

YOUR FREE READER'S COMPANION

The Leatherworker's Starter Kit

A companion to The Leathercrafting Bible · by Hank Sutton

Thanks for picking up the book. This is the companion you keep on the bench: the tool list that skips the gimmicks, a leather weight chart, the saddle-stitch spacing that makes your work look professional, and the edge-finishing steps that separate a first project from a tenth. Print it, get some beeswax on it.

Most beginners buy the wrong leather and twice the tools they need. Get these two pages right and your first wallet will already look like it belongs in a shop window. — Hank

Tool Buying Guide — What to Buy, What to Skip

You do not need a \$600 kit. You need eight good tools and the discipline to use them well.

Buy these first

Tool	Why	Rough cost
Stitching chisels (3mm, 2-prong + 6-prong)	Even, professional holes	\$25-40
Two harness needles	Saddle stitch needs two	\$5
Waxed thread (0.8mm)	Strong, forgiving	\$10
Cutting mat (self-healing)	Protects bench + blade	\$15
Utility/round knife + spare blades	Clean cuts; replace blades often	\$15
Edge beveler (#2)	The single biggest "pro" upgrade	\$18
Wing divider	Consistent stitch line	\$12
Wooden/glass slicker	Burnished edges	\$10

Skip for now

- Pricking irons over \$80 (chisels do the same to start)
- Powered burnishers, clicker presses, skiving machines
- Leather "variety packs" — you'll get scraps too thin or too stiff to learn on

Leather Weight & Temper Chart

Leather is sold by weight (ounces), which is really thickness. 1 oz $\approx$ 1/64 inch.

Weight	Thickness	Best for
2-3 oz	~1.0-1.2 mm	Linings, soft pouches, watch straps
4-5 oz	~1.6-2.0 mm	Wallets, card holders, small goods
6-7 oz	~2.4-2.8 mm	Belts (lined), bag bodies, sheaths
8-10 oz	~3.2-4.0 mm	Heavy belts, holsters, straps

Start with veg-tan, 4-5 oz. It cuts clean, tools beautifully, takes dye, and forgives mistakes. Chrome-tan is for later, when you have a sewing machine.

Saddle-Stitch Spacing Templates

The saddle stitch is the heart of hand leatherwork — two needles, one thread, locked every pass so it never unravels even if a stitch is cut.

Spacing by project

Project	SPI (stitches/inch)	Chisel spacing	Edge margin
Wallets / card goods	7-9	3.0 mm	3.5 mm
Belts / straps	5-6	4.0 mm	4.0 mm
Bags / heavy goods	4-5	5.0 mm	5.0 mm

The method, in order

1. Scribe your stitch line with the wing divider, set to the edge margin above.
2. Mark holes with the chisel along that line — keep the chisel vertical.
3. Cut thread ~4x the seam length; thread a needle on each end.
4. Pass both needles through each hole from opposite sides; pull even.
5. Keep the same needle going through "in front" every time — consistency is everything.
6. Backstitch 2-3 holes at the end, then trim flush and burn-seal if synthetic thread.

Edge Finishing — The Step Everyone Skips

A finished edge is what makes a piece look bought, not made.

The sequence

1. Trim the edge clean and flush with your knife.
2. Bevel both top and bottom edges with the #2 beveler.
3. Sand: 400 grit, then 600. Knock off all the fuzz.
4. Dampen lightly with water (or gum tragacanth / Tokonole).
5. Burnish hard with the slicker until the edge turns glossy and dark.
6. Optional: a touch of paraffin or beeswax, then slick again.

If you only adopt one new habit from this whole pack, make it edge finishing. It takes ten minutes and it's the difference a customer can see from across a table.

That's the kit. Start with a simple card holder — four pieces, one seam, every skill in miniature. When you finish your first piece, I'd genuinely love to see it, and in a couple of emails I'll tell you exactly how a quick word from you helps this book find the next maker.

Stitch slow, burnish hard,
Hank Sutton