


# Japanese Bookbinding

The image shows a stack of several Japanese bookbindings, likely of the stab-binding style. The books are arranged in a fan-like pattern, showing their spines. The spines are made of different colored materials, possibly paper or cloth, in shades of orange, light blue, light green, and reddish-orange. Each spine is decorated with traditional Japanese stitching, which appears as a series of small, repeating geometric patterns. The stitching is done in a dark thread, possibly black or dark brown. The books are set against a plain, light-colored background.

**Take out all the  
Supplies in this  
Image**

- **Color Paper**
- **Yarn**
- **6 WC**  
**Techniques**  
**Sheets**
- **Scissors**
- **Ms. B will**  
**give you the**  
**needle**





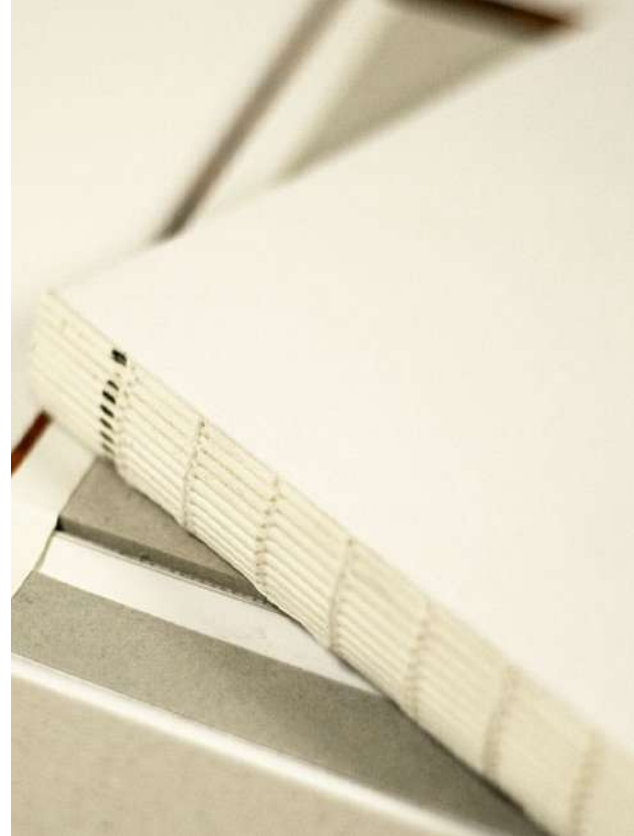
# **5 Things to Know About The Stab Binding Bookbinding Technique**

# Smyth Bookbinding Technique

The backbone of our journals and books is a **Smyth** sewn binding. It is widely recognised as the highest-quality binding available in today's market.

The Smyth sewn refers to a classic style of bookmaking in which the signatures (sheets of paper folded into groups of pages) are sewn together and reinforced with adhesive and fabric binding.

The Smyth binding technique is named after David McConnell Smyth, who invented the sewing machine that automated the technique, for its durability and lay-flat qualities and are proud to use this method for the majority of our books.



# Smyth Bookbinding Technique

Over the years, we have also offered a variety of designs with a Hand-stitched spine, which have been created using an ancient Egyptian technique known as Coptic (or chain) binding.

While Coptic binding was being developed in Egypt, a method known as stab binding was being used in the Far East.

To properly appreciate Smyth sewn spines and the modern bookbinding techniques that we employ, it is necessary to understand the innovations and advances that got us here.

We will focus on stab binding, an ancient technique that is now especially popular for making homemade scrapbooks and photo albums.



# Five things to know about bookbinding methods

## 1) It is exactly what it sounds like

Using an awl or a similar sharp pointed object, the binder stabs holes along the left edge of a book in a straight line or more complex pattern and then sews thread through the holes to both bind and decorate the book.

## 2) The Style is also known as Japanese Bookbinding but there are Chinese and Korean variants

The foundational Japanese version of stab binding is called *Yotsume Toji*, which roughly translates to “four holes.” This is also the basic Chinese version, while the Korean standard has five holes (a more favourable number in Korean culture). All styles were practiced during the Edo period in Japan and the Qing Dynasty in China.

### 3) There Are 4 Basic Variations

1. **Four-Hole Binding** (*Yotsume Toji*) – the most common and straightforward style
1. **Noble Binding** (*Koki Toji*) – a Chinese variant, also known as *Kangxi*, which has two extra holes near the corners for additional strength and decoration: <https://youtu.be/-ogUB8T2Tx8>
1. **Hemp Leaf Binding** (*Asa-No-Ha Toji*) – a variation of *Noble Binding* with more holes, including corner stitching, creating a more elaborate and durable binding: <https://youtu.be/aPmNakh2nGU>
1. **Tortoise Shell Binding** (*Kikko Toji*) – similar to *Hemp Leaf Binding*, without stitching around the corners

## 4) It is a low-cost and simple Binding Technique

Stab binding continues to be a popular choice for bookbinders in many parts of the world, especially those seeking a low-cost alternative. It does not involve many tools, expensive materials or any machinery. Many “Do-It-Yourself” enthusiasts have latched on to this style for that very reason and have developed unique variations on the standards listed above.

([iBookBinding has put together a great list](#) of online tutorials to help get you started!)

## 5) There Are Countless Video Tutorials Online

If you are interested in creating your own simple stab-bound book, it is pretty easy to find YouTube videos. We especially love the series of tutorials that [Sea Lemon](#) has put together, teaching you everything from binding technique to how to wax your own thread!

# Four-Hole Binding (*Yotsume Toji*)

I will be teaching the **Four-Hole Binding (*Yotsume Toji*)**, but you pick any of the 4 bookbinding techniques:

1. **Four-Hole Binding (*Yotsume Toji*)**
2. **Noble Binding (*Koki Toji*)**
3. **Hemp Leaf Binding (*Asa-No-Ha Toji*)**
4. **Tortoise Shell Binding (*Kikko Toji*)**



*Diy:*  
**Japanese Binding  
(4-Hole)**

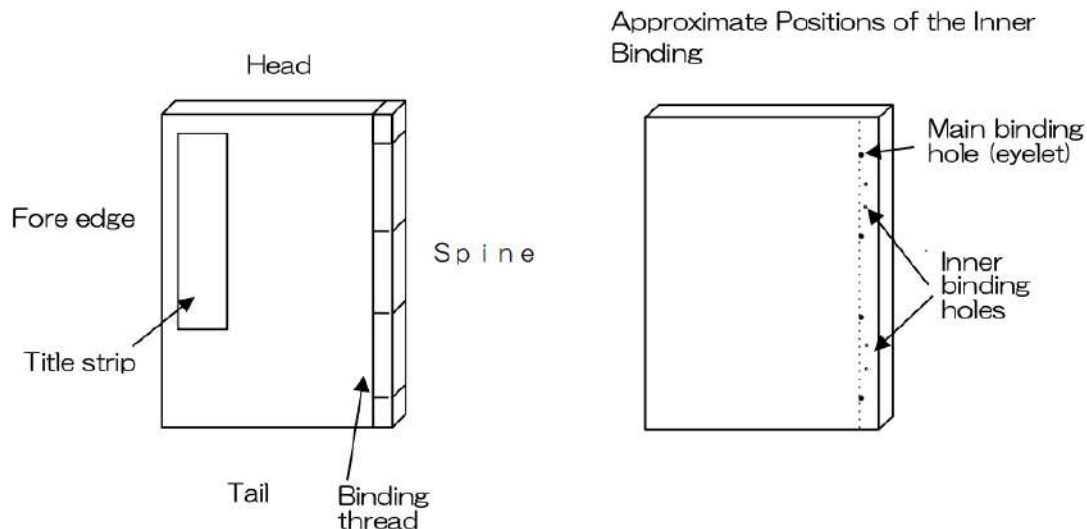
Video:  
4-Hole  
Japanese  
Bookbinding

# Japanese Four-Hole Book Binding (*Yotsume Toji*)

Japanese-style bound books (*wasôbon*) come in many types of bindings, such as *kansubon* ("handscrolls"), *orihon* ("folding books" or "accordion books"), *detchôsô* ("glued books" or "butterfly binding"), and *fukuro toji* ("pouch binding"), to name a few.

Here, we will explain *fukuro toji* ("pouch binding"), and *yotsume toji* (Japanese four-hole book binding), in particular.

## The Parts of a Japanese Bound Book



## Materials and Tools Used

- *Washi* (traditional handmade Japanese paper) for use with paper string  
100% *kozo* (mulberry) *washi*: Approximately 15g/m<sup>2</sup> thick (such as thin *Mino* or *Sekishu-banshi*, etc.), 2 cm wide, and 20 cm long
- Bookbinding needle    A long needle for sewing cotton cloth or bookbinding needle
- Binding thread    Silk thread (*Taihaku*: Thick white silk thread)  
The thread length should measure approximately 3.5 times the length of the book from head to tail. A single-threaded needle is often used for Japanese-style bound books, while a double-threaded needle is often used for Chinese classics.
- Board    Used for a work platform.

### **\*A Note on Rebinding**

Even if the thread is somewhat worn or loose, as long as the inner binding is sturdy and the book opens and closes without difficulty, there is no need to re-bind the book. Since re-binding may result in the book coming apart from the existing thread being cut, the material itself runs the risk of becoming damaged. Therefore, one must carefully consider whether to re-bind an item or not.

When re-binding a book, preserve the original thread in a small pouch along with the book.

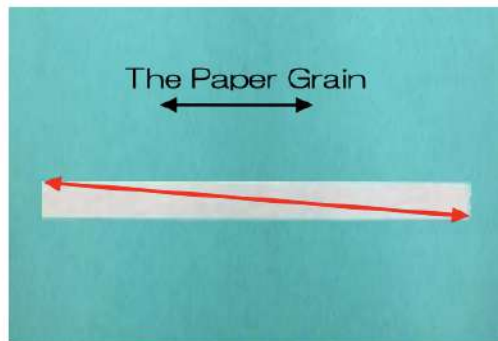
## **1. Twisted Paper String and inner binding**

With inner binding, the pages will not scatter even if the binding thread breaks.

In addition to paper string binding methods for Japanese books, materials may also be bound with staples, clips, or similar implements. As staples and clips can cause rust and other damage, materials can be preserved by removing those items and re-binding the material with paper string.

### 1-1 How to Make Twisted Paper String (*Koyori*)

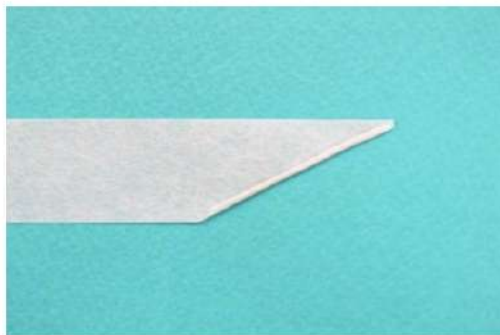
Proceed to twist the *washi* into string after placing the rough side of the *washi* face up.



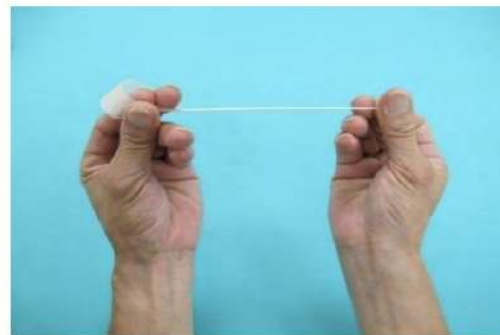
1. It is best to make the length of the paper string equal to the diagonal of the *washi*.



2. Start by picking up the lower right corner of the *washi* and twist it with the thumbs and index fingers of both hands. Moistening your fingertips will make this easier.



3. The beginning of the twist.

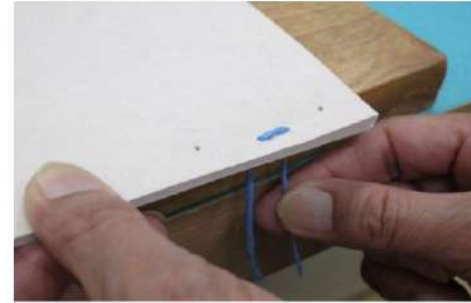


4. Twist up with your left hand while keeping it taut. Roll it with your right hand every now and then.

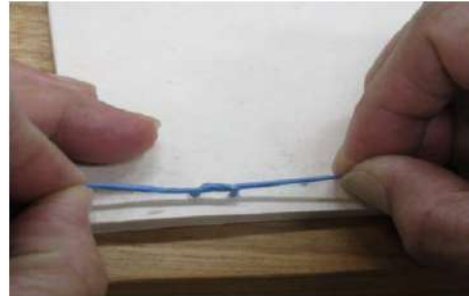
**1-2 Inner Binding (To make it easier to see, a blue paper string is used throughout the photos)**



1. Pull the both ends of the paper string through two holes for inner binding. If the paper string does not easily thread the hole, cut the ends at a diagonal. The thread will pass through more easily with sharpened ends.



2. Pull the paper string through from underneath.



3. Tie it once on the other side, then pound and flatten the knot with the back of the scissors. Pounding the knot will tighten it and prevent it from loosening.

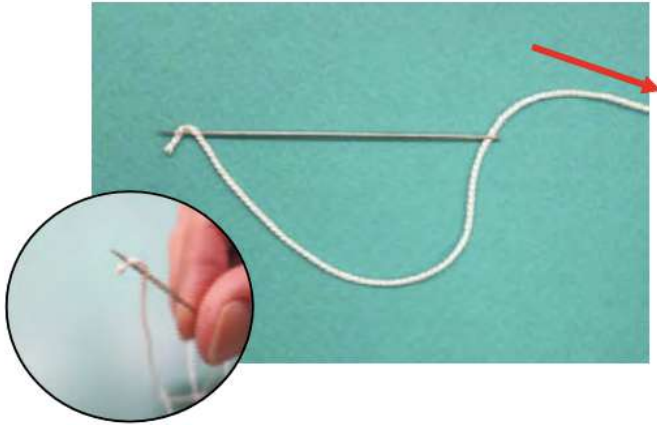


4. Leave approximately 5mm on both ends and then cut with scissors.

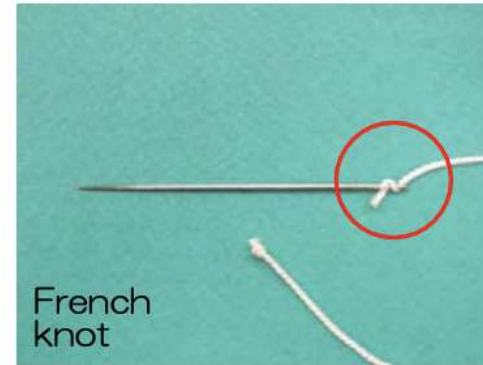
## 2. Japanese Four-Hole Binding (*Yotsume Toji*)

### 2-1 Preparing Binding Thread

With the thread fastened to the needle as depicted in the photo below, the thread will not slip from the needle during binding and will make work easier.



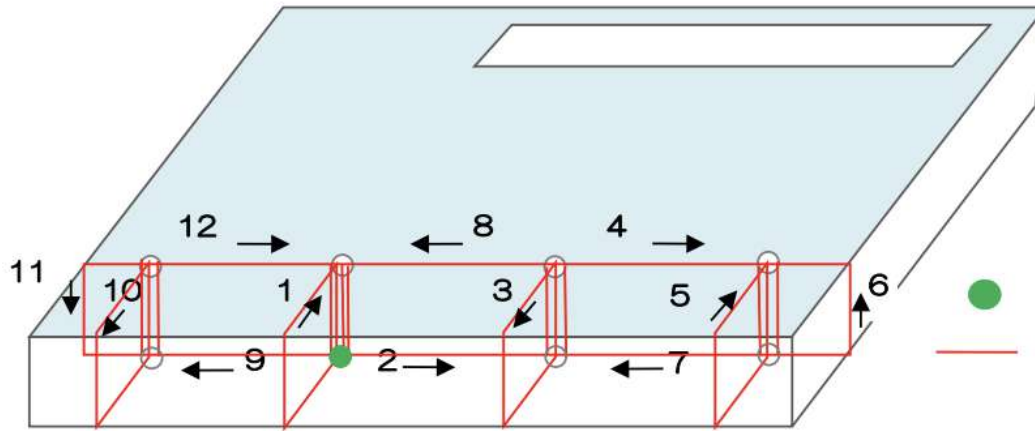
1. Thread the needle, and then pierce one end of the thread with the needle in two places. Pull the other end of the thread in the direction of the arrow shown.



2. The thread is fastened to the eye of the needle. Make a French knot with the other end of the string.

## 2-2 Japanese Four-Hole Book Binding (*Yotsume Toji*)

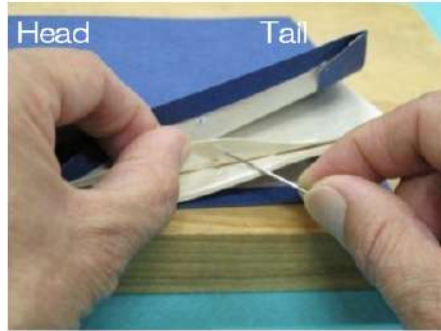
As you will pass the needle through one hole at least three times, be careful you do not pierce the thread with the needle from the second pass onward.



### The Binding Order

The green dot marks the starting point.

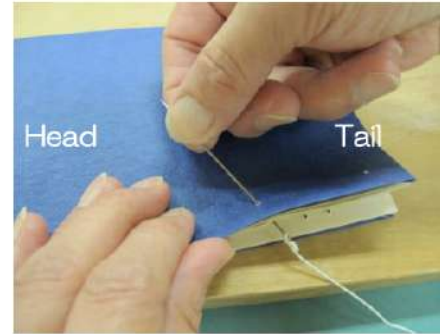
The red lines indicate the binding thread.



1. Place the back cover right-side up so that the spine is facing you. Turn up two to three pages from the spine, insert the needle through the paper of the book between the spine and the second binding hole from the tail, and then pull the needle tip out from the binding hole in the back cover.



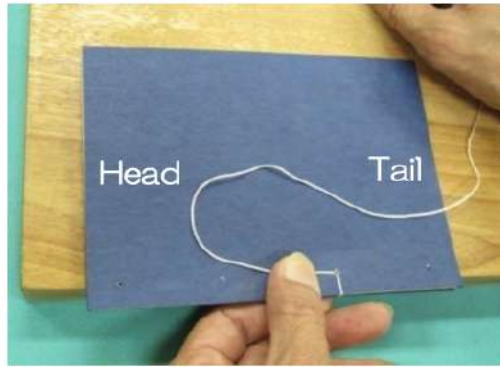
3. The French knot will come to a stop in the body of the book and the thread will not come loose.



2. Pull the thread out of the second binding hole from the tail on the back-cover side.



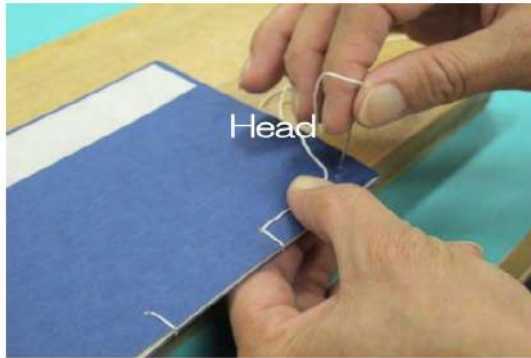
4. Insert the needle into the same binding hole, this time from the front cover side so that the thread catches the spine.



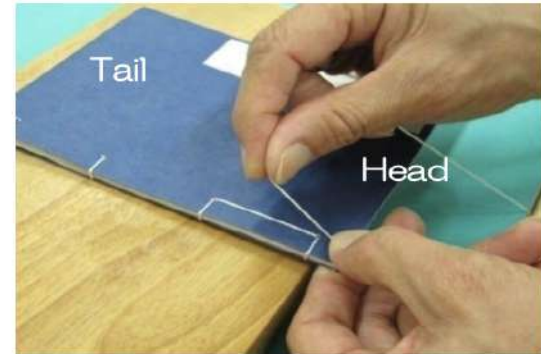
5. Proceed to the next binding hole along the left side (toward the head) and bind the spine.



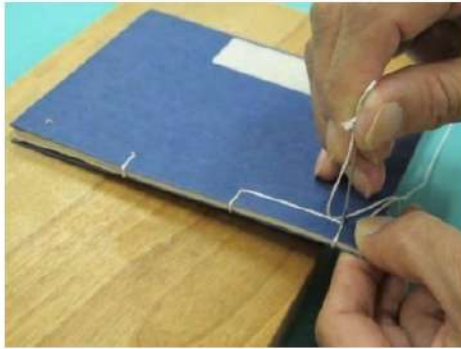
6. To prevent the threads from loosening, press the thread down with your thumb as you continue to bind.



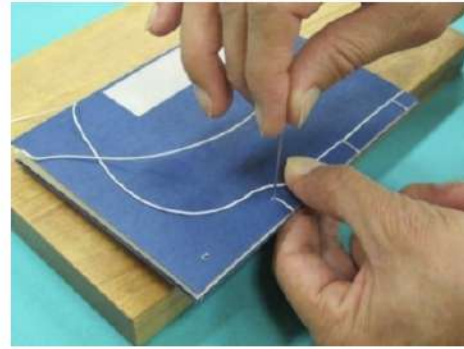
7. Switch to the front cover, pull the thread through the hole at the head of the book, then loop the thread around the spine and pass the thread through the same hole.



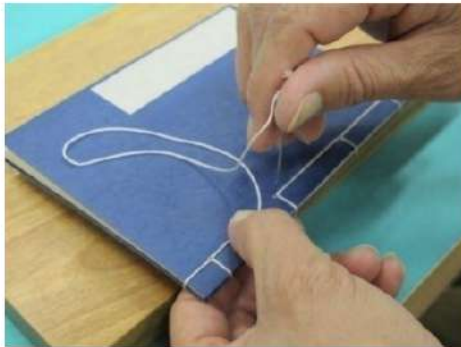
8. When binding the head of the book, change the direction of the book so that the material at the head of the book is facing you (the same applies when working on the tail).



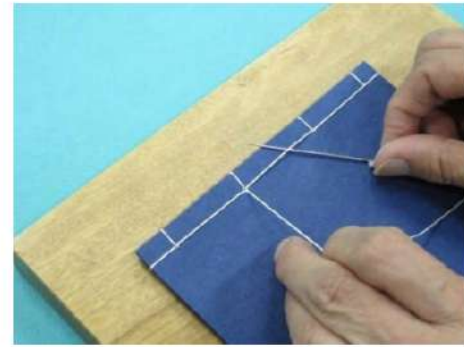
9. Loop the thread at the head of the book and pass through the same hole. Then switch to the back cover, thread the second hole from the head, and return to the front cover.



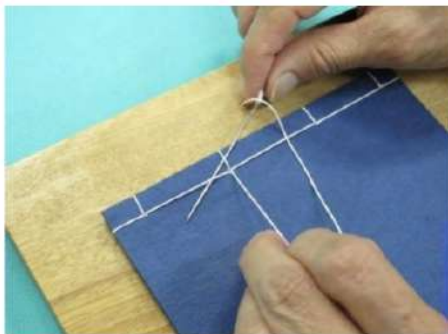
10. Return to the starting point. Repeat these steps and bind the tail just as you did with the head of the book. (See steps 7-9)



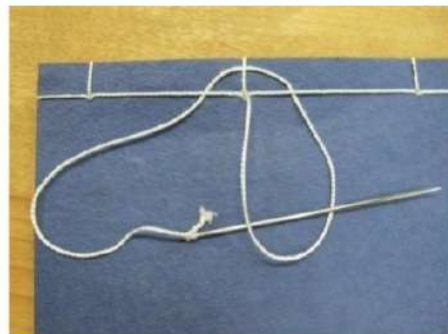
11. Return the starting point again and pass the needle through the back cover. At this stage, all locations have been threaded.



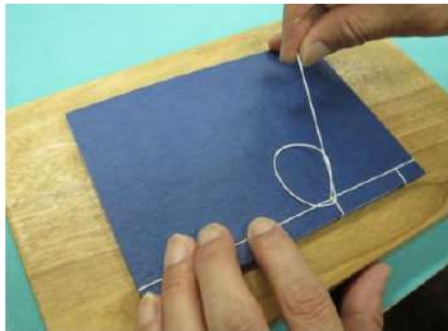
12. Finally we are ready to tie the threads. Return to the back cover, and pass the needle with the binding thread through the lower three locations. Start with the first location.



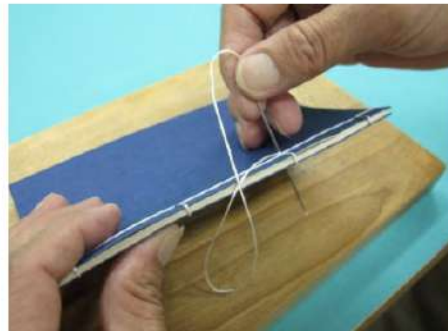
13. Pass the needle with the thread under the two remaining locations. At this point, without tightening the thread, make a thread loop with your left hand.



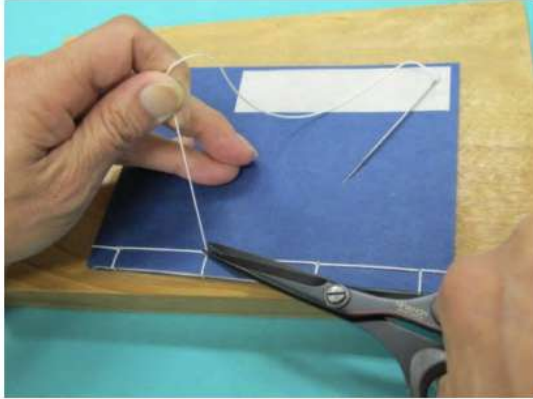
14. Pass the needle through the loop of thread.



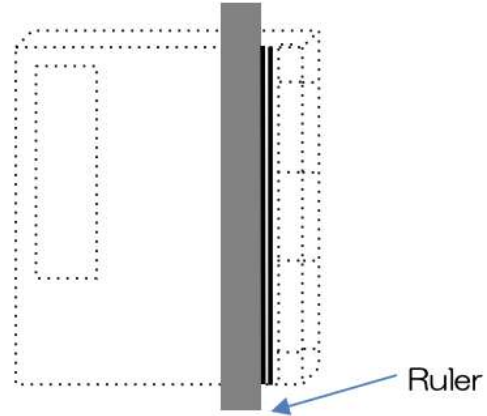
15. You can form a knot by pulling the thread. Pull tightly to prevent sagging.



16. Pull the needle through the same binding hole and come out on the front cover side. When you pull the thread to the front cover side, the knot on the back will be pulled into the binding hole and will remain inconspicuous.



17. Pull the thread taut and cut the end with scissors. Be careful you do not cut any of the binding threads. The cut end of the thread will remain out of sight in the binding hole.

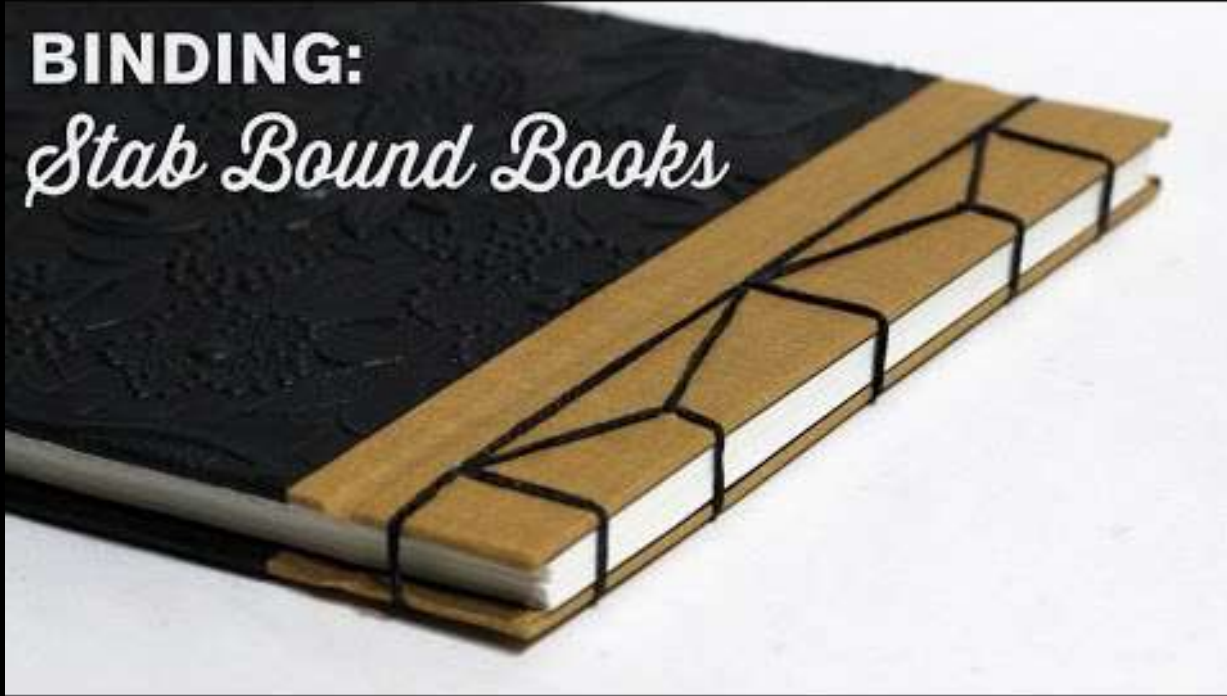


Place a ruler over the front cover of the new book to the inside of the binding thread and create two folding lines with the spatula.

Open the cover along the folding lines and gently form a folding crease. There is no need to create folding lines if you are re-binding a book, because it will already have them.

**BINDING:**

*Stab Bound Books*



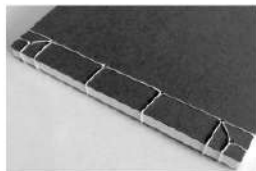
Video:  
Japanese  
Stab Bound  
Bookbinding



Video:  
Japanese  
Bookbinding

## Bookbinding - Loose Leaf Bindings

### Koki Toji (Noble Binding) Sewing Pattern



Koki Toji or Noble binding is an excellent binding to try once you have become familiar with Yotsume Toji (Four Eye Binding). You will notice it follows an almost identical sewing pattern but with an additional step after sewing around the head and foot of the bookblock.

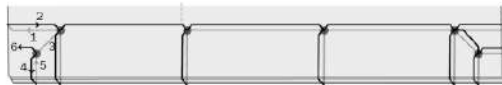
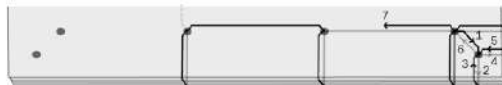
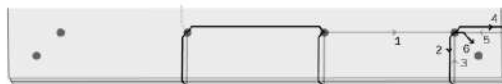
The dimensions shown here are appropriate for a book 12 cm high. If making a taller book, the pattern will be more pleasing if the spacing from the top, bottom and spine is greater than that shown here.

**Note:** Detailed instructions on creating a sewing station template, preparing the bookblock and drilling the sewing station holes can be found in the guide 'Japanese Stab Binding'.

01. Prepare a sewing station template as per the diagram below. Make the holes through the entire bookblock with a drill, awl, or punch.



02. Begin sewing in between the middle pages of the bookblock at sewing station C. Continue to sew following the numbered sequence in the following diagrams.

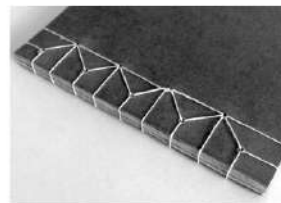


03. Finish by bringing the thread back out between the middle pages where you began sewing and tie off with a square knot.



## Bookbinding - Loose Leaf Bindings

### Asa-No-Ha Toji (Hemp Leaf Binding) Sewing Pattern

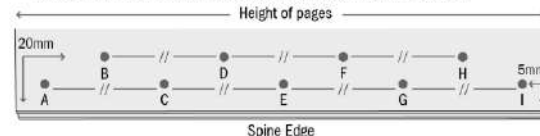


**Asa-No-Ha Toji or Hemp Leaf binding follows the same sewing pattern as the previous stab bindings but with a few extra steps at the end. The offset sewing stations across the spine creates a pattern that resembles that of a hemp leaf, giving the binding its name.**

The dimensions shown here are appropriate for a book 12 cm high. If making a taller book, the pattern will be more pleasing if the spacing from the top, bottom and spine is greater than that shown here.

**Note:** Detailed instructions on creating a sewing station template, preparing the bookblock and drilling the sewing station holes can be found in the guide 'Japanese Stab Binding'.

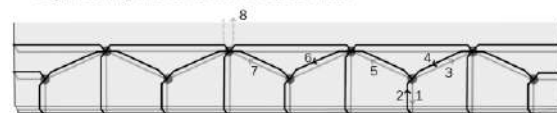
01. Prepare a sewing station template as per the diagram below. Make the holes through the entire bookblock with a drill, awl, or punch.



02. Begin sewing in between the middle pages of the bookblock at sewing station D. Continue to sew as for the noble binding until the final step, then continue as below.

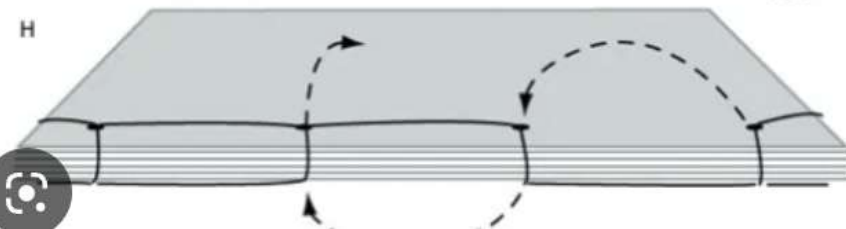
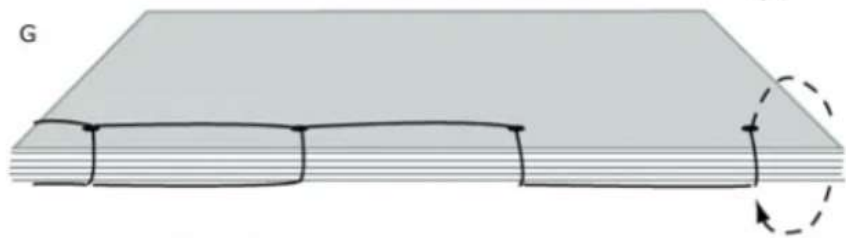
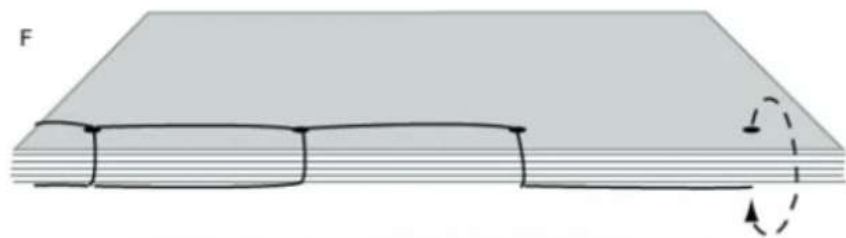
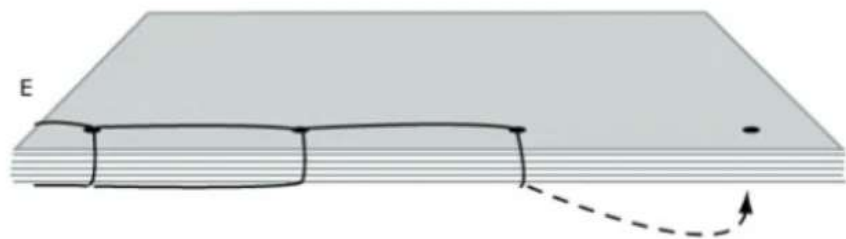


03. Finish by bringing the thread back out between the middle pages where you began sewing and tie off with a square knot.

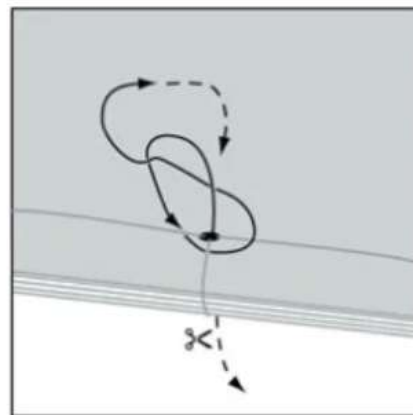


# Fabric Covered Journal Covers without Watercolor Painting

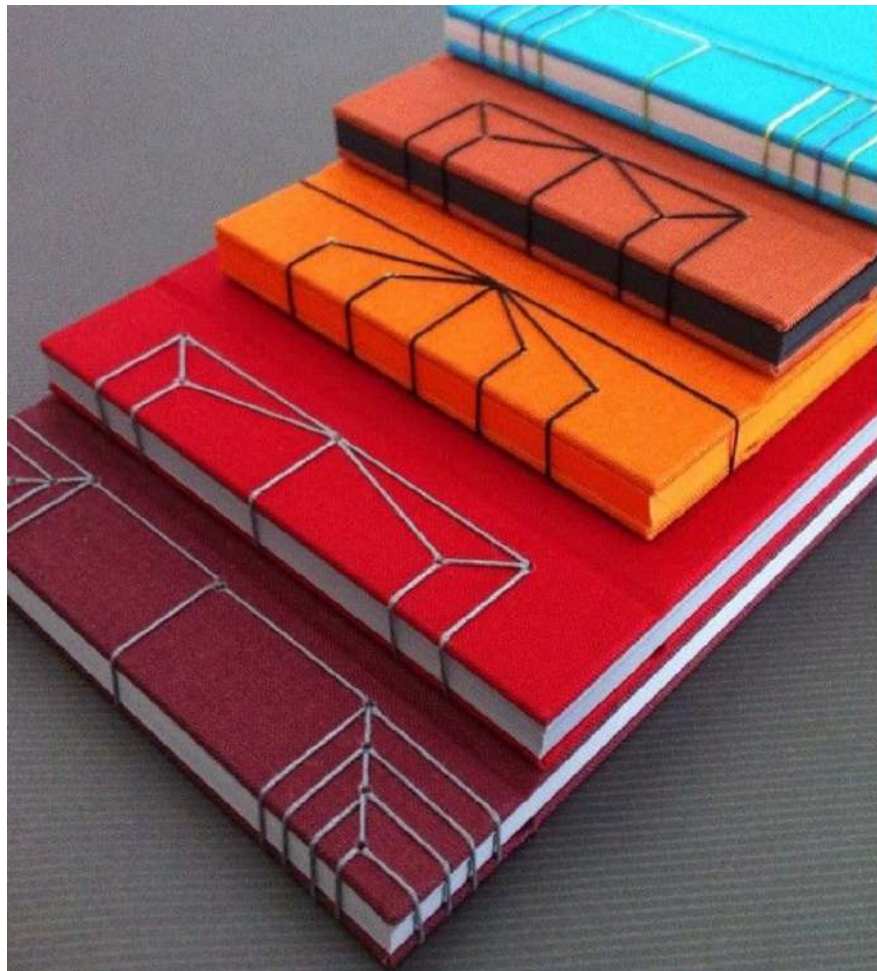




6. Finishing off. Tie a knot by threading the needle under and over the stitches. Then push the needle back down through the hole and cut off the thread.



The book is now complete

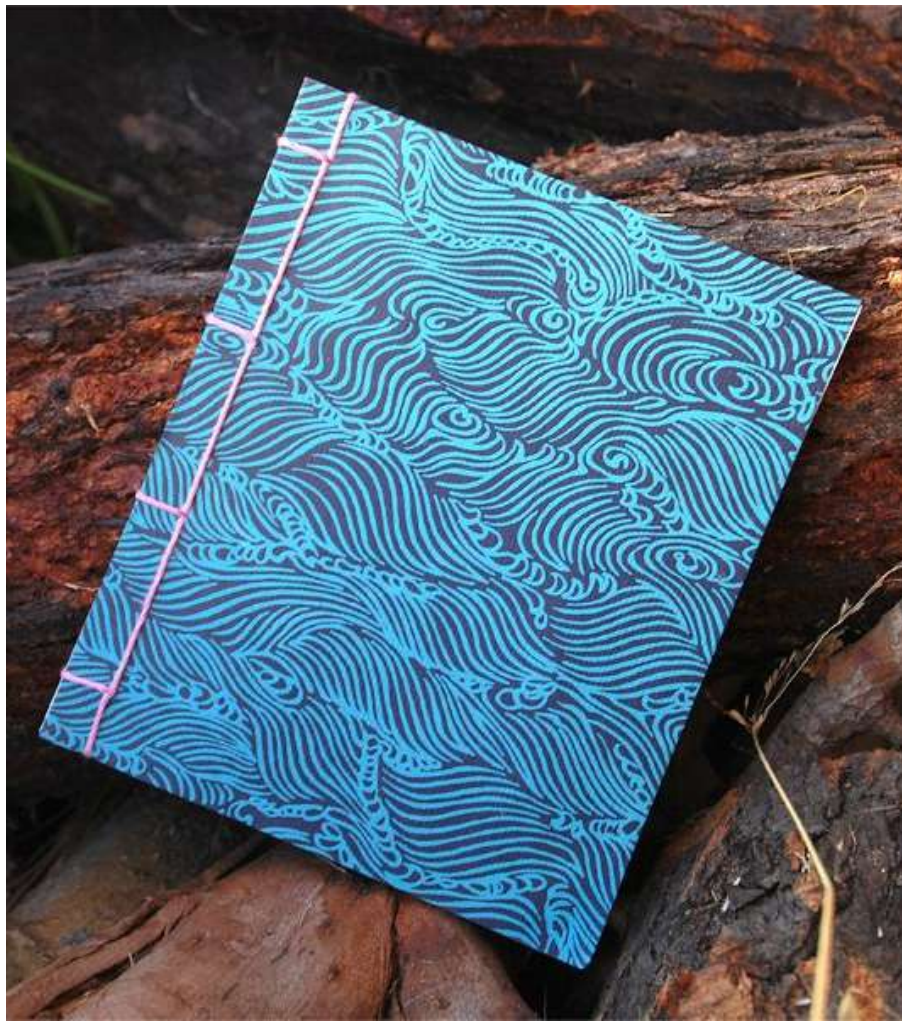






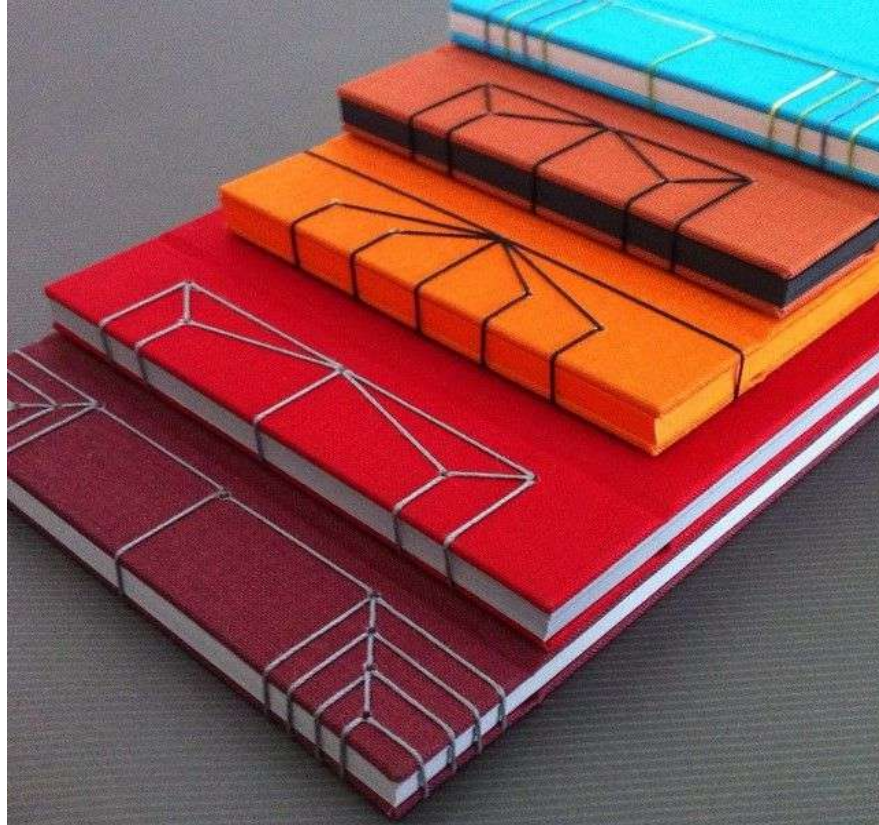
Canton  
Museum  
of Art







# Additional Bookbinding Videos and Tutorials





# **BINDING TUTORIAL**

Video:  
Japanese  
Bookbinding



Video:  
Japanese  
Bookbinding

# Beginner Bookbinding Project

Video:  
Beginner  
Bookbinding





Video:  
Making a book at  
home:  
Bookbinding



Video:  
Japanese  
Bookbinding



Video:  
Japanese  
Bookbinding