

Vintage leather briefcase/satchel

by **caracoda** on October 9, 2016

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Author: caracoda Era Shevtsova
Dare something worthy!

Intro: Vintage leather briefcase/satchel

Hello everyone!

My name is Era, I've been doing leatherwork for 6 years now. I enjoy leatherwork and I love making patterns. I even opened an online shop with leathercraft patterns.

Here is my tutorial on making an old and vintage looking briefcase/satchel. It is great for artists, graphic/digital designers, students with lots of books and other things and it will accommodate just about anything you need to carry every day. It is also good for travelling when you want to have all your necessary stuff with you in the train or airplane. It is large and very roomy and I call it "brieftchel". Of course this is a made up word. I love classic British satchels and I wanted to make my own one but I also wanted it to be briefcase-like. So I combined two together and called it "brieftchel". It has a basic structure of a satchel, one main department for a laptop, books, lightpad, organisers and even maybe a lunch box if you want to put it inside. A detachable shoulder/crossbody strap will allow you to take the weight off your hands. The smaller front pocket is still roomy enough for tablets, pencils, brushes, maybe sandwiches or anything else. It IS a large pocket. The closure is presented by two buckled straps which actually have magnetic buttons underneath. This is for easier opening so you do not need to meddle with the buckles every time. I also added a large flat pocket on the back panel if you need to put some papers or files there. It has a snap button closure but you can just tuck the closure strap in to the pocket if you don't want to use it. The inside space is very large and you can use it for any organiser inserts which are so popular nowadays.

I reinforced the bottom part of the gusset with an extra layer of leather and installed 8 brass feet to protect leather and to give the bag more stability. The handle is quite "heavy duty" and it is attached to the flap which has also been reinforced for durability.

This is a large case and when fully filled is quite heavy so I decided against adding any lining inside just not to make the whole thing even heavier. When empty this brieftchel weighs a little over 2kg.

I spent a lot of time designing this brieftchel, I made all the cutting and tooling patterns myself from scratch. The tooling is of course optional, you might want just to use a factory dyed leather and make a plain durable thing. I like the "old and used" distressed look on leather and I use it constantly when making my card cases. You do not have to like it because it is quite specific look but if you do I added detailed step-by-step instructions with photographs on how to achieve that look. If you do not want any tooling you still have a set of cutting patterns to make this case without it.

I use Photoshop to make the patterns and then after making an item I correct all the errors and mistakes which might be there and when the corrections are done I have full sized ready-to-print good patterns which can be used for making things out of leather. I put a lot of thoughts into this set and I believe I changed and corrected any errors I found but if you see anything that you think is wrong please let me know and I will fix it.

This is about all for the intro. I hope you will enjoy making your brieftchel as much as I did. I learned a lot myself while making it and I believe you will, too. Thank you for taking time to read this and good luck with your projects!





Step 1: Tools and materials needed

You will need:

To get the patterns ready:

- ~ Adobe Acrobat Reader to open and print your PDF file
- ~ printing paper a printer. Standard home printer will do just fine
- ~ glue stick or sellotape to assemble the patterns
- ~ scissors to cut the patterns out

Materials:

- ~ vegetable tanned natural leather, 2.5mm
- ~ vegetable tanned natural leather 2mm
- ~ hardware: snaps, magnetic snaps, D-rings, handle hardware, buckles x3, rivets, handbag brass feet x8, swivel hooks and basically whatever you are planning to use on your case. Also double cup brass rivets and tubular brass rivets.
- ~ round punch, oval punch, oblong punch

To cut the patterns out of leather:

- ~ round awl to trace the patterns on leather
- ~ round knife or utility knife or any other appropriate and sharp knife for leather
- ~ cutting board
- ~ strap cutter (or a 1m ruler to cut long shoulder straps)
- ~ strap end punch

To tool leather:

- ~ water and sponge to case leather. Sponge can be substituted with a piece of sheep wool.

<http://www.instructables.com/id/Vintage-Leather-Briefcasesatchel/>

~ stylus to trace the tooling pattern

~ swivel knife

~ stamping tools (basic set)

~ mallet

~ modelling spoon

~ granite as a base for tooling

To dye/antique leather:

~ resist for leather (acrylic finish will do, I am using RTC finish)

~ detail brush and a medium round brush

~ antique gel/paste (I am using Eco-Flo Antique Gel in Saddle Tan)

~ Fiebing's Professional Oil dye in Saddle Tan

~ acrylic finish (RTC or Super Shene)

~ sheep wool

~ wool daubers

~ Leather conditioner (I am using Obenauf's product) any brand as long as it is water proof

To distress leather:

~ sandpaper blocks (150-180 grid)

To install hardware:

~ rivet setter, tubular rivet setter, snap button setter, moul (heavy and not metal one), anvil,

For stitching:

~ stitching needles (at least 2 but more spare ones)

~ thread (waxed polyester 1mm)

~ stitching awl (diamond shaped and sharp)

~ pricking irons or stitching wheel to mark the stitches

~ stitching pony or clamp to hold your project while stitching it

To finish the edges:

~ edge beveler

~ a pair of dividers

~ gum tragacanth or substitute (I am using Quik Slik), edge dye (spirit one, I am using Fiebing's pro oil dye in Walnut color)

~ edge slicker (any will do, I am using a plain wooden from Tandy)

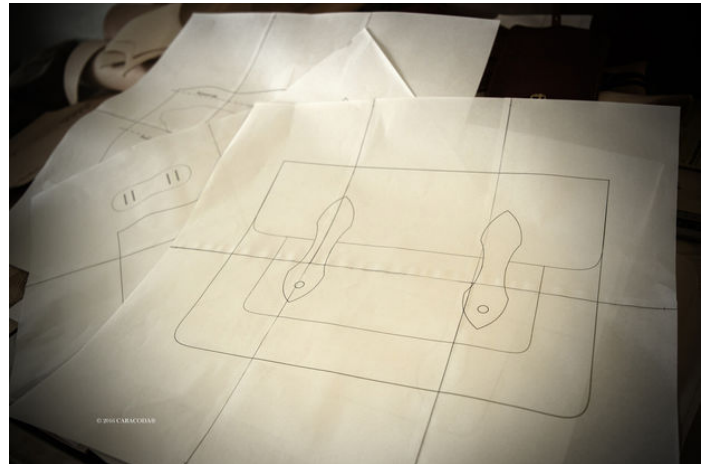
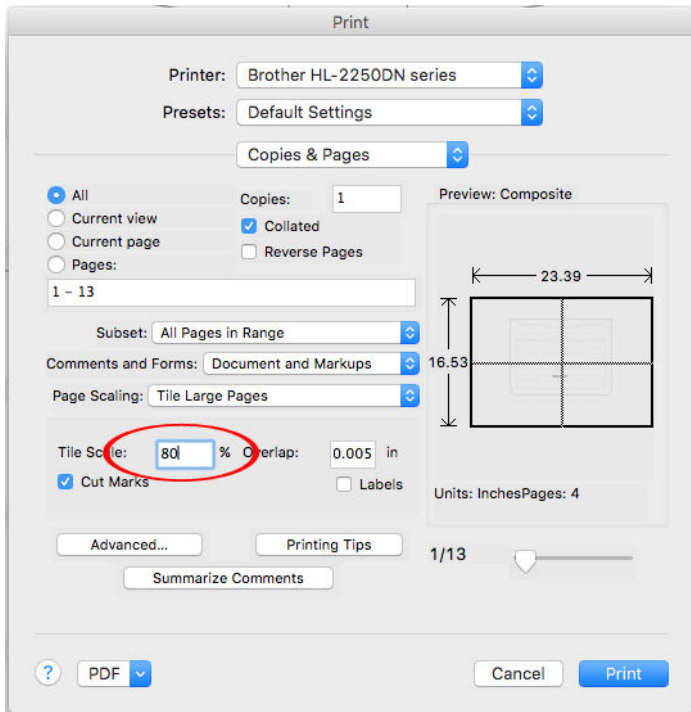
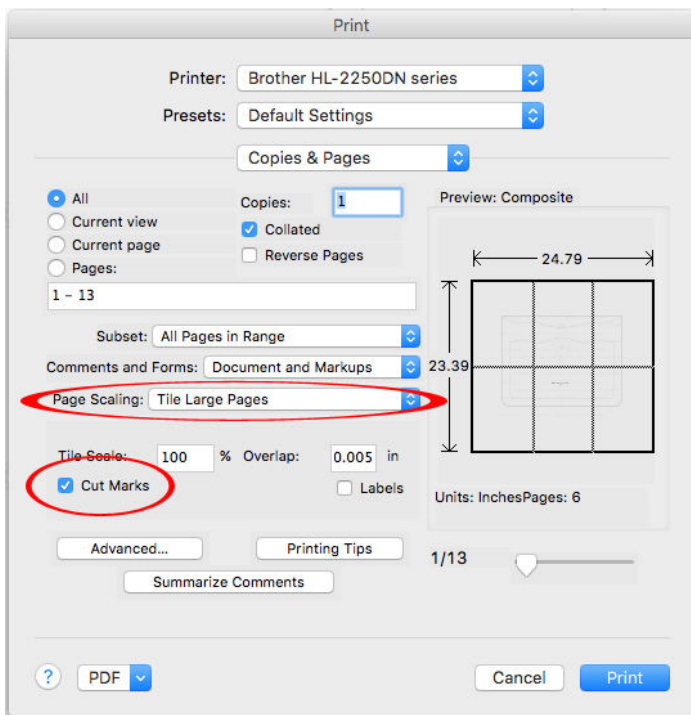
Also glue for leather: leathercraft cement or water based weld for leather, sellotape 50-60mm wide

Step 2: Patterns

First things first. Whatever you make you need patterns. In the end of this step there is a file "Old vintage brieftchel patterns". Click to download it to your computer. This is a PDF file and you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader which is available for free here: <https://get.adobe.com/uk/reader/>. Open the file and print it out at full scale. In the dialog box check the "tile large pages" so the printer can divide large pages in few parts and print them one by one. Then you need to assemble those parts to have a full sized pattern. Check the "marks" box and you will have a little crosses in the corners of each page. You align those crosses and the pieces will match. See the photos for details. Now if you want your brieftchel to be smaller (this one is really large) you need to print at a smaller scale. Type a desired number in the box (see the photo). I would say 80% will make you a nice compact case but you can choose to your requirements.

Once you printed out and assembled/glued the patterns you need to cut them out. Make sure you have all the parts.

I use glue sticks for assembling the paper parts but sellotape can be also used if you prefer.



File Downloads



Old vintage brieftchel patterns.pdf (21 MB)

[NOTE: When saving, if you see .tmp as the file ext, rename it to 'Old vintage brieftchel patterns.pdf']

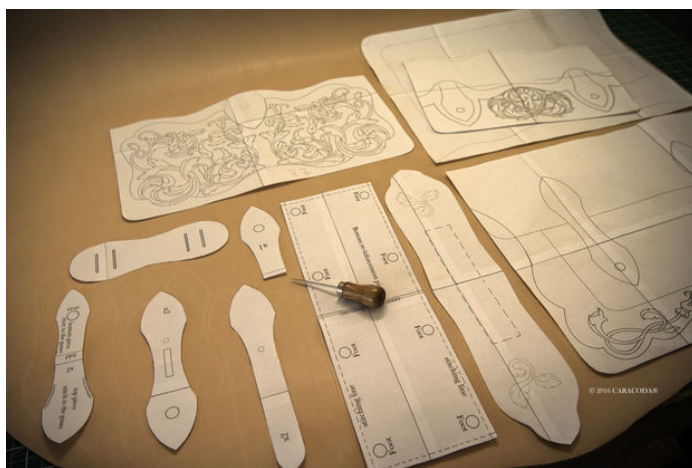
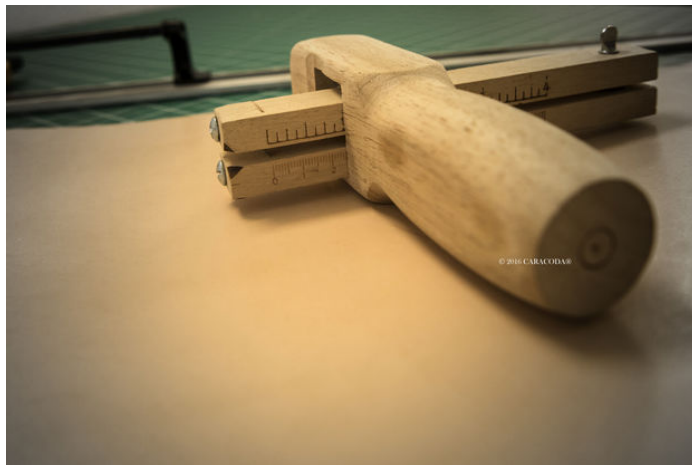
Step 3: Cutting the leather

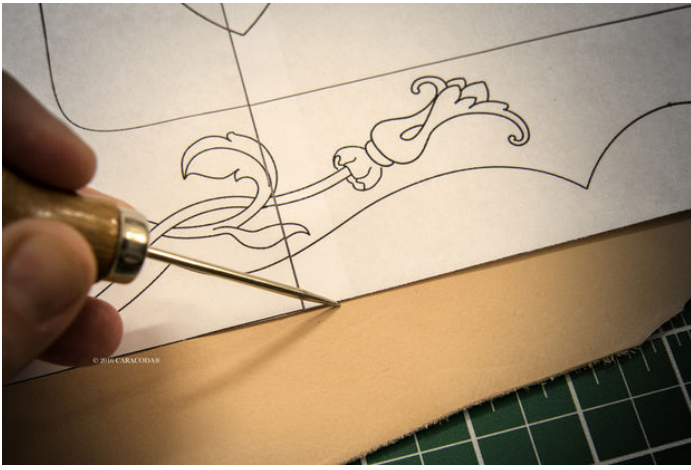
Before anything else take a strap cutter and cut two long straps 1" wide (2.5cm). That is if you decide to use 1" buckles and D-rings. There is no paper pattern for a shoulder strap in this tutorial as it is hard to trace a piece of paper that long and much more sensible just to cut a long strap with a ruler or a strap cutter.

Next place paper patterns on leather leaving approximately half an inch between pieces. Use leather wisely, it is expensive. Use a round scratch awl to trace the patterns. Do not scratch too hard, just enough to see the lines.

Pay attention to those pieces which you need to cut out twice, like buckle straps, shoulder strap holders, etc.

When cutting the pieces out leave some extra leather around the patterns, do not cut along the lines. This is for easier coloring later. After everything is antiqued and dyed we will trim that extra leather.





Step 4: Tooling

This is a large part and if you don't want any tooling but rather plain colored leather case you can simply skip this step.

In order to achieve this "old and used" look we will only be doing basic outline beveling and then rounding out the edges with the modelling spoon. If you don't like this simplified look you can find instructions on detailed tooling in my other tutorial here:

<http://www.instructables.com/id/Antique-style-leat...>

Take wide sellotape and stick it to the back of leather (few stripes to cover the whole area). This will prevent leather from distortion and stretching while tooling. You might also want to have some kind of weights to help leather not to slip when you are tooling. A couple of pounds (around 1kg) is fine. You can see mine in the photos.

First you need to case the leather. This means you need to add enough moisture to leather so when tooled it gives a nice burnished color and a good print shape. Use a bowl of clean water and a sponge/sheep wool to wet the leather. Add enough water so it almost stops getting absorbed into leather. Now leave it for an hour or so until the leather surface will become light color again. It will be cold to the touch which means there is moisture inside. Dry outside and wet inside this is what we need.

Now place a tooling paper pattern on the dry and cold leather surface and fix it a bit with a tape (masking tape will work better). Use a stylus to carefully trace all the lines. Do not push too hard, just enough to see the lines under the paper. If the paper starts getting wet and wrinkled it means the leather is too wet.

When you are done remove the paper and cut all the lines with a swivel knife. Ideally you will need a narrow blade for small and tiny areas and a wide one for long lines but if you only have one blade it is still perfectly fine, you will just need a bit more practice to cut all kind of lines with the same blade.

When the lines are cut use bevelers to go along these lines and bevel outside them. Place a beveler into the cut outside the line and hit it with a mallet. Don't hit hard, just enough to get a print. Then move the beveler slightly along the line and hit again. Keep moving the beveler as you hit it.

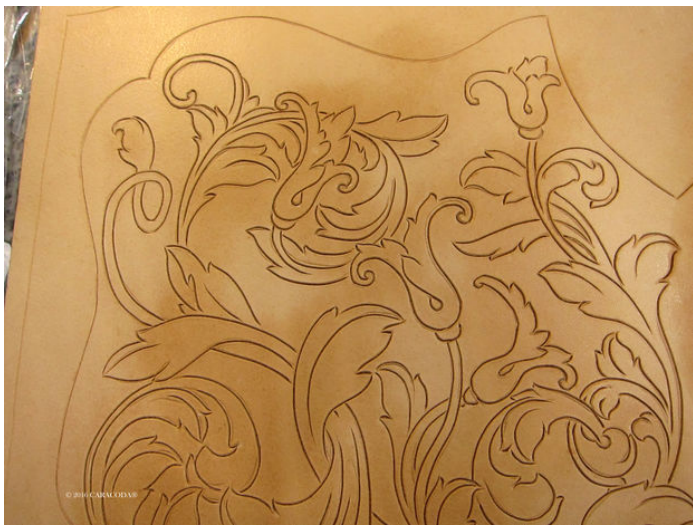
Once you went through all the lines take a modelling spoon and smooth out all the edges of the design. You can also use an undercut tool to lift the edges of the elements such as leaves and petals.

This is all for tooling. As I said, if you want more detailed work please refer to my other tutorial (use the link above).

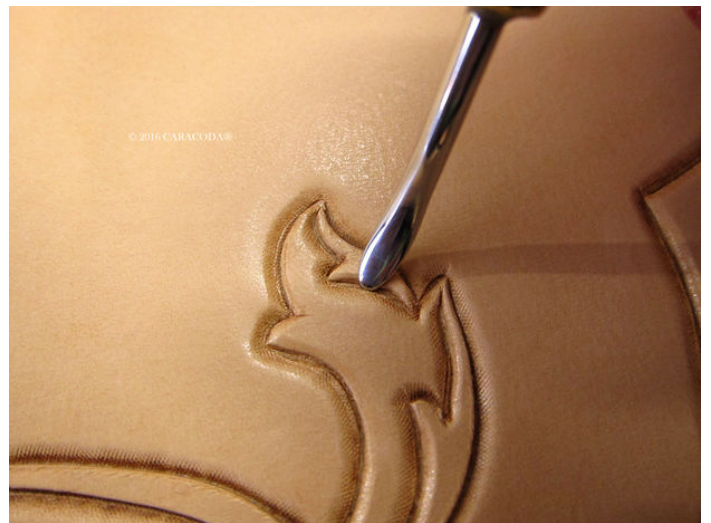
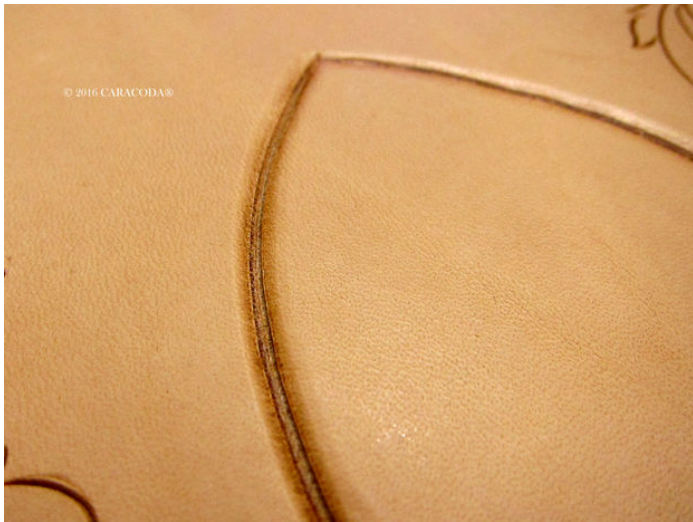


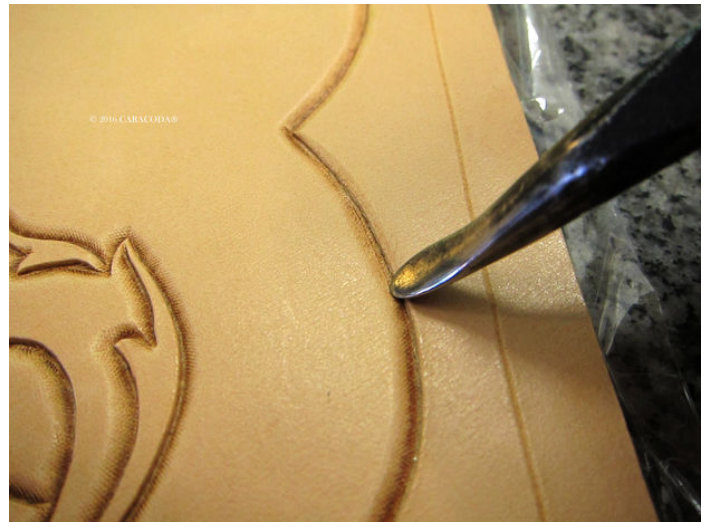
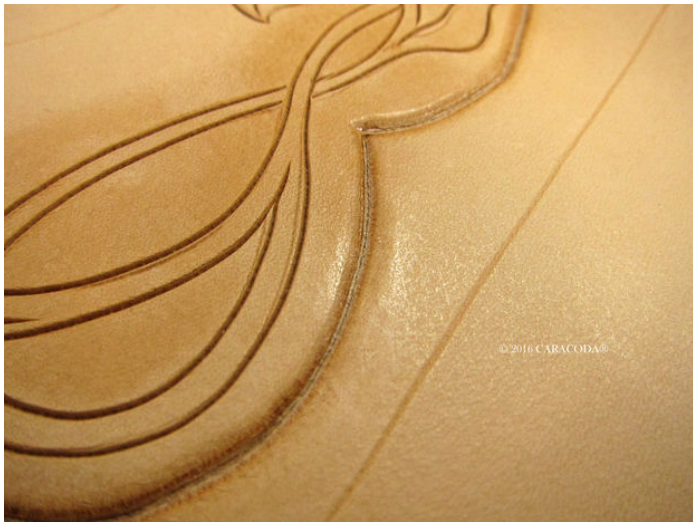


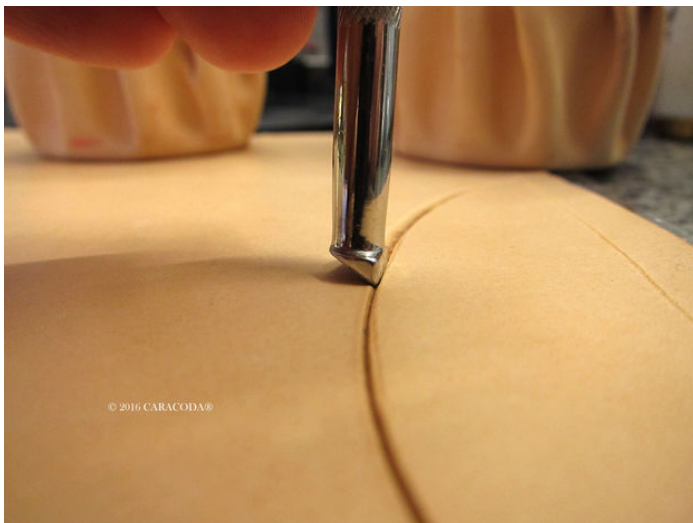














Step 5: Resist, antique, dye

To make the tooled areas look lighter we need to apply resist before any color. For this purpose any acrylic finish can be used. Usually, in classic antiquing you would need to apply a few layers of resist letting dry each of them. In our case we will only need one layer as we want some color to bleed through. I am using RTC finish which I happen to like but it does not matter which one you use, although some finishes are more water resistant and some are less.

We are going to antique front and back panels, front and back pockets, flap and reinforcing piece on the flap. Basically, everything that has tooling will be antiqued. The shoulder strap, the gussets, all little pieces of straps and closures will be dyed.

Use a detail brush to apply finish to the tooled elements. Use a larger round brush to apply finish to larger areas around them. Let it all dry and then it is time to antique.

Put the gloves on and get some water and paper towels ready.

I am using Eco Flo Antique Gel in Saddle Tan color from Tandy, it is my favorite and I've been using it for as long as I've been doing leatherwork. It is water based and does not have any nasty smell. Put some gel on a piece of sheep wool and rub it in leather surface in circle motions. Take paper towel and wipe the excesses off. The gel will be absorbed fast and to wipe it off you might need to wet the paper towel. Do not use too much water, just enough to wipe the gel off. Leave the pieces to dry overnight.

Now dye the gussets and all those little pieces. I used Fiebing's Professional Oil Dye in Saddle tan. It will give darker color than the antique. Just take a piece of sheep wool and apply dye in circle motions. You can use a wool dauber for the shoulder strap. Little pieces are more manageable when they are not cut out of leather until they are fully dyed and finished. That is just my preferences, not a rule.

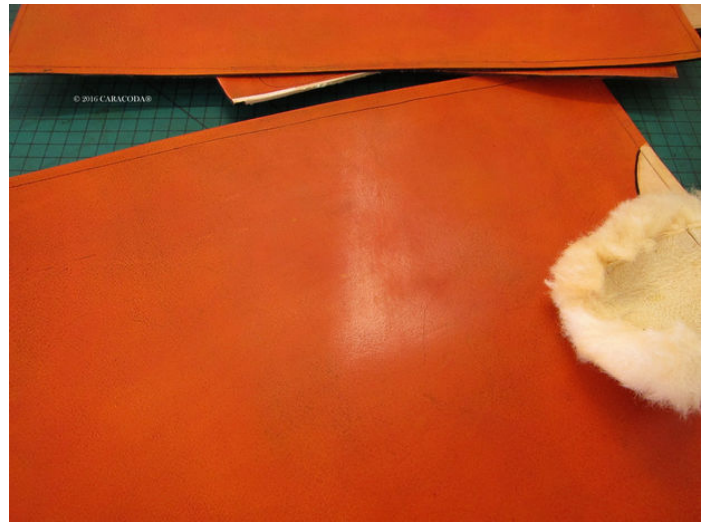
When everything is dyed and antiqued leave the pieces to dry overnight. Then take a clean piece of sheep wool and buff everything really well. If you are not sweating you are not doing it good enough.

Now use a piece of sheep wool and antique gel diluted with water quite a lot to tone the flesh side of the gussets and small pieces. Wet the wool really well and add some antique to it. Apply to the flesh side in circle motions. Let it dry.

Now apply acrylic finish to both sides of the gussets and small parts. Let it dry.







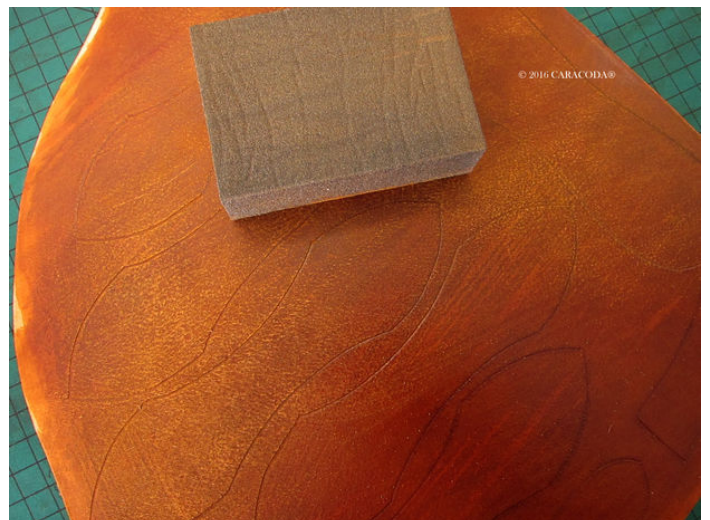
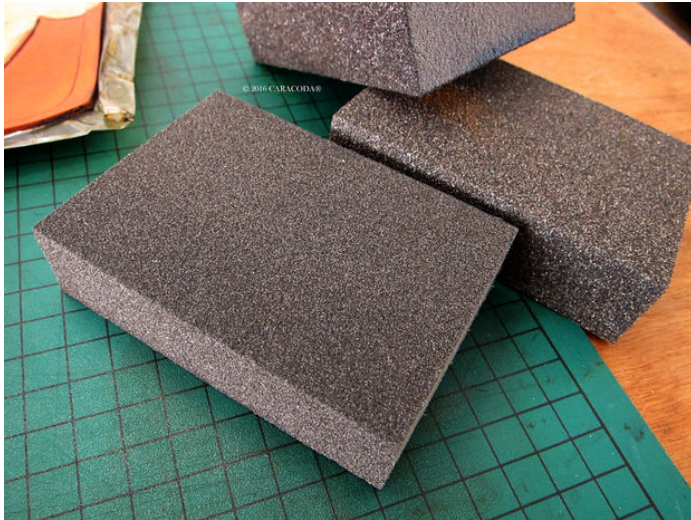




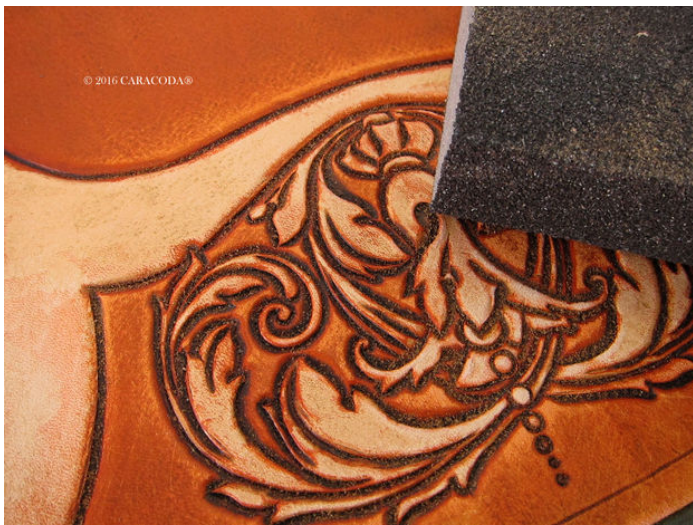


Step 6: Distress it

Now you need a few foam blocks of sandpaper (150-180 grid). When the leather is all dry rub it in circle motions on the grain side. Rub it well, rub it all. Tooling area, resisted (light) areas where the color is blended, you want to smooth it but don't overdo it. You don't want a smooth even tone, just kind of like one layer of color is rubbed off and another one is showing through from underneath. Like it is really an old and very much used bag. Go through all parts including the strap and everything. Rub everything well and always in circle motions. Use a shoe brush to brush the dust off the leather. Then use a sheep wool piece to buff the surface a bit to return that sheen.







Step 7: Condition the leather

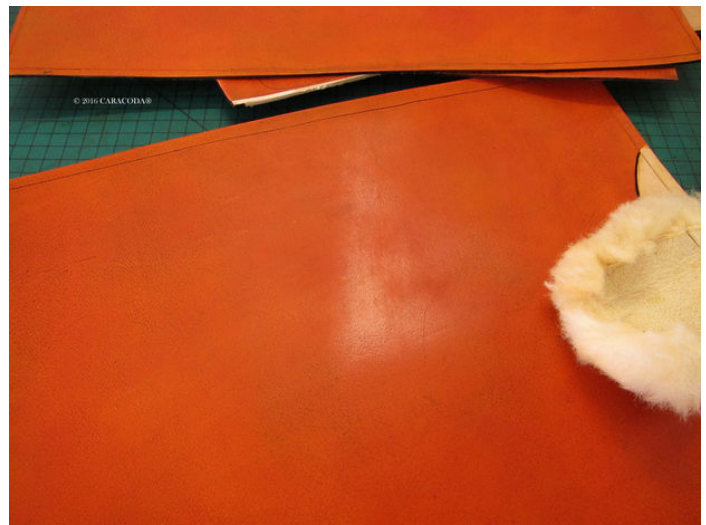
Now it is time to condition the leather. After all you've done to it you want to restore some oils in leather. You can use any oil from leather shops and then after it is settled and dry apply finish or you can do it my way. I use Obenauf's leather preservative (heavy duty). It consists of oil and wax and preserves, conditions and seals leather nicely. It is waterproof and sometimes I use it as finish. If you are working in a room with low temperature it is better to slightly warm up the leather surface. I usually use a hair drier because I do not have a hot air gun. Do not burn the leather, just warm it up a little bit. Then use a piece of an old t-shirt and work the conditioner into leather nicely. Do not use large amount at the same time, better little by little. The oils will be absorbing into leather as you rub it in and the waxes will be sealing the surface. Go through all the parts, dyed and antiqued. Some color will bleed on the cloth, it is ok. If you feel like another coat is needed - do it after the first one is settled a bit. Then leave everything overnight to absorb.

Now wipe the excesses off with a soft cloth. Obenauf's leaves white residue in the cuts of the tooling areas, it's wax. I happen to like it as it gives the look of a really old and antique thing when the dust of ages got into the cuts and grooves and settled there forever. I usually leave it there and I am happy with the look. You do not have to do the same if you don't like it, just take a toothbrush (buy a new cheap one, do not use your old toothbrush) and brush the wax out of the cuts.

Buff everything off very well.

Now you can take the sellotape off the back of antiqued parts. Use antique gel diluted with water to color the flesh sides. When it is dry coat them with acrylic finish.





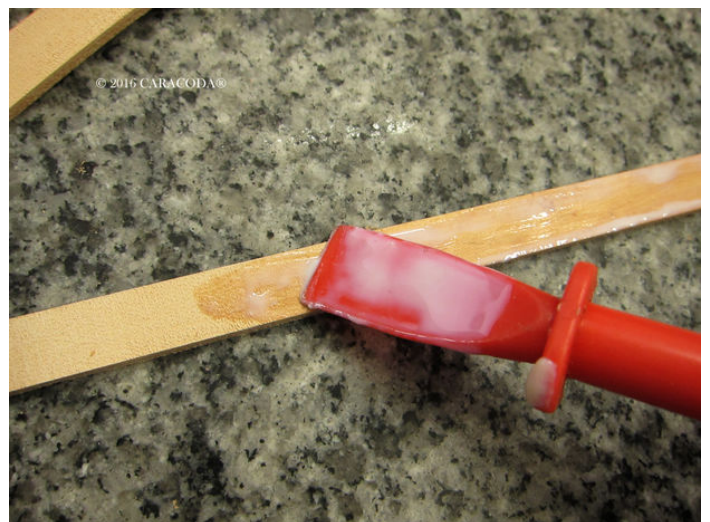
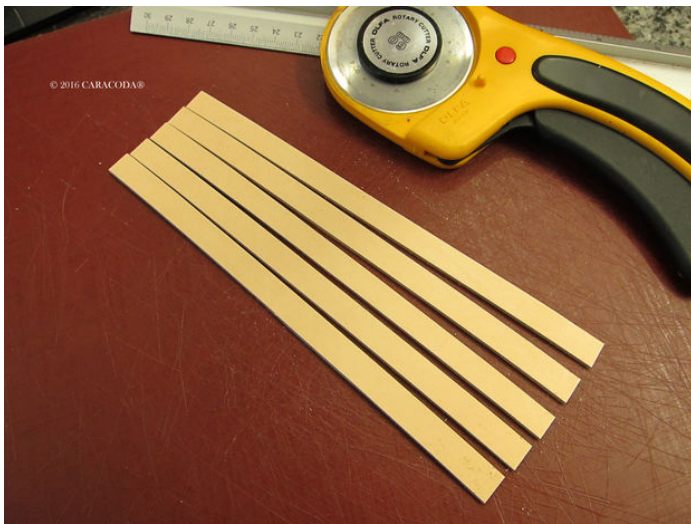
Step 8: Making the handle

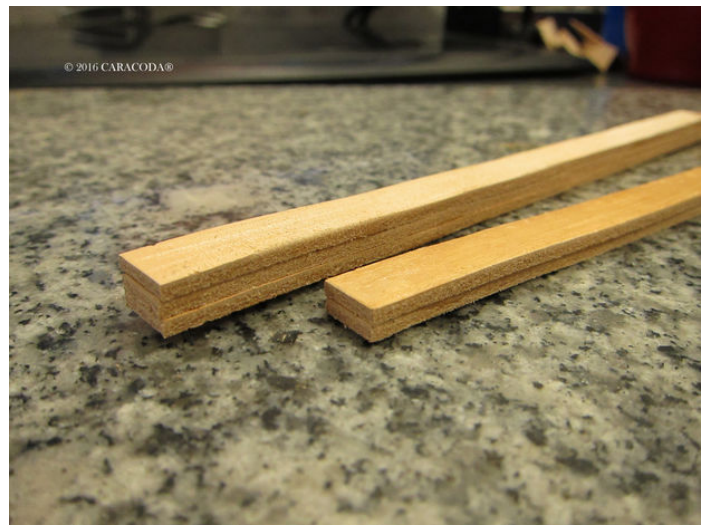
For the handle I used Al Stohlman pattern from the "Leather cases vol.2" book. When making I corrected it a bit to my taste but I left the pattern original as in the book in case you want the Stohlman's pattern. I made the cut outs a bit larger to fit the D-ring I used (I used brass pillar posts) but you might not want to change it. This is to one's taste I guess. Anyway, the pattern is included in the PDF file.

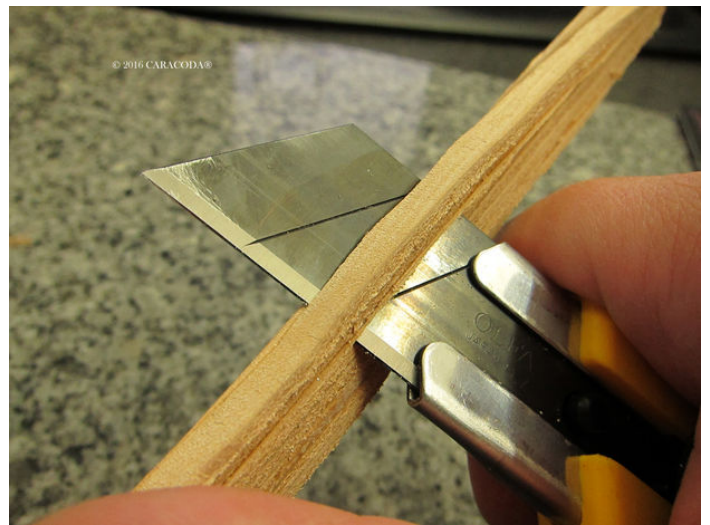
First we need to make a filler for the handle. You need 5 stripes 3mm thick each (or 3 stripes 5mm thick each accordingly). Glue them together one on top of another. Tap it with a mallet to help the glue to work its magic. Make a central line with a pair of dividers. Now cut the edges on both sides of the central line to make a cone shape (see the photos). Then cut the ends diagonally (see the photos). Bevel the sharp edges and use sandpaper to make the filler nice and smooth (as much as possible).

Now cut the handle part out of leather (already dyed and finished). Cut the holes out using a punch or you can use a craft knife. I put a white dotted line where I corrected the pattern. Skive the edges (there is another white dotted line showing a larger area to skive). It is more correct than the version in the patterns. Apply Quik Slik to the round cut out edges and polish them with a slicker. Mark filler placement. Apply glue to both parts. Water the flesh side with a brush or sponge. Make it quite wet. When the glue is tacky put the pieces together. Shape the handle nicely wrapping the leather around the filler tightly. Use a pair of duckbill pliers to tighten it up and shape it. Fold the skived sides and put them through the D-rings you are going to use. Fold them inside as shown in the photos, glue to the filler ends and apply glue to the grain side (see the photos). Use the pliers to tighten up everything.

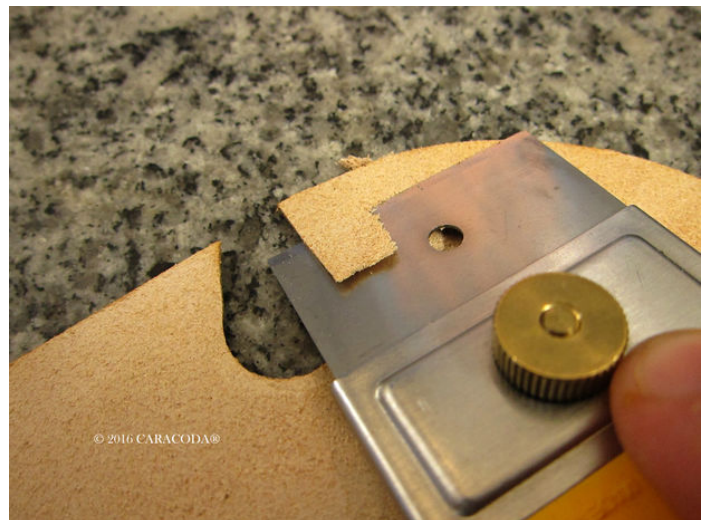
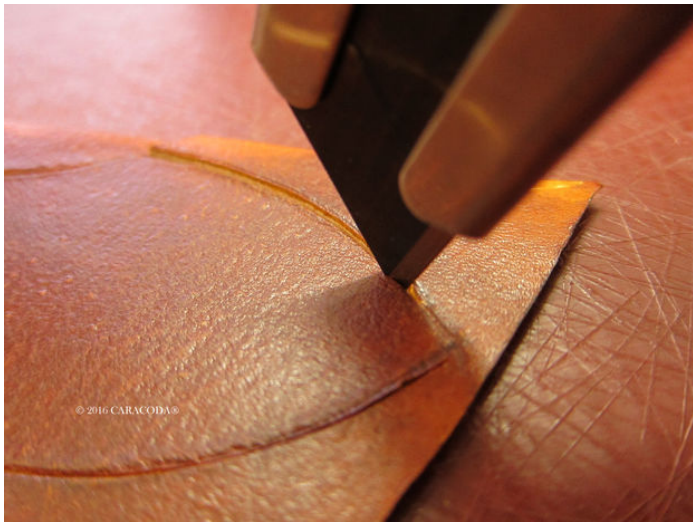
Mark the stitching holes with the stitching wheel or with pricking iron. You do not need to actually punch the holes, you will be stitching using an awl.



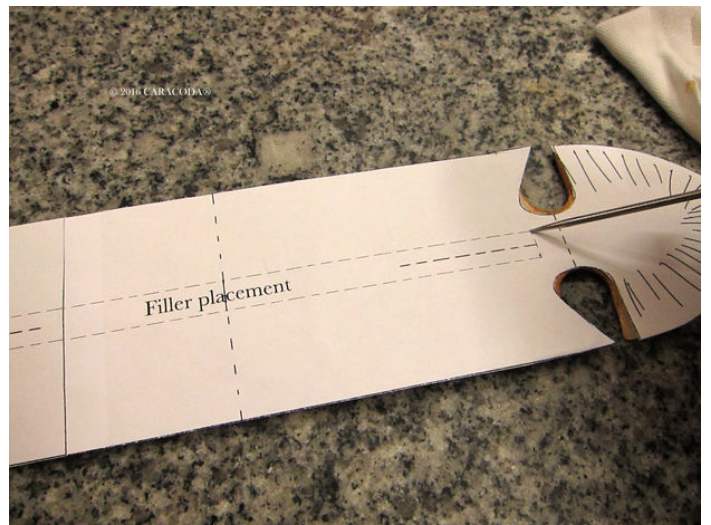
















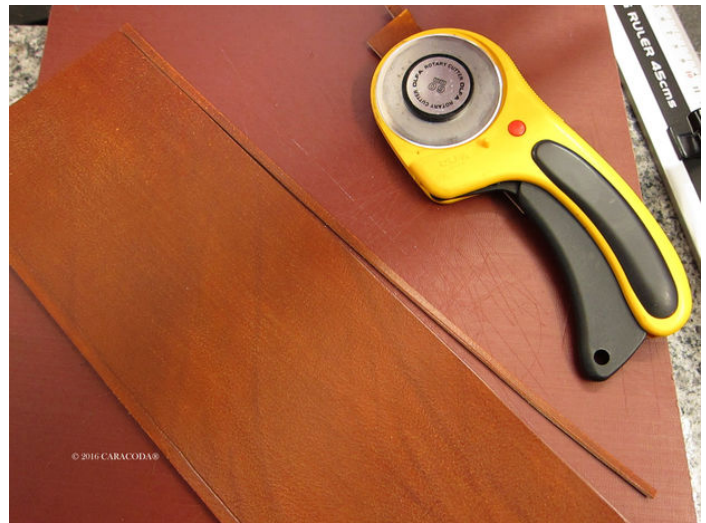
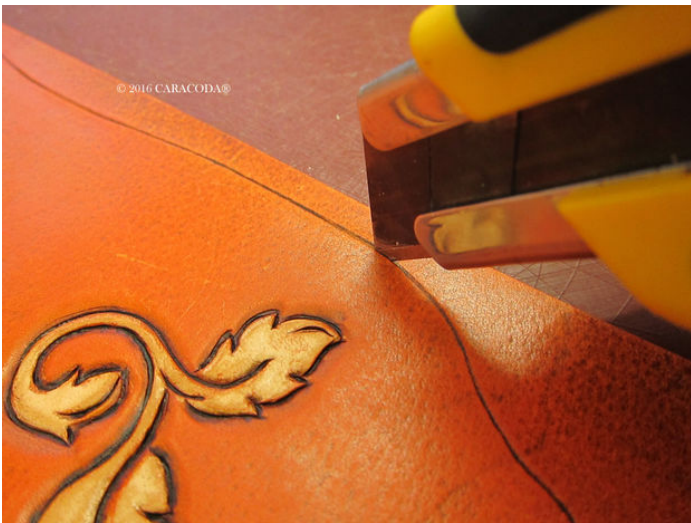
Step 9: Trim the pieces

Trim all the parts along the marked pattern lines. You have clean edges which otherwise would be black from the coloring. Take a pair of dividers and measure $\frac{3}{16}$ on the ruler. Mark a line along all the edges on all parts except of the gussets.

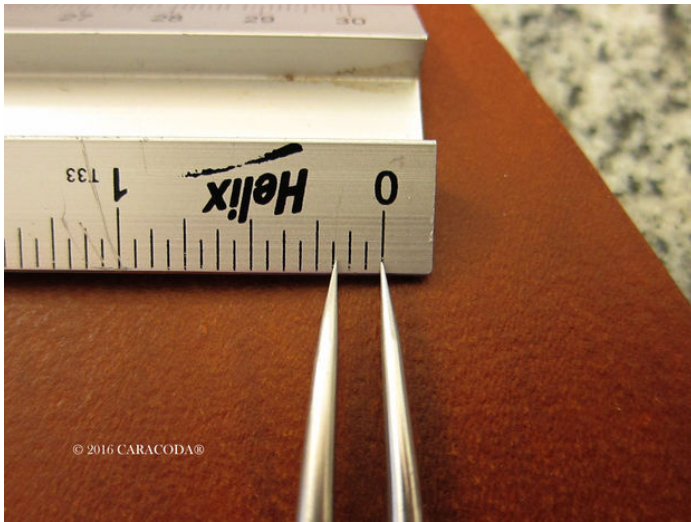
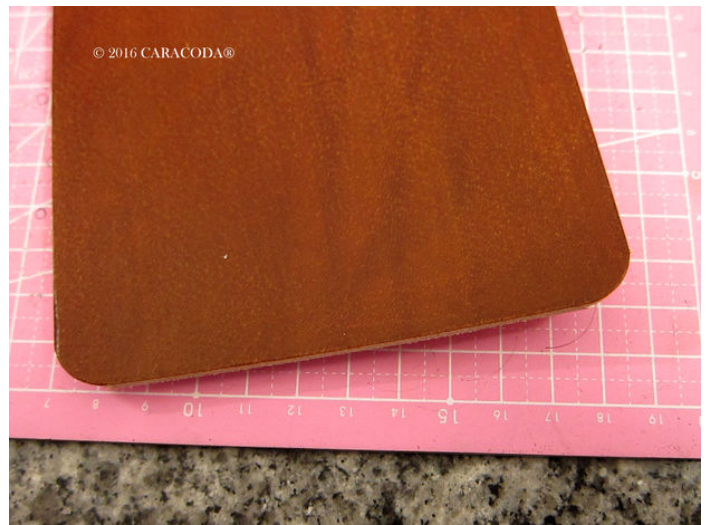
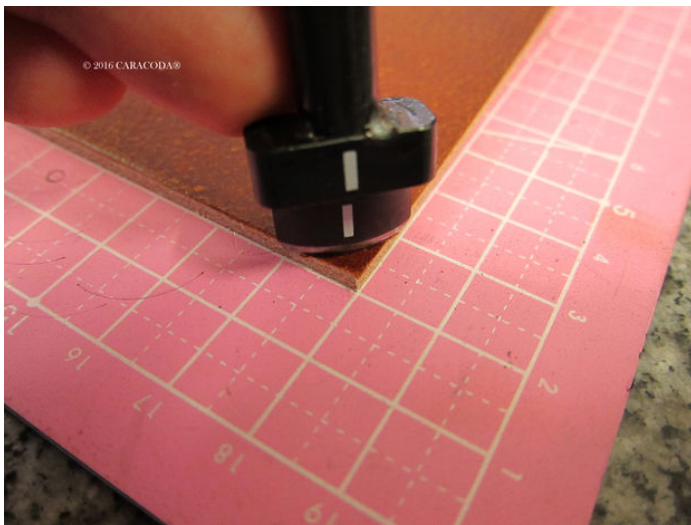
Use an edge beveler to bevel the edges on grain sides of all small parts, straps, all antiqued parts (panels, pockets, flap, flap reinforcing part) and reinforcing piece of the bottom gusset.

Bevel the flesh side edges on the flap, back pocket, closure straps and shoulder strap.

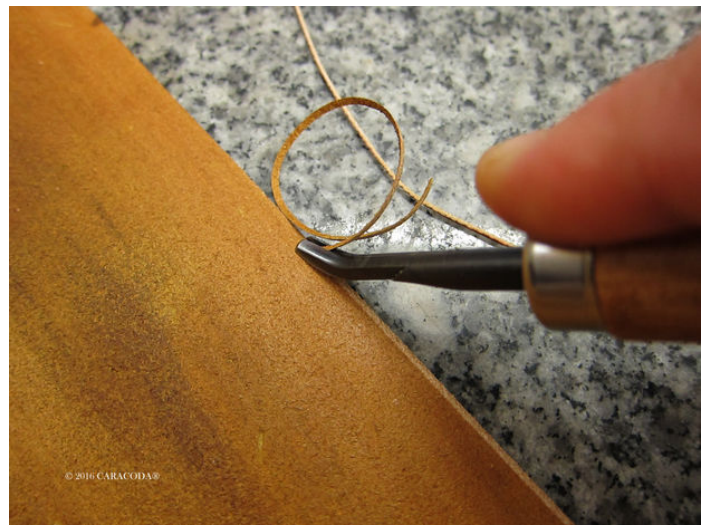
Round up the corners on the reinforcing part of the bottom gusset. You can use a special tool for that or just something round like a mug, a jar or a ruler.











Step 10: Edges

There is a lot of different ways to finish the edges. This is one of them.

We are finishing edges on reinforcing pieces on the flap and the bottom gusset, on the flap, on all small pieces, on the shoulder strap, all sides of the back pocket, top edge of the front pocket, top sides of both panels (front and back).

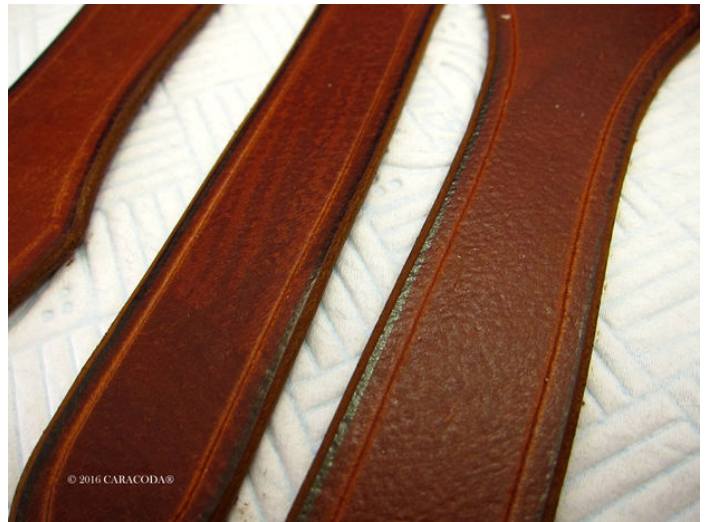
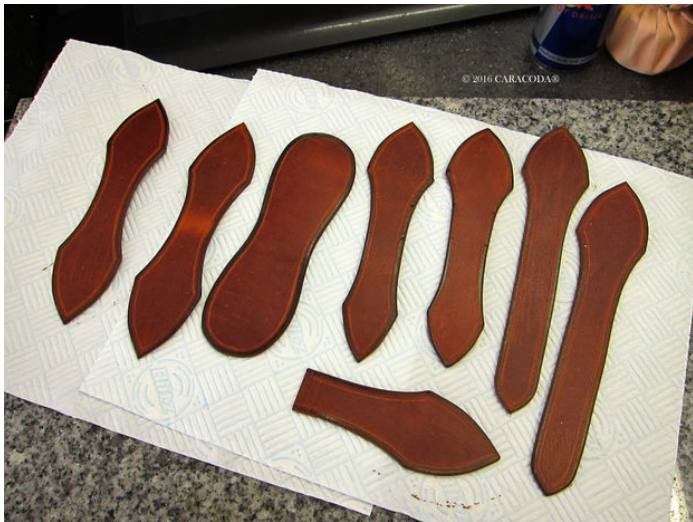
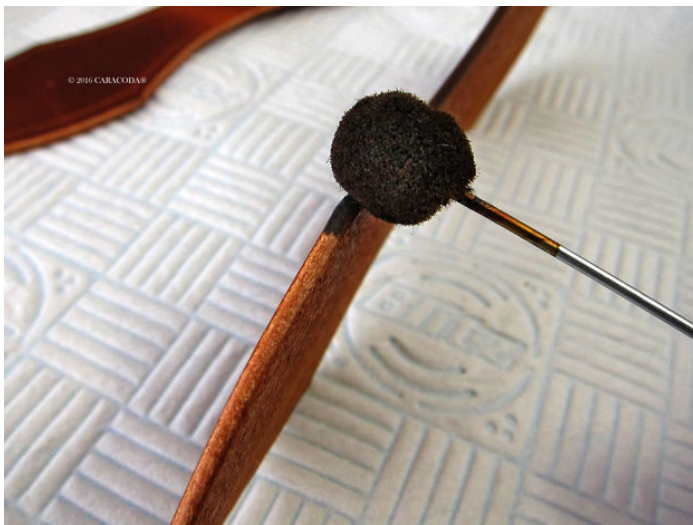
I use Quik Slik. Bevel the edges, apply Quik Slik with a wool dauber or edge paint applicator, let it settle a little bit and then polish the edges with a wooden slicker or a piece of canvas. I use wool daubers for dyeing the edges. One dauber for each color. Hold it over the fire, let the wool burn down half way, then brush the black particles off with a piece of paper towel and you have a proper tool! Do it somewhere in the kitchen with open windows and don't ever touch that black thing with naked fingers or they will smell forever.

Now dip this dauber into the bottle, let some dye run off and then carefully wipe the edge in one careful motion. Do another coat if needed. I am using Walnut color from Fiebing's Pro Oil dyes. After some use you will see a groove on the dauber and that is a good thing. Now you can use it over and over again with other projects and the edge will always be perfect. Use one dauber for each color. Do not wash it off, just let it dry and store until the next time you need it. One dauber can last for years (honestly).

After the dye is dry apply edge finish. I like using some chinese mix. I don't know what's in it but I bought it on ebay and I like it. There is a lot of different edge finishes in leather shops just google it up.









Step 11: Hardware installing

Now use the paper patterns to mark all the hardware placements and all the holes needed to be punched.

Buckle closure straps:

Punch the long hole with an oblong punch for the buckles. Punch two slots for the magnetic button in the bottom part. Punch a small hole through both layers for the tubular rivet.

Install the magnetic button (the top part of it) and put the strap through the buckle. Apply cement to both parts on flesh side. When it is tacky put the parts together taking care to align the edges nicely. Install the tubular rivet: insert the rivet from the top down the holes, put a washer on on the bottom side, use a tubular rivet setter to set the rivet. Mark the stitching holes.

The bottom gusset reinforcing part:

Before you install the brass feet you need to punch/mark the stitching holes.

Mark the feet placement using a paper pattern. Punch the holes. Install the brass feet (use some glue on the screws to fix them properly).

Back pocket closure:

Install the snap button on the back pocket and the closure strap using the paper pattern to mark the placement of the button. Check the placement carefully aligning the flap with the back panel and the back pocket to make sure the snap button parts are in the right place on both pieces.

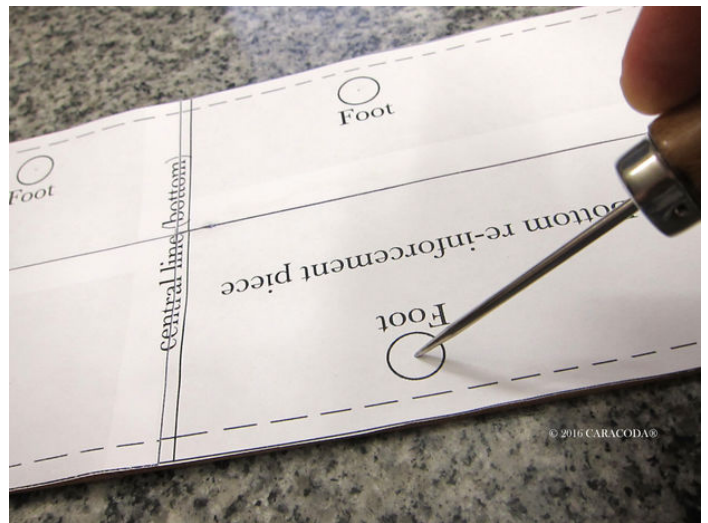
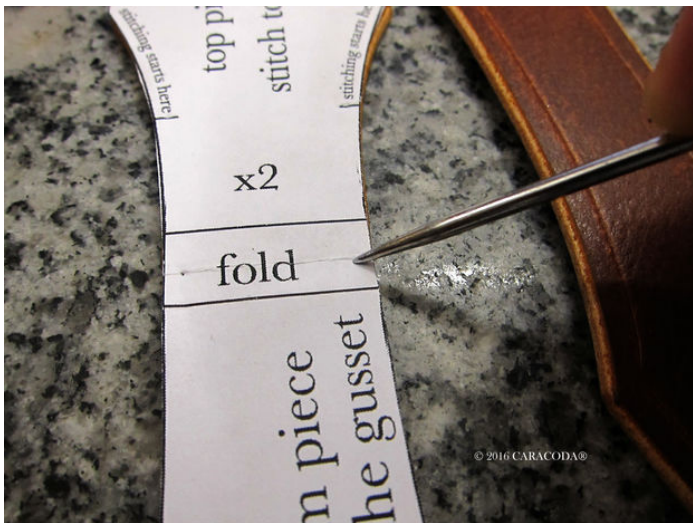
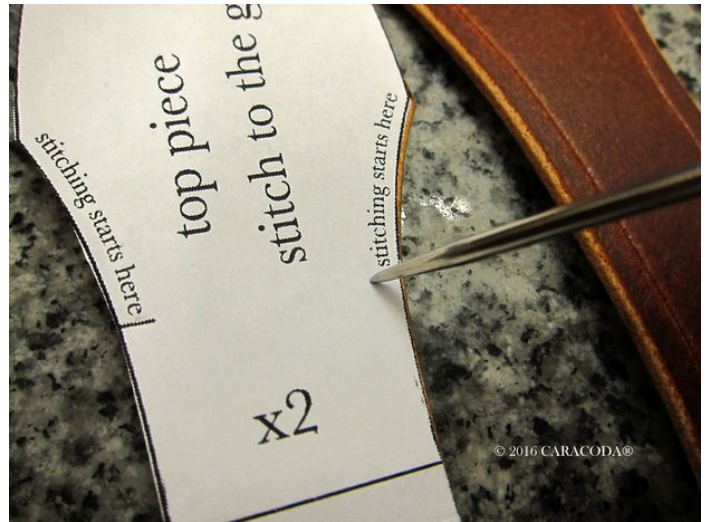
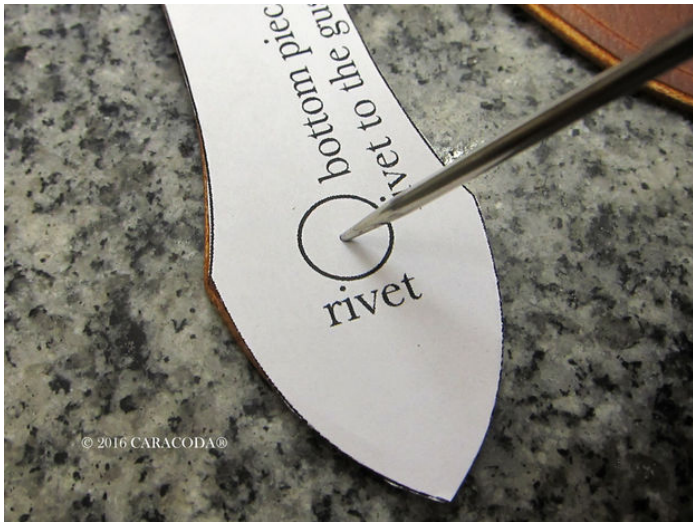
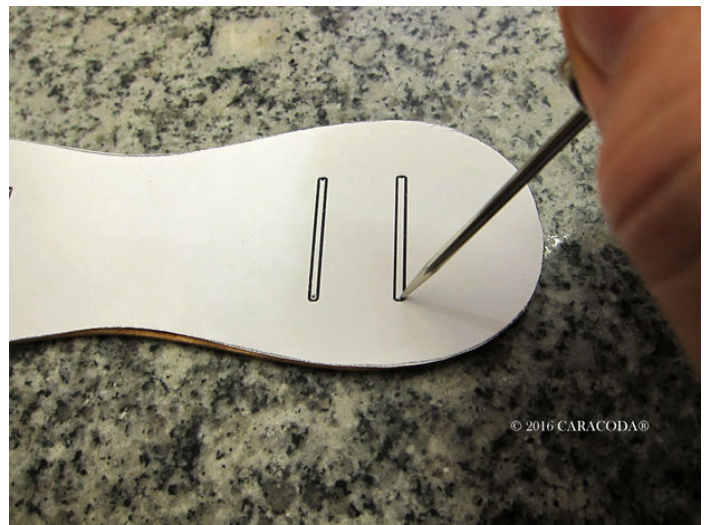
Front pocket closure:

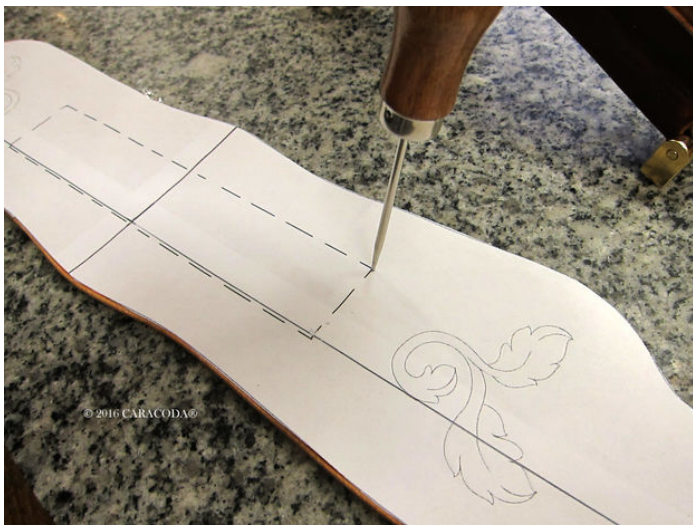
Install the bottom parts of the magnetic buttons in the places marked on paper pattern. Use self adhesive felt to cover the back sides of the buttons on the flash side of the pocket. Alternatively, you can glue some leather pieces on but the felt will work just fine.

Mark all stitching holes where needed. Do not punch them through, just marks will do. You will be using an awl when stitching.

Refer to the photos as they are quite detailed and visual.







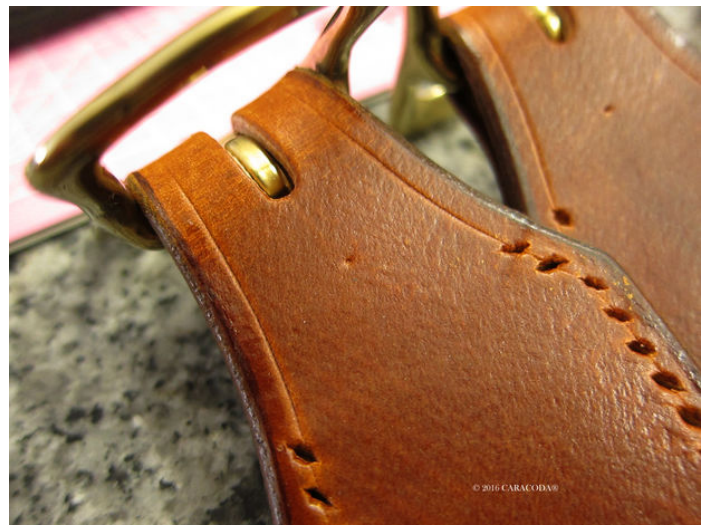
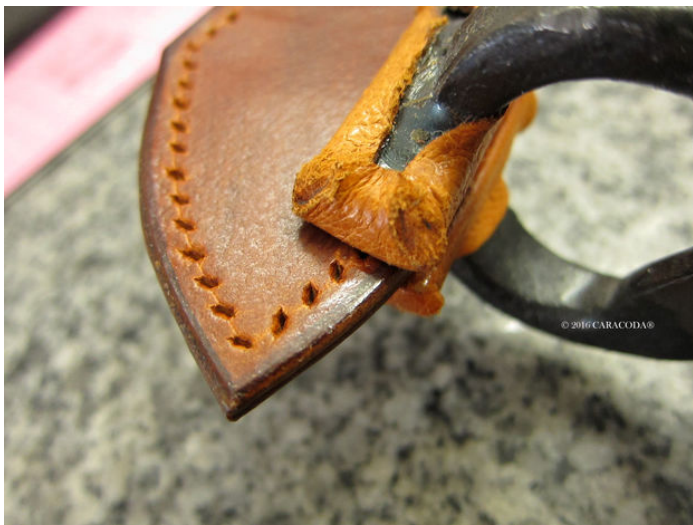




















Step 12: Stitching time - Handle

I use waxed polyester thread 1mm thick. Natural color is my favorite. I use this thread in 99% of all items I make. It is called Tiger thread otherwise known as Ritza 25.

For thick leather you need 4 lengths of the stitching area needed plus a few inches for comfort and for thinner leather you need 3 lengths plus few inches. This is approximately and how I measure my thread for stitching.

You need two stitching needles and a stitching awl.

Thread the needle and then push the needle through the middle of thread couple of inches from the end (see the photos). Pull the needle through.

Do the same on the other end of thread with the other needle. You will get one piece of thread with a needle on each end (see the photos).

Put the handle in the stitching pony or clamps (whatever you use) and use an awl to punch through the first marked hole. The awl is diamond shaped and it will leave a diamond shaped hole matching the marked hole.

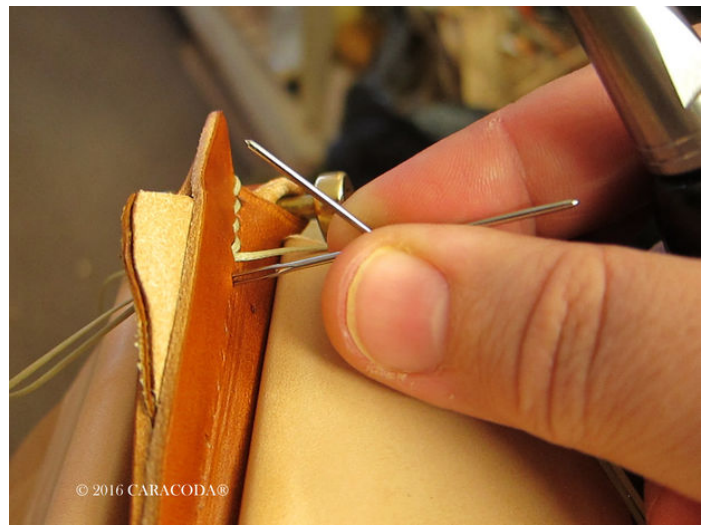
Make the overstitch (around the edges) and tighten it up. Then follow the photos. Push the left needle through the hole, pull it out on the right side. While pulling out the left needle push the right needle through the same hole to the left side. Pull both needles out and tighten the stitch. You should have the same length of thread on both sides. Now put the awl through the next marked hole and repeat the needle exchange. The left needle goes through the hole to the right and the right needle goes through the same hole to the left. Tighten up the stitch. Carry on this way until you stitch the whole area. Make two tight stitches over the edges and then make three stitches in the opposite direction over the last stitches you just made (see the photos). Get both needles on one side, cut the thread short and use a lighter or a wood burning tool to melt and fix the ends.

Mark a line 3/16" from the stitching line and carefully trim the excess of leather. Bevel both sides, dye the edge, apply finish and polish nicely.

The handle is ready.













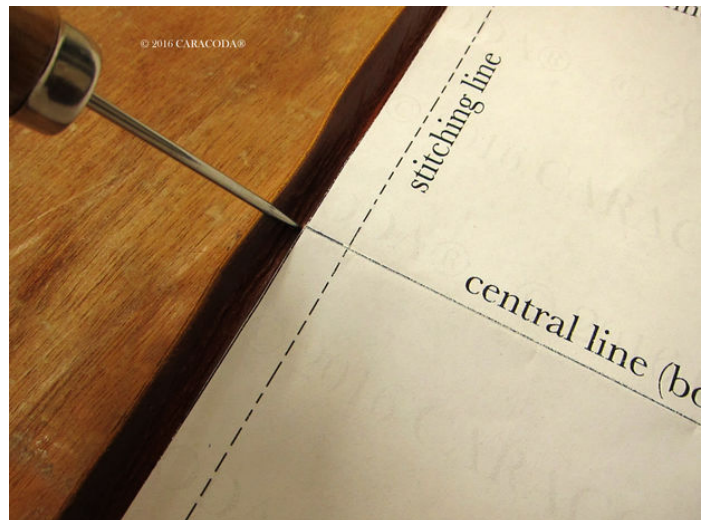
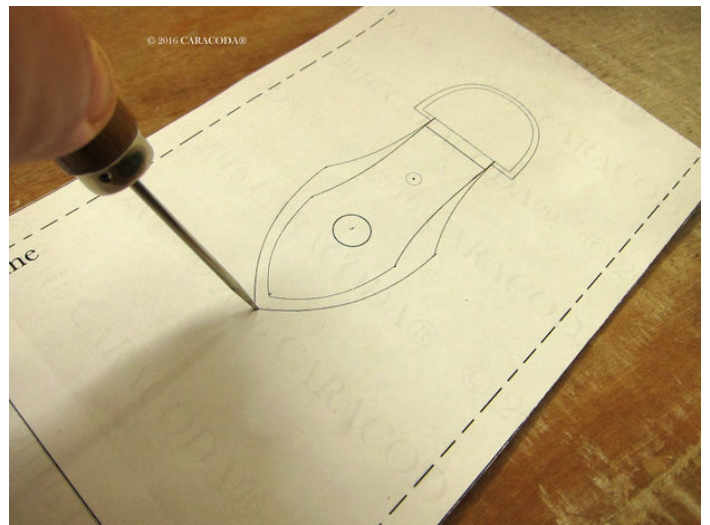
Step 13: Gussets

Use water and a brush to wet the edges of the gussets. It might take some time to get water through as they are already finished. Use a ruler and a folding bone and fold the sides of the gussets to the grain side 1cm from the edges (as shown on the paper pattern). Where the corners of the case are use your fingers to stretch the leather and shape a nice round corner (as nice as possible).

Place the reinforcing piece and align the central line marks on this piece and the gusset. Use a round awl to trace the reinforcing piece (try to trace it a little bit inside, away from the edges).

Rough out the grain side of the gusset in the areas under the reinforcing piece. Apply glue to the both sides and when it is tacky put them together aligning the marks.

Use the paper pattern to mark the placement of the strap holders. Punch the hole where the rivet will be. Trace the leather pieces, the ones which go inside. Skive the edges on the side which will be inside. Rough out the surfaces before gluing. Insert the D-rings. When the glue is tacky insert the tubular rivet from the flesh side of the gusset through the leather, place the strap holder aligning the holes and marks (see the photos). Place the washer and set the rivet. Apply glue to the both sides of the strap holder and when it is tacky put them together aligning the edges (see the photos).









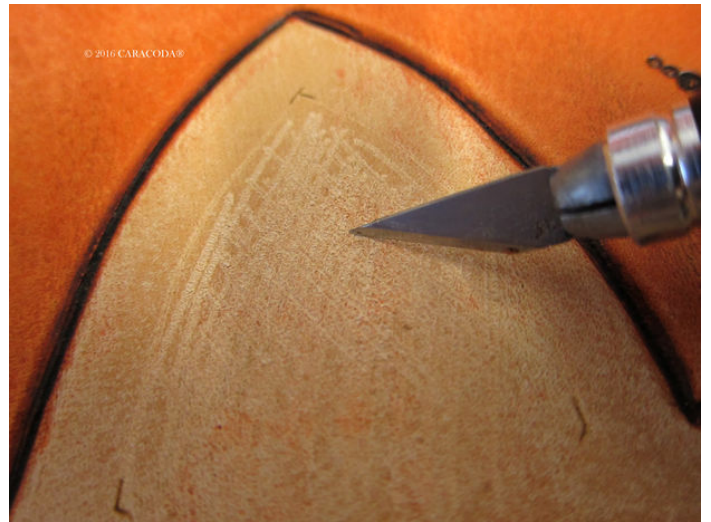


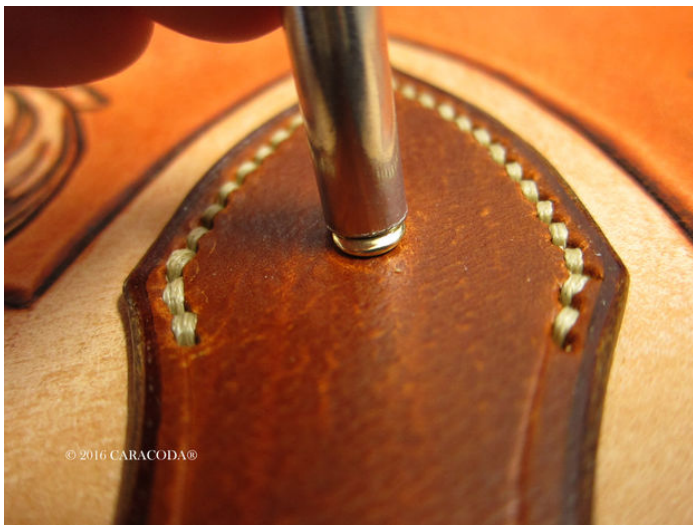
Step 14: Stitching - Little pieces

Stitch the buckle straps.

Trace the closure straps on the flap, glue them together and stitch them. Set a double cup rivet on each of them.





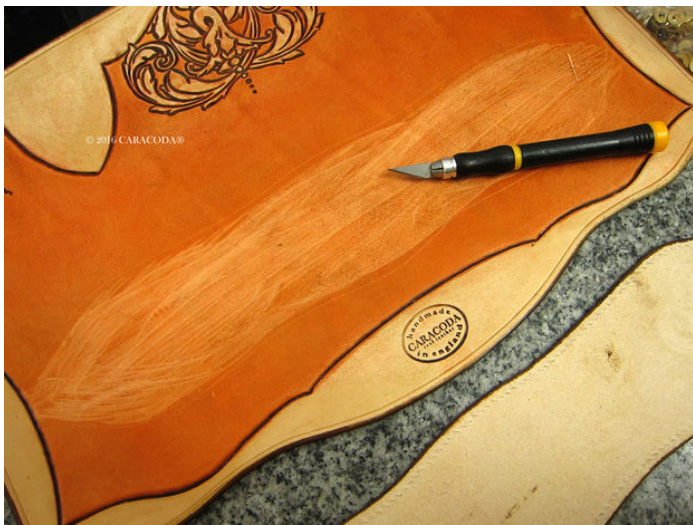


Step 15: Handle and bottom gusset

Stitch the reinforcing piece to the bottom part of the gusset.

Glue and stitch the reinforcing piece to the flap. Mark the holes where the handle will be attached. Attach the handle with the screws and some glue.





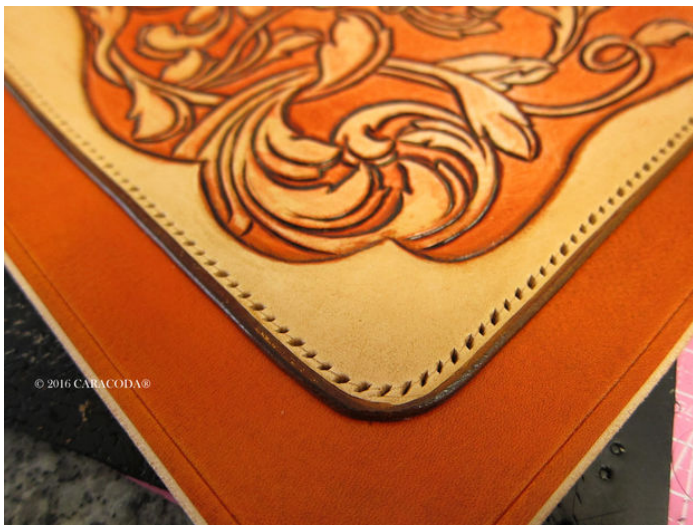


Step 16: Back pocket

Mark the placement of the back pocket on the back panel (trace the pattern). Rough out the leather and apply a line of glue on both pieces. Put them together and mark the stitching holes.

Stitch the pocket.





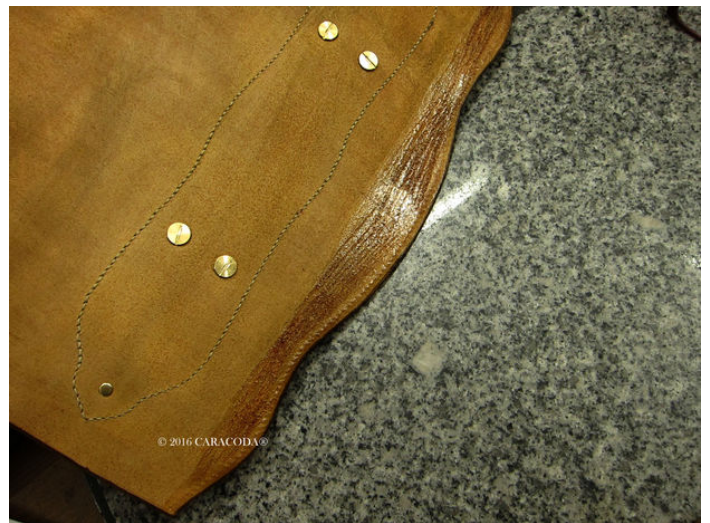


Step 17: Flap

Use a piece of thread to fix the flap in place (see the photos) and then trace the flap line on the back panel. Establish the placement of the closure strap. Remove the thread pieces and glue the flap and the back panel together. Make sure the closure piece is placed nicely and correctly.

Stitch the flap to the back panel.







Step 18: Front pocket

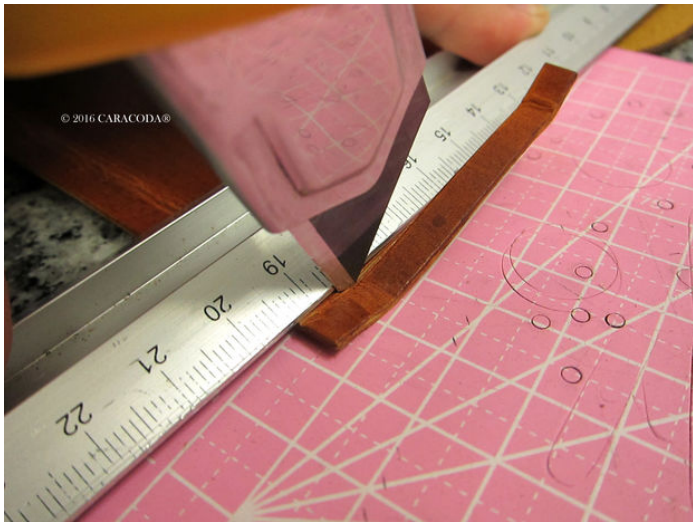
Brush some water on the front pocket gusset where the corners of the pocket will be. Shape the round corners helping with your fingers to stretch the leather.

Apply the glue to the folded gusset edges and to the edges of the pocket and when it is tacky put the pieces together starting from the central mark in the bottom. Leave some extra leather over the edges on the gussets to allow for later trimming. 1-2mm will do. Shape the folding edge nicely using a folding bone and pliers. Make a cut where the pocket edge ends. Use a ruler to mark the edge line on the gusset. Cut along the line. Slick the gusset edge before stitching. Stitch the gusset. Trim it with a sharp knife. Be extra careful not to cut into the edge of the pocket. Bevel the edge from the gusset side. Finish the edges.

Stitch the front pocket to the front panel in the same manner. Use the pattern to trace the placement line, glue and stitch the gusset to the panel.











Step 19: Main gusset

Stitch the gusset to the front panel the same way as in the previous step. Glue together, leave some excess of leather for trimming, cut the top edges of the gusset along the panel edge, stitch together, trim the excesses, bevel from the gusset side, finish the edges.







Step 20: Last stitching

Now stitch the front part with the pocket and the gusset and the back panel together. Use a round awl to go through the first hole so you do not cut the thread with the sharp edge of the diamond awl. Make double stitches where the flap and the panels are connected.

You do not need a stitching pony at this stage because the case is already too big for it. You can hold it on your lap. Fill in the case with packing paper or bubble wrap. This way it will be much easier to hold the case when stitching. The last photo shows the back of the stitching.

Trim the edges, bevel from the gusset side and finish the edges.





Step 21: The shoulder strap

The shoulder strap is very quick to do. You need two pieces.

First piece is long. Measure the length you need from the D-ring on one side to the D-ring on another side of the bag. Measure the crossbody length and not over the shoulder. This will be the long piece of the strap. It will be approximately 130cm depending on how tall is a person for which the case is made.

The short piece is approximately 45cm.

Use a strap end punch to trim the ends on both pieces.

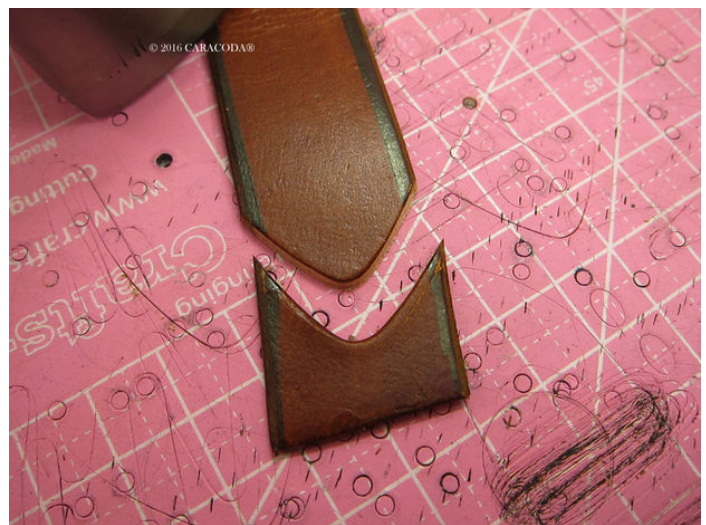
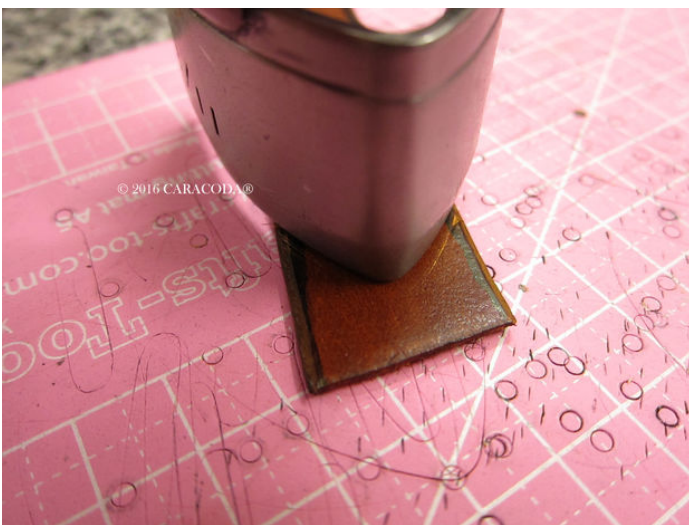
Punch two holes on one end of the long piece. One is 1/2" from the end and another one is 1 1/2" from the end. Then make 1 1/2" space from the second hole and punch a third hole and then a fourth one 1" away from the third one. Or you can just fold the strap in the place where the swivel hook will be attached and mark the other set of holes.

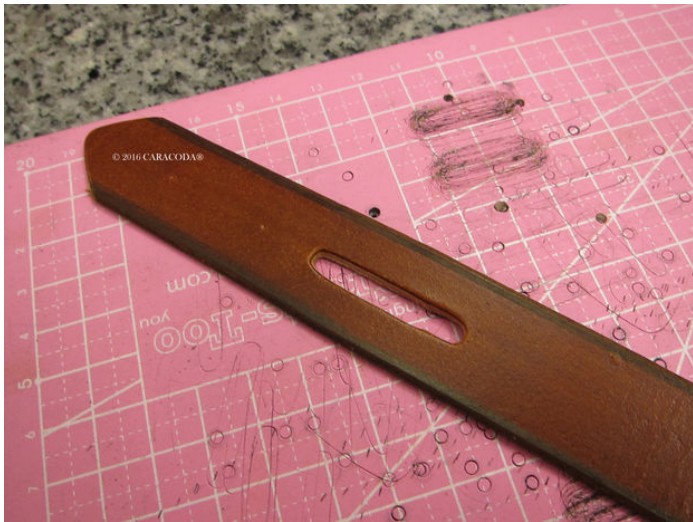
Pull the end of the strap through the swivel hook, place the hook in the middle between the holes and set the rivets through both layers of leather to fix the hook.

Do the same on one end of the short piece of strap but make three holes on each side of the hook instead of two. The space between these three holes in each set is 1". In the further space between the rivets there will be a strap keeper (see the photos).

The other end of the short strap is for the buckle. Make the same set of four holes as in the first case only the space between the middle holes is 2" and not 1 1/2". You need to punch a slot for the buckle in that space. Insert the buckle and fix it with two rivets. The short strap is ready. The long one needs the holes for the buckle tongue. Attach both straps to the bag with swivel hooks, align the end of the long strap with the D-ring in the short strap side and mark a dot on the long strap where the buckle is (the buckle is on the short strap). That will be the reference hole. Punch the oval holes from there to the both direction with 1 1/2" space between them. Make a couple holes in each direction.

Insert the shoulder strap pad as shown in the photos.









Step 22: Finish

And we are done.

This is not an easy project even for those who have been working with leather for some time, but if you think big you can learn quite a lot from it. There is a total of 510 photos here and I tried to picture every step as detailed as possible. If I missed something in the list of tools and materials needed please forgive me and read the tutorial first before starting making the briefcase as you might find some tools mentioned in the process which are not listed in the beginning.

The main point of this tutorial is to help you to master this scary briefcase thing. I know for sure that many even experienced in leather working people are afraid to try making briefcases. I do not make them often either. I put a lot of time and effort in this tutorial to help with it and I hope it will be useful for those who decide to "go for it". The pattern should be good as I was correcting it as I was making the case. I did not change the Al Stohlman pattern for the handle on the paper in case someone wants to try it "as it is" but I mentioned corrections in the photos and description.

The tooling part as well as the coloring is quite specific and of course optional. You do not need to master tooling to make a great briefcase or a satchel. You can also skip those steps if you just do not like my way of "distressing" and aging leather. You will still be able to make a case with my patterns and instructions out of factory dyed leather, it will be even faster that way.

The tooling pattern is my original one, I drew it from scratch with a pencil and then turned it into vector in Photoshop. It took ages because I had to trace each single line but after that it is much easier to use a pattern with nice clean lines.

Please do not use the tooling pattern to make stamps and embossing plates for sale (as some people did with my previous instructables). You can freely use it to make leather items and sell those items in your shop but do not make anything that can be sold and then used by other people as tools or materials for craft. Please respect my work as I would respect yours.

I wish you good luck with all the projects you make, not only this one. Leather work requires patience and determination but there is nothing impossible if there is a will.

Thank you for taking time to go through all the steps and please ask anything which you do not understand or that does not make sense to you. It was a long tutorial for you to read and even longer for me to create so I might have missed something or have not mentioned something obvious. Please let me know if you see that and I will do my best to fix it and help you to understand.

Thank you very much!

Era Shevtsova (Caracoda)







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