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Your wish list seems empty. If you've previously added items that should be on your wish list, please log in to your account to view your wish list. Consider this a practical and quick guide on how to make a leather holster. I cropped down all the steps just the ones needed to make this a simple and quick weekend project. I've written a few other tutorials over the years, so if you like this one - you can see others here. It's a fairly simple project and you'll learn basic pattern skills, leather cutting, leather trim, and sewing. There are many ways to make a leather holster, of course, ones that are a little more accurate, like what I'm going to show you. However I realized after going through a bunch of these long and detailed posts, he kinda took pleasure in creating the holster and made it a little tense. So, what I did here is kind of took the key points and made them easy to follow the guide to setting up the template. If you want to see the current holsters I make in the store, and maybe buy one for yourself - check out all the holster options here. Let's start with the necessary tools to work. Now assuming you put a gun in that holster... You can get a gun first. Mine replica 1873 Cavalry Single Revolver Action, it's not a shooting type that makes this project a bit, a bit safer, maybe? The main tools needed from left to right: Poster board pattern Pencil Rolling Blade with large diameter Gun Sharp Scissors or leather scissors Metal line razor blade In the image above, I decided later that you don't really need all these items, so I'll notice that below: Leather glue (don't need) Clips (don't need) Stitch crease line Stitcher Stitch Wheel (don't need if you have the next tool) Two leather needles - they have a blunt tip stitching pony - hold your piece in time stitching that's all you need if you want to do the rough work of getting this holster done. But if you want a more refined look, check out the next set of tools: Hole puncher, or hole kick set - helps cut narrow corners with thick leather Edge beveler size 2 - rounds piece even from uneven cutting Cocobolo wood burnisher with a little wax canvas tape on - do burnishing and polishing the edges of the wood Weighted Hammer - used to kick the punching tools Of several random leather punching tools Just for looks really Swivel knife - cuts out designs or reference lines into the skin before punching it also you'll need skin. I recommend full-grain vegetable tanned skin about 9 - 10oz. Thickness. Skin dye is also optional if you want to darken your skin - although this will also happen naturally over time with exposure to the sun and exposure to oils and use. Also cup or so of olive oil, or a good leather conditioner. I sell some of the things I do shop, but I only do it in small quantities. And also - a few paper towels and a sponge. How is this post so far? I spend most of my free time creating tutorials like this to help those as you get into the skin and woodworking, or better at it. If you want to support my efforts, consider checking my handmade leather goods store and buying a gift for yourself or a loved one. It's readers like you who help keep a small US business like mine going strong, so thank you! PART 1: Pattern First grab your poster paper. Actually... First - empty gun and make sure there are no bullets in it or cameras, etc... My gun turns out to be not firing a replica, so I'm pretty safe there if I don't throw it in my mind. It's pretty hard! Place the unloaded gun in the bottom right quarter of the paper (this tutorial is created for the right holster only FRY!). As you can see in the pictures I'm on to show the final template we're going to create, so you have an idea of where we're headed. Make a line parallel to the barrel of the gun about 3/4 above the barrel, walk past the tip of the barrel about 3/4 and finish it straight about where the curve of the handle starts to go down. This line will become a line of folds within minutes - so we can duplicate the shape like a butterfly's wing so that it matches when sewing occurs. Now make the 1/2 mark below any significant protrusions on the gun. Right to left I started with the tip of the barrel, the bullet pusher, the top of the body of the gun (I'm sure there's an actual name for that, chimes up, if you know it), the beginning of the trigger guard, at the end of the trigger guard. I also put the point just in the middle of the trigger area a little forward, and the random point at the top of the gun where the cylinder ends just for reference. That's where you get a little artistic freedom. The points I just made are a reference to where the edge of the holster should be for a decent fit - different types of weapons may differ, of course, so if you have a thinner than a revolver, you can tighten it up a bit. Anyway - go ahead and trace the shape along these lines connecting the dots. Now the top of the holster can be eyeballed - I put in a curve to cover the rest of the cylinder area, but retreat a bit by the time it reaches the hammer. The idea is that you don't want anything touching the hammer in case it has a trigger effect when sliding the gun back into the holster. Put the gun back on top of the template and see how it looks. Next I only partially cut out what I just drew, then I'm going to fold it along that line we did earlier. Continuing you may notice a few extra marks, holes and something that is not in my photos - I realized that I included some steps that weren't really necessary, that just ignore everything I don't really point out! Okay - now that I'm saving you from making a giant mistake later down the line. Go ahead and write 'Face Up' on the contour. This means that at the top of the pattern and should always face up when tracking on the skin. There was a 50/50 chance I got it right the first time I made a holster, but as luck would have it, I unfortunately traced everything upside down, causing a left-handed holster. Of course, now that I'm sitting here thinking about it, it wouldn't be such a big mistake since I intend to eventually make a double holster belt. If you happen to have whats called a Bone Folder, you can use it to fold along this straight line we drew, otherwise - at that point I went ahead and folded the pattern up and over along that line and then trace the outline around the bottom of the holster to the top just where it makes a sharp turn (marked arrow), you can stop there. Take a look at the straight line you drew at the beginning. I drew a dotted line so you could see how I'm imagining an extension from it. This line represents where the holster will bend again to make the back skirt that secures it around the waist. The angle of this line will affect how the gun breaks out of the holster. How you connect to this line is up to you. I made a gentle inner curve. Go ahead and cut along the line you just trace, up to this dotted imaginary line. Then fold this piece up and again on the left side of the sheet. Here I made a point around 7/8 on the side of the holster. At the top (top right in the photo) I disappeared closer to the holster. Downstairs (bottom right in the photo) I tightened it up to about 1/2. Then I traced the dots and made the outline of the skirt. Next - time to mark the skirt holes - this is where the holster will slide in and become secured. This part may be kind of up to you, but as a reference I made the first line hole 1 1/2 of the bottom of the skirt, and about 1/4 of the side of the holster when overlapping as seen in the photo. The second hole will be placed 2 1/2 up from the bottom of the skirt and 1/4 inch from the side of the holster. The third hole is located 4 1/4 of the bottom of the skirt and about 3/8 on the side of the holster. The last hole is 6 1/4 from the bottom of the skirt and 3/8 on the side of the holster. Phewwww. That was rude. I then repeated this process on the other side of the skirt for the other end of these holes. However, I put the dots a little higher - give the holes a bit of an angle - for looks, of course! The holes can be hand-picked in place. Make two lower holes around 5/16 wide and the top two about 3/8 wide. Again, accuracy here is not entirely necessary. Now do your best to cut out this whole piece as well as the holes. The holes are easier to cut if you hole the kick ends, then use a razor and ruler to cut straight lines between those holes. PART 2: Cut Skin Ok - now that the boring part is over let's get to the best stuff - skin! well actually it's all part of the process if you don't then the time patterns, you will live the easier life of my friend. Now that my pattern is done, it's time to trace it to the skin. To do this I use a pretty thick full grain vegetable-tanned hide. It's about 9 ounces thick, but you could go even thicker if you have 10 ounces or 11 ounces on hand. Once it is traced I start cutting out the mold with different tools. I usually start with a rolling blade and a ruler for all simple straight incisions. Careful not to cut the razor as the nickname in the skin here can turn into a tear a few years later. Then I use a set of punch holes to punch hard corners. Then I alternate between the sharp scissors and the rusty razor blade. I'm not going to have the blade rusty, but for some reason it's always like that. When cutting with a razor on this thick skin it is better to make each incision in two passages. One will kind of set the line you need and the other goes the rest of the way through. Keep those fingers to the side, the razors will sometimes jump like a bronco straight from the plains. It's good to get as close as possible to the tracing line, but don't end the world if it's not accurate. If it's possible to err on the side without cutting off enough - how can you go and sand things down in a later step. At this point I'm ready to paint the skin, oil it and stamp some designs inch PART 3: Dye and butter Here I use my natural in-house made dye mix. This skin I chose for the holster didn't quite take it as well as my usual store products, but that's ok. It will darken with age, plus I can add a little more oil to it later. After putting a layer of dye just on the top side, I flip the skin and apply a medium-thin layer of oil to it. There are many types of oils you can use with plant-tanned skin, although some think that some oils may go rancid, or possibly worsen the skin over time. I encourage you to experiment with this step and see what works for you. The idea of oiling your skin is simply to refill the oils that are washed out of your skin when you paint it and work. Oils help to grease fibers and keep the skin from cracking and breaking down. It is also important to note that oiling should be done in several thin layers against a single thick. It can easily be excessively oily, and your piece will look crude and gross. It's hard to fix too. PART 4: Stamping, Beveling, stitch marking To give the holster a little more character I used a swivel knife and line to lay out links I would use to stamp the designs together. I put a few on the skirt as well - although keep in mind which part will show and which will be hidden behind the holster. I guess I forgot. Using a weighted hammer and some random brad (one of which is a basket weave, but no matter!), I tried to keep things simple. Above you can see all my punching efforts, though minimal -- they will have the effect on giving the leather holster a little more character. I admit that my punching skills are still in infancy, since I tend not to decorate my pieces too much. While it's still raw - I'm scrapped by the edge, which is a huge leap to making it start to look like an exquisite piece from a rough cut one. I have mangled the top side completely, and the back side is only in areas where they will not be stitched together. With the crease of the stitch line I mark the line 3/16 in from the edge. Now I really had to do this before beveling the edge as it's much easier to use the tool, but I'm always up for a good challenge. You can see in the photo where I start and stop the line. I'm sure it's just around the top of the holster - it will give him extra strength in a place where he'll probably wear a lot. Back along this line I use a diamond to sew the kick and set all the holes on one side. Every time I lift the blow - I set the last chisel blow into the previous hole - so things are evenly spaced. Unfortunately for me, I left 1 prong and 2 prongs a blow at home... so I had to improvise on narrower angles using the lacing chisels I had, that is similar, but not diamond-shaped. And then... a few minutes later I realized I had a traditional diamond awl sitting next to me all the time - darn! Now here's a shortcut I mentioned I'd like to use earlier. To get the holes on the other edge of the hit you need to flip the skin over, use the creaser again on the edge you haven't punched (while the skin is a little wet) and then start punching again. By flipping the skin over the forms of diamonds still align when pressed together to be stitched. It's not a traditional way to do it, but a pretty simple way at least! Punching in this way can lead to a dirtier looking stitch on the back, but that's ok in this case because you're ok to actually see it. Also - here's a pro tip when you kick this side, angle your punches so the prongs dig more in the center of the piece rather than to the edge (you'll thank me later). Normally you'll use one diamond awl and kick holes as you go - but for many people it leads to messy stitches, blood and a bit of pain as well... that is -- at least until you get through that stage. When you get near the end (at the top of the holster), you have to stop at the peak curve. Leave things there for now, the last couple of holes are easier to predict once we stitch everything up to this point. But before we go to sewing we have to burn all the edges except the hand that becomes stitched. We will burn this part later, after it is sewn and then polished. To really get a good edge, you should start with a medium thin sand like 200 then work up a thin sand sand paper like 600, sand down those edges as best you can. Then wet just the edge of the skin a little before taking it to the cocobolo burnisher. Mine has a piece of waxed canvas to speed up the process. The burnisher will rotate in the drill press, so everything can happen pretty quickly. PART 5: Stitching time start sewing. I like this part of the project the most simply because it is a simple repetitive task that has a zen-like quality meditation to it. If you're into this kind of think you could also be in sewing as many as two layers of belt... It takes some time and hundreds of stitches. I just could do a tutorial on this one day (at the moment I have this other tutorial bet). Set your piece in a sewing pony so that the holes are just above the handle. It can be a little uncomfortable to get it into position, but do your best. Grab about the length of the thread equal to both hands wide open, palm to palm, and add an extra leg or two for good measure. Even this short stitching length requires a lot of threading. To fasten the thread on the needle I first run the thread through the eye hole... Then leaving about a 6-inch tail I pierce the thread with the needle... Pulling pierced eventually the length of the needle... and further over the eye hole. I then pull up a thread to tighten the loop around the eye hole. This method keeps the thread as thin as possible, making it easier to go through the hard seam holes. Repeat the step at the other end of the thread, so that the two needles are attached to one length or thread. To start the saddle stitch I always start on the right side and make sure the side is also the top side of my project. Every step from here on out should be repeated in the same way for each stitch... It's a good way to get your stitching up a pretty good level of perfection. Go through this needle from right to left. Pull half the strand through the hole so that you have equal lengths on both sides. Now the stitching begins, start with the next hole up and pass the right needle through the right side. Take the left needle and place it behind the right as it passes through, making a 'T'. Pull the thread a few inches through... Then pull down and towards you at both ends of the thread - this clears the way for the next needle to pass without penetrating the thread. If you pierce the thread your stitching will come to a quick stop and you will need to spend a few minutes untangling it. Keep that pressure on both strands as you pass the left needle through the same hole. On the right side, lift the thread up as the needle passes. Then lower the thread up and again on the back of the needle. This creates a loop of needle running through and what makes this saddle stitch. Saddle stitch is the best stitch in this case because if one stitch breaks, the other have a more chance of holding the piece together until you get it repaired. Now pull both ends of the thread tightly. With the final tight pulling once all the thread is through. Then - continue these steps with each stitch hole until you get all the way to the top of the holster where we still have a few un-punch holes. I was waiting to punch the last few holes on the back because I wanted to make sure I didn't kick too... and that's what would all line up. Here I take my diamond blow awl and carefully feed it to the top side hole, and press until I've pierced the backside. Now - it's in a perfect scenario when your tools are super sharp. Unfortunately mine wasn't there, so what I did instead was used a diamond kick awl to make a mark in the back on each hole. Then I tool a piece of sewing pony, to my rubber mat, and laying a piece down from the back of the exposed I forced the awl into each marking and made a putt. This helped to avoid the inevitable bloody slip of an unstorted instrument. Sharp tools can be dangerous, but sometimes boring ones are worse because you tend to use more force, and that's when things can slip. With all the holes punched, I repeated the step all the way up to the top of the holster. Now it's time to finish the stitches and lock them down. To finish sewing, you literally sew everything in the opposite direction. On my first backstitch I now start with a left needle on the left side and pass it through one stitch hole back from the top. The right needle is now in front of another that runs through. I pull the short length of the thread through and apply pressure forward to create space for the needle. Then I pass the right needle through the hole. Thread behind the needle and I pull it up and over again... and down in front of the needle, creating a loop. Then the thread is stretched tightly. Next, repeat these rollbacks in two more holes. A total of three backstitches are usually a lot. Once the last backstitch is done I pass the right needle through the next hole to the left side. Now that both needles are on the back of the holster I tie a simple knot behind one of the stitches and cut off the thread. You can then use a lighter to burn the tip so it doesn't wear out. PART 6: Edge Burnishing and finishing Touches stacking holsters on the table, it looks like it's finally coming together. One criticism I have at the moment is to use a diamond kick set with a closer distance. Closer marked have a more refined look. Time to check the fit gun in the holster. It is a good idea to wrap the gun in plastic wrap before putting it in the holster in case there is still moisture there. The skin may take several days to dry completely. Everything seems to fit pretty well. The skin is nice and light too - it will loosen up over time and using. Now we originally burned the entire holster, except for the stitched edges, and here's why. The stitched edge is sometimes not perfectly cut or aligned. After stitching you can sand it nicely with the drum sanding. Be careful not to take too much though - you can't go back in time! After grinding the drum I usually jump down to fine 600 sand paper and get that edge nice and smooth. Then I wet the edge of the skin just a little bit and push it against my cocobolo with wax canvas. It's actually spinning in this photo, but the speed of the camera is to quickly say. Edge Edges Thus, will produce a good glass edge. It won't last forever though, but it sure looks good to start this way... the final phase, installing the holster through the skirt. And there you have, a simple half day project for most. I realized my dye never set in the way I wanted it too. I can fix this to some extent by putting a few more layers of oil on my skin. I also know that plant-tanned skin earns a beautiful patina over time. Although it may look very light colored now, within a few months of use it will be light brown, after a year it can even become dark rich brown just by passing it, the sun and any other item it comes into contact with. I thought I'd throw in a few shots of my rookie level punching, ha! A few months ago I did stamp the leather belt, check it out here. I've been working on a series of these holsters and testing different aging techniques. The holster on the right was a bit redundant, but it has that old western dry desert view to it. The best part about making things with your hands is you can experiment and try new things, and the results sometimes surprise you. Hey - if you have any questions about this tutorial, please let me know by writing the comment below. I usually respond for a day or two max. Cheers! 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