
Make a Leather Key Fob or Wristlet Strap with Elke Bergeron

Chapter 1 - Leather key fob

Introduction

Overview

(upbeat instrumental music) - Hello, my name is Elke Bergeron. I'm a designer and I specialize in leather goods. I'm going to show you how to make a leather key strap. (upbeat instrumental music)

Make a Leather Key Fob or Wristlet Strap

Key fob and strap variations

- The materials we're gonna need are a natural vegetable leather, it's about eight to nine ounces of a belting quality. You can have a scrap long enough to make the key strap. A poly board, a rivet setter, an edge burnisher, the poly hammer, water, a key ring, rivet, sponge, an end punch, this is a 1/2 inch end punch, and they come in different sizes as well, today we'll use a 1/2 inch. A leather punch, which also comes with removable sizes for different size holes, an awl, an edge beveler, which, this one is a number four, for a thick, heavy leather like what we'll be using. A strap cutter, an extra sponge to put on your conditioner, and a tape measure, to measure the length. A lot of these tools are specific just to leather, and you can find them at tandyleatherfactory.com. The first thing we're gonna do is cut a strap, using our strap cutter. Before we cut the leather, I'm gonna show you how to put your strap cutter together. The strap cutter comes in three pieces. You have your handle, you have the double sticks here with a blade in between, and you have a metal disk. So you'll take your handle, we'll take the hole on the metal disk, and drop it on top of the screw, carefully. You'll then take, you'll want the numbers to face you, going straight down, let's see if we can get it onto the, there we go. And you're gonna slide it in. There's numbers on the side of the sticks that show a ruler, either centimeters or inches, and you'll slide the end here to match what size you would like to cut. I'm going to be cutting my strap half an inch. So we're going to slide the bar over until we hit the 1/2 inch mark. You'll balance it carefully with your fingers while you tighten the piece on the back. Really nice and tight, so now it's stuck. If you need to adjust for the thickness of your leather, you can use the screws on the side, and you can push these together. So there's a lot of simple adjustment that you can do with the screws. When you've got your strap cutter adjusted to the size you want, you wanna make sure that the edge of your leather has already been cut straight. You can use a ruler and a rotary cutter to just lay it down and make sure you have a nice straight line. Because the edge of the leather and the handle will need to match up perfectly so you get a really beautiful strap, that's even all the way down. We'll uncurl this. I'll actually roll it, this is a really long piece, so there's a good chance your piece may not be this long. You're going to measure the edge of the handle up with the straight part of your leather. Grab the leather in your left hand, and the handle in your right. If you're a lefty, feel free to swap the direction. You're gonna pull nice and steady while pushing against the side of the leather. When you've got a nice piece started at the top, you can use that to hold onto, it really helps. And you're going to slowly, I recommend going very slowly, especially at first, this is something that takes practice, it doesn't

automatically come out perfect. Because the blade can sometimes slip out if you go too quickly. The reason I'm cutting the whole length of the leather strip is because if I stop with just the amount I need, you'll end up with an uneven edge, and if the next strap I need maybe two inches wide, I'm cutting down it and it makes it uneven. So you kind of just cut the whole length of whatever you have, and then you'll cut the piece you need, and save the rest for later for a different project. When you get to the end, be careful 'cause sometimes it does wanna slip out. So now we've got our nice, long strap, and it's really nice and even. Once your strap is cut, we can cut the length that we want. I'm gonna cut 12 inches, a foot, and that'll make a nice size for our keyring. Length, here's 12 inches. I'll take an awl, make a mark. Once we know where we're going to cut it, we can take our end punch. I will put it right in the middle. Tip it towards yourself, so you can visually see inside the V shape and see that it's even. And hit it with the hammer. And do the other side as well. And you're gonna bring it right up to the edge. And now we have the beginning of our strap. The next step would be to bevel the edges to give them a nice rounded feel and much softer than what they are now, which is pretty sharp. Edge beveler comes in different sizes. You can have a two, a three, a four, those are the typical sizes. The higher the number, the bigger the gouge, and that's gonna take off more of your corner. The lower the number, you'll take off less. So with a nice, thick belting leather like this, I like to use a number four. So by taking your right hand, I like to put my finger down by the bottom, I hold the tool at a 45 degree angle, so it's neither facing this way or this way, it's like right at a nice angle. And that's the shape that's going to be cutting off the edge of your leather. Use your left hand and really securely hold the leather down with your fingertips. You'll start at the end, and you move your fingertips, and the edge beveler, little by little. This technique takes lots of practice, so don't get frustrated, just keep at it and really practice on lots of scrap before you apply it to your real project. Not only are you gonna bevel all the sides, you're gonna also bevel the back side as well. So you'll get a lot of practice just even on the piece you're doing. It's best to try and keep the piece nice and steady and long. The movement is kind of smooth and you end up with a nice big piece. Now that does not happen automatically right from the beginning. The technique you don't wanna use is chopping. You don't wanna use this kind of technique, because that will make it really rough, and it's not as smooth at the end of the day. So once you've finished the front, actually, be careful with the points too. It's just, sometimes you gotta just do your best. And you're gonna flip it over, and the back side is basically a composite, it's been pressed down, so it's usually not as smooth, you can see it's crumbly. Just do the best you can. 'Cause once we burnish the edges, it's very forgiving. It'll cover a lot of the defects of the edges. All right, you now have a really nice-shaped strap, and we're ready to smooth out the edges. Just dampen the sponge, you don't need to soak it. You can dip it in the water and really squeeze out most of the water. I like to do one edge at a time, not the whole strap, because by the time you get to the back side, it's already dried. You really need to do this when it's damp. Dampen the edges, and yeah, you really wanna try and avoid soaking it, soaking it doesn't really do it any good. Once you've dampened the edge, we're going to take our edge slicker, or edge burnisher, and it comes with different notches for different widths of leather. This width is perfect for the middle one. So, you can start at the end. Hold it tightly. It's a little awkward sometimes, especially when it's a really skinny strap like this, but just kinda rest it between your fingers and your thumb and just go little by little. And move down the length of the strap. You can see how the edge is getting a really nice shine, and it's smooth and rounded-looking, as opposed to when it was just freshly cut, it was really square. Continue to burnish all the edges until it's all finished. Mine is all done. And now we're going to apply conditioner, to give it a really finished look. Especially on vegetan, it's really good with protecting

the leather and bringing out the color. So, leather conditioner is more like a cream, it's not an oil. And it disappears pretty much after it's dried. But it really gives the leather a beautiful finish. And you rub it all on the front, gonna apply some more, and you're gonna wanna flip it over. This also helps to mat down some of these, if you press hard when you're rubbing in the conditioner, you can get some of these fuzzy bits pressed down into the back, which definitely is good. And just keep using as much as you want. You really can't use too much. So don't be afraid to just keep adding more. Make sure you get your edges. Once it's covered with the conditioner, I kind of just really wipe it down a lot. The position of your holes, there's only three holes your gonna punch into the leather strap, and the first two are easy, because you just go about half an inch in from the end on either side. So I like to start by punching these holes. We're gonna take our leather punch, and we're going to need a size that's big enough for the rivet post to fit through. This is about 1/8 inch. We're going to punch a hole on either side. Whoops, that's... And once we're finished with this hole, it all depends on the size of your keyring. And what you wanna attach. So the way we figure out where we're gonna put the third hole, is we actually mock up the keyring. We fold the center down, and we find out where, like how much room we're going to need for this keyring to move around. You have to remember that a rivet actually has a head, so it's not just pushing down around the hole, it's actually pushing down 1/8 inch, probably, around all of it. So, you need a little bit more space than just making it super tight, otherwise you'll have no movement, and that will almost cover the ring. So make sure you have some space. Push it down a little bit. And that's where you'll find out where you need your third hole. So I'll take my awl again. We're going to make a nice mark in there. Go back with our leather punch. Punch the hole. Now we're almost done. So we take these two ends, we take our end down here, and line them all up, with the other end tucked in between the two. We'll take our rivet. This is the back side of my rivet. Some rivets come with heads on both sides, and that's not a problem. This one only has a head on one side. You also need to use an extra long post on this project, because as you can see, you don't have much room when the rivet comes out the other side. Then you take your rivet cap, and you snap it on top. There, and it should hold nicely. To finish the key strap, we need to set the rivet. So, this is a rivet setter, and you can buy this at any craft store. You just wanna make sure that the pole is big enough kinda to fit over the head. The bottom of your rivet will fit on the concave area, and you hold it really nice and steady. Then, you're going to use your left hand, and you're gonna hold the post, you're gonna take a deep breath, (chuckles) and you're gonna whack it in. And there you go. It's stuck in. And it won't come undone, and now you have a key strap. And this technique was really easy. You can make it different sizes, you can add a brass clip, you can make it larger, and you can even put it on a clutch.