raw edges to the inside of the spine wrapper.
- Erase all pencil marks inside the spine wrapper.
- Lace the cords through the holes.

Preshape the spine wrapper to the base of the shoulder

- Place the book between press boards with the boards right up to the shoulder.
- Pull the cords snug and square to the spine.
- Through a thin barrier, run a Teflon folder between the shoulder and the press board to define the shoulder of the spine wrapper.
- Gently close the lacing holes around the supports.

Attach the spine wrapper

- Using PVA, glue up the spine wrapper from the spine crease to the outer edge.
 - The area of the wrapper that covers the spine of the text block must be kept free of adhesive.
- Pull the cords snug.
- With your fingers, press the spine wrapper into place against the text block and into the shoulders.
- With a Teflon folder, through a thin, transparent barrier, rub down the spine wrapper to ensure good adhesion in the shoulders.
- Insert Mylar barriers and then fences between the waste sheet and the endsheets.
- Place Reemay barriers around the spine wrapper. This will keep the leather from becoming shiny.
- Position the cords outside of the boards so they do not mark the spine wrapper.
- Nip.
- Clean off any adhesive that has oozed out.
- Place the book between Reemay and boards under weight.

Lace on the spine wrapper #2

- Trim cords to the width of the spine wrapper.
- Unravel cords into individual plies.
- Paste up the cords, all the way to where they exit the spine wrapper.
- Allow the paste to penetrate for a moment.
- Again pull the cords snug.
- Fan the cords out on top of the spine wrapper.
 - As you are fanning the cords, take care to not weaken them by removing any fibers.
- Adhere the cords to the spine wrapper with paste.
 - Make sure the cords are well adhered to the contour of the shoulder.
- Replace the fences between the waste sheet and the endsheets.
- Place Reemay barriers around spine wrapper.
- Nip.
- Place the book between boards under weight until the cords are dry.

Trim boards #2

- Trim any particularly crooked or protruding endleaves at the fore edge.
- Place the boards,
 - very close to the base of the shoulder for thin boards, farther away for thicker boards, and
 - with even squares at head and tail.
- Mark even squares at the fore edge, equal to the height of the squares at the head and tail.
- Flip the text block over to confirm that this width works for both sides of the text block.
- Confirm that the fore edge will be cut square with the head and tail of the board.
- Cut both boards identically.
- Sand board edges gently if the cutting has resulted in ragged edges.

Attach boards

- Place the text block on the bench with a board underneath to protect the shoulder.
- Glue up roughly 3/4" of the spine edge of the inner face of the first board.
- Glue up the spine wrapper/flange, stopping a bit before the base of the shoulder.
- Place the first board with even squares all around.
- Glue up and place the second board in the same manner.
- Do any repositioning necessary so boards appear even and the book stands upright and square.
- Insert the Mylar barriers and then the fences between the waste sheet and endsheets.
- Nip.
- Remove the book from the press.
- Clean any visible adhesive from the joint and between the boards and the head and tail of the spine wrapper.
- Dry the book between boards under weight.
- When the board attachment is dry, tear off the excess waste sheet beyond the point of board attachment.

Adhere pastedowns

- Trim pastedowns slightly at the fore edge to account for stretch.
- Apply the adhesive necessary for the required amount of pull.
- Set down boards.

- Insert fences.
- Place press boards around book.
- Nip.
- Replace fences with blotters.
- Dry fully between press boards under weight.

Final steps

- Carefully trim away any spine wrapper visible on the board edges at the head and tail.
- Sand the board corners ever so gently to leave them less vulnerable to bumping.
- Color any raw areas around the lacing holes with watercolor pencil or acrylic.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

The Even More Simplified binding is inspired by Jen Lindsay’s 2017 binding of *Introduction to Heraldry*. The technique presented here is also heavily informed by both Sün Evrard’s Simplified binding and Peter Verheyen’s three-part variation on the Bradel binding. The work of the Tomorrow’s Past Collective—a small, international group of bookbinders making modern conservation bindings for antiquarian books—is also an inspiration. Peter Geraty’s instructions for the Parchment over Boards binding provides additional techniques for laminating boards, including the “floating board” needed when covering the boards in parchment.

As always, I am grateful to my editor Jill Krase, the friends who proofread early versions of this document, and to the students who participated in the 2021 Two Simplified Bindings workshop this text was first written to accompany.

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- Middleton, Bernard C. *A History of English Craft Bookbinding Technique*. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1996.

Sources for supplies

- Thin four-ply linen cord
 - In the U.K. from J Hewit & Sons, Ltd Flax Seaming Twine, 4/8 ply
 - In the U.S. from Colophon Book Arts Supply, M.D.P. 100% Flax Cord, 8/4 ply
- Easily-frayable 4 mm linen tapes from Talas, German Linen Sewing Tape
- Heavy paper to laminate for boards (An internet search will offer many more sources.)
 - Fabriano Murillo
 - Colorplan (Note: Unlike the other choices, Colorplan paper has no surface texture. It does come in five weights and 50 colors.)
 - Zaansch Bord, from the Netherlands and difficult to source in the U.S.
- Strong linen thread to make your own cords (An internet search will offer many more sources.)
 - Bockens Lingarn, 35/2
 - Londonderry Linen, 50/3