

A day out learning to make hard back books

We're just home from a super fun day learning to make hardback books, we're both still a little bit giddy from having so much fun.

If you don't know the story of Kate and I, you may not know that books play a huge part in our lives and indeed in our story. Kate is a librarian and I am a book geek. I always tell people that I am the real-life version of Sebastian from "Never Ending Story", the kid who gets lost in a book in order to escape the real world. Unfortunately, I never got a luck dragon.

When Kate and I met, instead of the usual flowers and chocolates, on our second date, Kate gave me two of her favourite books. It was one of the sweetest and most appropriate gifts ever and sparked a love of Terry Pratchett.

So, today we got to go live out our geeky book alter egos and learn to actually make books. It was soooooo much fun. Kate has been to a bookbinder to watch the process before, but this is the first time either of us actually got to try our hand at making books.

So how do you make a book?

I have to be honest and say its actually a whole lot easier than you think it would be and as a hobby it's not as expensive as some other hobbies. The basic bits you need are really cheap. Scissors, a sharp knife, a ruler, something to press down folds and make them crisp, glue, a needle and lastly, paper and card. Of course, you can go as simple or as fancy as you like and that will affect the cost but the rainy craft weekend fun and opportunity for gift giving makes it all

worthwhile for me.

So.... It all starts with some paper, which can be any type of paper you like, although I really like nice heavy paper so that would be my choice. I always like the really nice stuff that you can use a fountain pen on, not that I would ever risk writing with a fountain pen, as I don't so much write, as scrawl.

So where do we start? Simply by folding paper in half to make your pages. Four pieces of paper, folded in half to be specific.



Each of these little, folded pieces is called a signature and you make the main part of your book by sewing these signatures together. You don't have to be good at sewing, in fact, this is the first time I have EVER sewed anything. Unlike my little sister Leigh who has actually made Kate and I, pyjamas and



sponge bags and things.

I won't try and fail miserably to tell you all about the stitching process, but I think it was called a running stitch, but apparently, there are different types of bookbinding stitches for different types of binding. We thought this was going to be the really difficult bit, but it was actually really simple and much faster than I thought it would be. I was onto my very last signature before I even realised.

Then on each side of the pile of signatures (signature block), you have your "endpaper", this is the piece which you glue to your cover to attach your signatures to the cover. It's usually a different colour or a bit fancy. I've seen this as marbled quite a lot. They are glued to your first and last page and then glued to your cover. But before then, you make sure the main body of the book is secure by glueing along the back to help hold it all together and you put a strip of cloth or brown paper on this. This doesn't look pretty but it's very effective. The bulldog clips were really handy for holding the pages square and acting as a stand to let things dry.



Then the fun starts, you get to make your book cover which is essentially three bits of card glued onto some brown paper to create your movable binding. I know, really, it's that simple. By this point I felt a bit like someone had explained a magic trick. A little disappointed that these wonderful objects which had meant so much to me throughout my life, were actually so simple.



The pretty coloured piece is the cloth that it is all glued to, it's called book cloth.



There are lovely little touches that make it all work, like the ribbon page marker or the “headband”, which hides the messy ends of the signatures. This just makes it look that little bit more special, and dare I say it professional.



The two pieces, (the cover and the signature block) are stuck together by glueing the end pages onto the hardback cover, making your finished book. I know, really, that’s it!!!

So all and all, a fantastic day out learning to do something fun, exciting and which will definitely appear in our crafty

weekends... look out for handmade books as Christmas gifts.

Lastly, we want to say thank you to Marion, our tutor today who was fantastically patient, especially with me and my clumsiness. We'd definitely recommend you look her classes up if you fancy having a go at this.

[The old printing works](#)

