

Mélanie Voituriez



Little Delights ⁱⁿ Leather

*Charming Projects to
Use Every Day*



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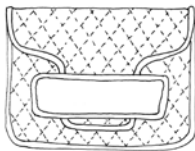
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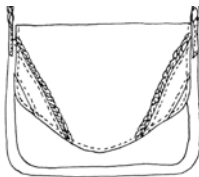
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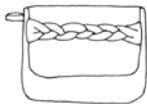
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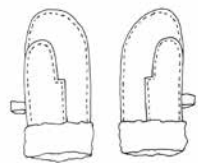
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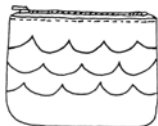
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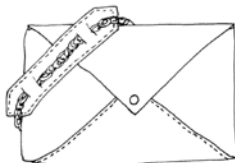
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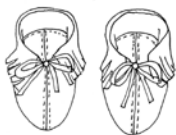
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Leather Weight/Thickness Conversions

Ounces	Inches	Millimeters
2-3 oz.	$\frac{1}{32}$ - $\frac{3}{64}$ in.	0.8-1.2 mm
3-4 oz.	$\frac{3}{64}$ - $\frac{1}{16}$ in.	1.2-1.6 mm
4-5 oz.	$\frac{1}{16}$ - $\frac{5}{64}$ in.	1.6-2.0 mm
5-6 oz.	$\frac{5}{64}$ - $\frac{3}{32}$ in.	2.0-2.4 mm
6-7 oz.	$\frac{3}{32}$ - $\frac{7}{64}$ in.	2.4-2.8 mm
7-8 oz.	$\frac{7}{64}$ - $\frac{1}{8}$ in.	2.8-3.2 mm
8-9 oz.	$\frac{1}{8}$ - $\frac{9}{64}$ in.	3.2-3.6 mm
9-10 oz.	$\frac{9}{64}$ - $\frac{5}{32}$ in.	3.6-4.0 mm
10-11 oz.	$\frac{5}{32}$ - $\frac{11}{64}$ in.	4.0-4.4 mm

Leather is usually measured in terms of ounces, and 1 ounce equals $\frac{1}{64}$ " in thickness. There is always a slight thickness variation throughout a natural hide, and so leathers are usually categorized using a range, as you see in the chart.



Introduction

My love affair with leather began a few years ago when a friend gave me some lovely remnants of leather, saying something like “You never throw anything away, so you’ll find something to do with these!”

I’d never sewn leather before, and right away I loved the blend of extreme softness and strength! However, my old sewing machine was less happy about it. Because it didn’t occur to me to ask anyone about sewing leather with a regular sewing machine, I spent several months using standard needles that kept breaking (odd!) and a metal presser foot that kept the leather from slipping along. What a relief when I finally learned the basics and switched to a Teflon presser foot and special needles for leather!

I’m telling you all this to explain that I’ve tried to write a book similar to one I would have loved to have when I was starting out: easy to carry around, not too many technical terms (in contrast with so many books about leather), and featuring attractive projects.

The projects are easy to do using a regular household sewing machine. I wondered if I should include hand-sewing techniques in the book (because they’re so interesting and they allow you to work with thicker leather for superb finishing touches), but that meant a lot of additional info and a more complex learning process for beginners (the saddle-stitch isn’t mastered in a day!). I therefore decided to stick to sewing thin leathers, using a machine.

My aim isn’t to turn you into an expert leather craftsperson, but to help you overcome any hesitations about working with such a beautiful material. You will find that leather is soft and enjoyable to work with, and you’ll soon be able to show off wonderful results!

Mélanie

Join me on my blog:
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Leather

Introduction

Leather has been used by people to protect themselves from cold and rain since time immemorial. It's a soft, strong material that can be used in all sorts of creations. Contrary to what you might think, it's easy to work with, as long as you have a few pieces of basic equipment.

What Is Leather?

Leather is tanned animal hide; tanning is a process that prevents it from rotting. Hide left in the open rots very quickly (in damp air) or gets very hard (in dry air). To be able to use it, humans had to find a way to preserve it.



The earliest tanning method consisted of coating the hide with animal fat and working it in until it became soft and rot-proof. This is “animal” tanning, and it is still in practice in the Asian steppes and the Arctic. People later discovered that tannin, a substance obtained from the bark of oak trees and several other kinds of plants, was excellent for tanning hides. This is “vegetable” tanning and it is still used today, but it takes several months to turn hide into leather. In the eighteenth century, the demand for leather grew considerably (especially for use in army equipment), and researchers started studying tanning methods scientifically. From their research came chrome tanning, using chromium salts, and today it remains the most widely used method since it's faster than vegetable tanning.

There are numerous kinds of leather, but the ones you find most often are from cows and calves, sheep and lambs, pigs, goats and kids, horses, and the deer family, including deer, moose, caribou, etc. You might also come across more “exotic” types, such as peccary (a small South American mammal), ostrich, crocodile, snake, and even certain fish!

And, of course, there is “faux leather,” a term used for materials that look like leather but do not use animal skin. The projects in this book can be sewn with it, though it doesn't necessarily behave like leather.

A Super-Short Glossary

Leather's “right side,” which shows the pores and had the hair of the animal, is called the **grain side**; the other side is called the **flesh side**. Unsplit leather is called **full-grain** leather. Thick hides are generally split before tanning, which means that they are thinned. The leather made from the lower nongrain layers is called **split leather**.

Nubuck is obtained when the grain surface is buffed to become velvety.

Soft leather or suede is velvety leather obtained by buffing, and most often it is made from the inner layers of leather.

Shearling is sheep or lamb leather that hasn't had the wool removed.

Pebbled leather refers to a texture embossed onto the surface.

After it's tanned, the leather will be dyed and finished. These operations affect the texture and color of the leather.

Aniline dyeing is a procedure that uses transparent water-based dye. It preserves the leather's characteristics and gives it a beautiful appearance. However, it is rather fragile.

Semi-aniline dyeing consists of applying a thin coat of lightly opaque pigments before

applying the transparent aniline product. This hides small defects.

Pigment dying consists of tinting the surface of the leather with a coat of opaque pigments, which completely hides the defects (insect bites, scars, etc.), makes cleaning easier, and makes it waterproof.

Varnishing is done by buffing the leather and applying a coat of high-gloss varnish.

The Grain

As we have seen, the grain is the side that shows the pores and hair follicles and is therefore different in each animal. Here are some examples:

Taking Care of Leather

Leather is easy to keep in good condition, but it needs a little care to maintain its quality. Leather that has been varnished or dyed on the surface is less fragile than aniline, semi-aniline, or nubuck leather, but all leathers (except varnished) remain porous and have a tendency to absorb dirt and grease. So before treating leather, carefully remove any surface dust or dirt with a soft cloth. Fragile leather, such as nubuck, soft leather, suede, and aniline, can be protected with a spray, sprayed all over the surface.

Dyed leather can be nourished with a grease-based product applied with a soft cloth.

Be sure to test a small hidden area of the item first to see if the conditioning or protective product works properly with it.

Buying Leather

Leather is sold as entire hides, half hides, or cuts. With entire hides, leather is priced by the square foot or square meter. Among hides that have undergone the same treatments, the prices can vary enormously: leather is separated into categories from 1 to 4. Leather in category 1 is perfect, while leather in category 4 shows a lot of defects: scars, insect bites, tattoos, wrinkles, etc.

How to Store Your Leather

In spite of its reputation for toughness, leather is a fragile material in some ways and shouldn't be stored carelessly. Don't store it near a heat source or exposed to sunlight. If you don't have the space to stack it flat, the second best thing is to roll it, separated by color, with the grain on the outside to maintain correct tension. Wrap kraft paper around the roll to protect the leather from the light.





Envelope-Style Purse and Smartphone Case

Difficulty level: ☆

Techniques: straight stitch (machine); setting rivets, eyelets, and studs

Materials: leather sewing-machine needle (size 16/100), Teflon presser foot, mallet, leather-marking pen, knife, punch pliers, tools for setting rivets and eyelets (supplied with the rivets and eyelets), leather glue, screwdriver

Recommended leather: For the purse: fairly stiff, thick leather. For the inset: thinner leather.

Dimensions: 9½" × 5¾" (purse closed)

You'll need:



Black natural-grain goatskin, 5 oz. / 2 mm thick: 21¾" × 17¾"



Striped calfskin, 2 oz. / 1 mm thick: 7⅞" × 9¾"

2 tubular rivets, ⅜" to ¼" thick

2 eyelets, ⅞" diameter

1 stud, ⅜" diameter

55" silver chain

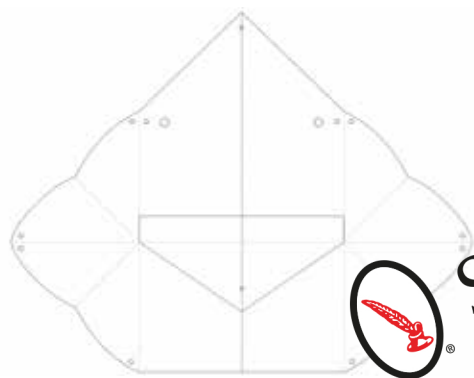
Amazing as it might seem, this purse is put together without sewing! It's made up of a single piece of leather, folded and held in place by rivets; a minimum of effort for maximum effect.

The smartphone case has a secret pocket in which you can slip your credit card or some cash.



CUTTING

- **Main part of the purse:** Copy the pattern onto a $21\frac{3}{4}'' \times 17\frac{3}{4}''$ sheet of paper (see the diagram below of the full pattern) and then cut it out of the black leather, marking the different locations with the leather-marking pen.
- **Inset:** Trace the pattern for the inset and cut it out of the striped leather.
- **Slide for the shoulder strap:** Cut the strip once out of the black leather and once out of the striped leather.



The full pattern

PURSE INSTRUCTIONS

Making the Purse

- Locate where the inset is to be placed on the main part of the purse, and glue it on with the leather glue (1).
- Install the leather needle and Teflon presser foot onto your machine.
- Once the glue is dry, do a decorative edgestitch all around the inset at $\frac{1}{8}''$ from the edge with a stitch length of $\frac{1}{8}''$.
- Make the holes in the places where the eyelets will go (usually the little tool to make the holes is supplied with the eyelets) and then set them, following the instructions on the packet (2).
- With the punch pliers ($\frac{1}{8}''$ tip), make a hole for the stud in the spot indicated on the inset.

- Insert the stud in the hole and screw it on the right side of the leather (3).
- In the spot for the stud slit on the flap (see pattern), make a small $\frac{3}{16}''$ hole with the punch pliers and a small $\frac{1}{8}''$ slit with a knife to enlarge the hole (4).
- Using the small tool supplied with the rivets, make the holes in the locations indicated on the pattern—holes 1 to 5 (5).



-4-

-3-



-1-



-2-



-5-

- Fold the leather as shown in the drawings, along the gray dotted lines shown on the pattern, making sure that the rivet holes match up (6 & 7). At each fold, press down on the folds to mark them or tap them with the rounded head of a mallet.
- Insert the male part of a rivet into hole #5 (on the inside of the purse) and bring it out through hole #1 (on the outside of the purse). Set the female part of the rivet and then attach the two parts together with the mallet and the little tool supplied with the rivets (8). Do the same for the other rivet.



-6-



-7-

Making the Slide

- Cut slits into the black leather strip with a knife.
- Place the two parts wrong sides together and stitch all around at $\frac{1}{8}$ " from the edge with a stitch length of $\frac{1}{8}$ " (9).
- Slip the chain through the slits in the slide (10). Thread the chain through the two eyelets and then join the two links at each end to close the chain.



-8-



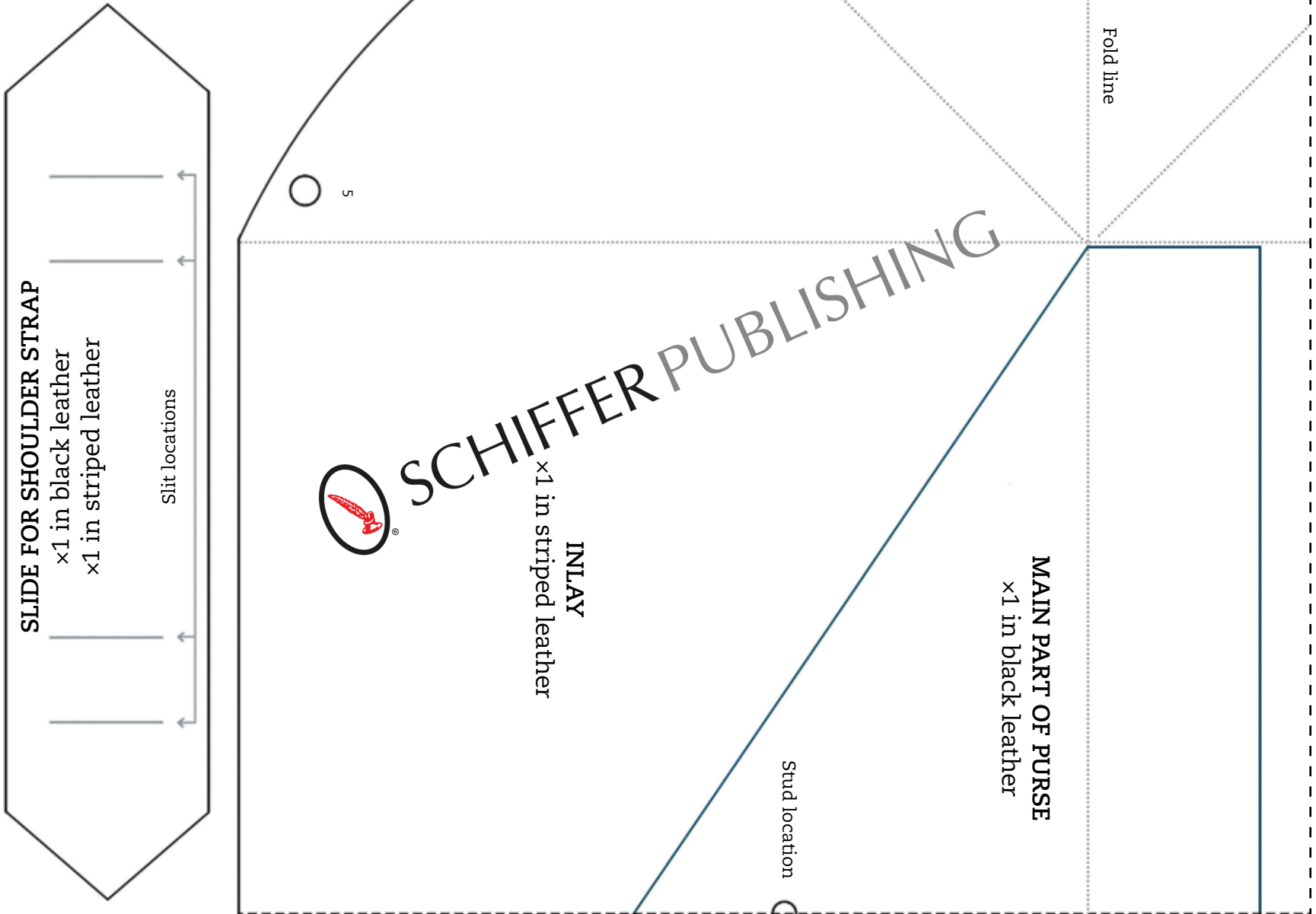
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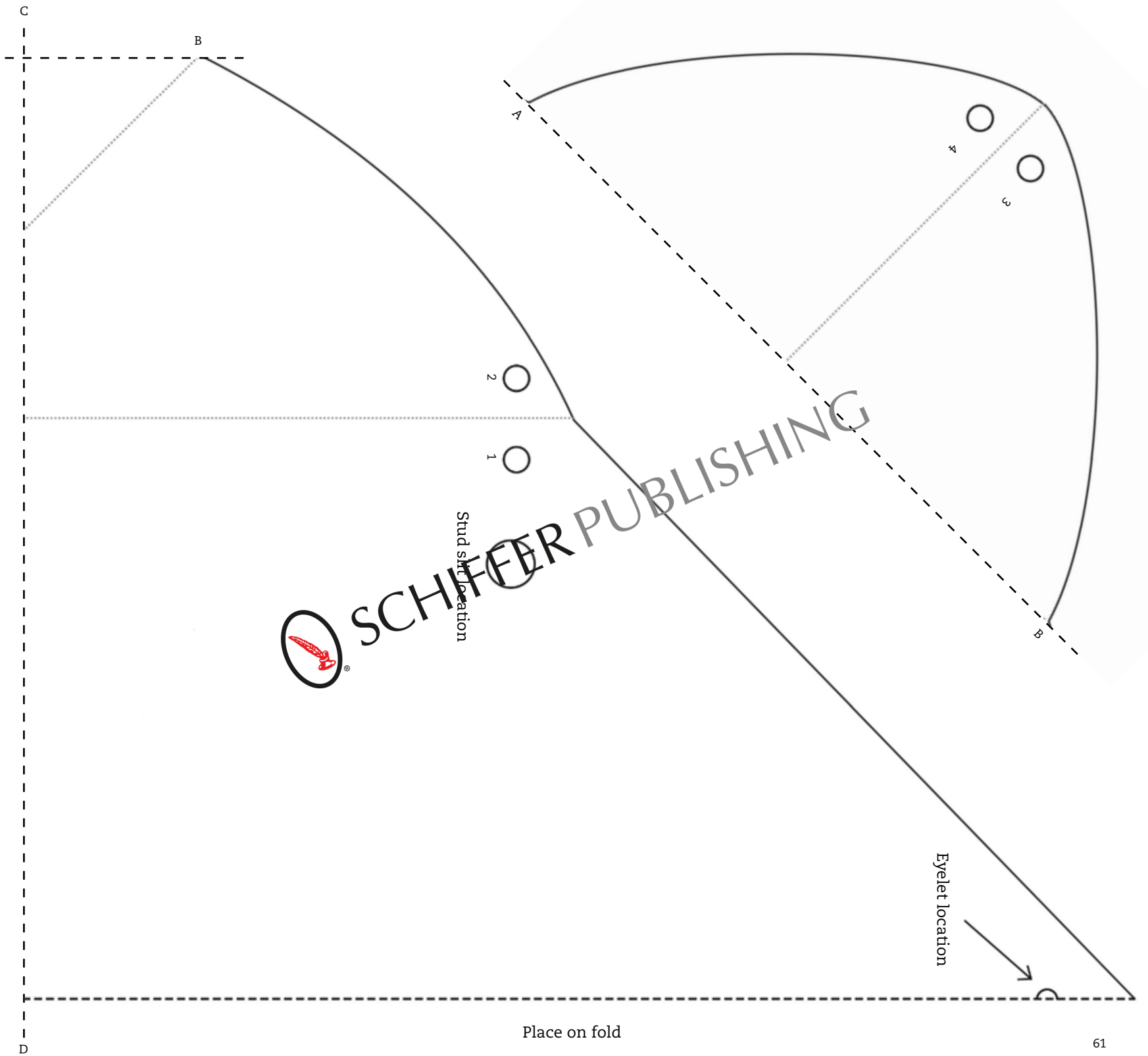


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Envelope-Style Purse: Half Pattern





Smartphone Case

Difficulty level: ☆

Techniques: straight stitch (machine)

Materials: leather sewing-machine needle (size 16/100), Teflon presser foot

Recommended leather: Fairly thick, stiff leather such as natural-grain goatskin or suede. Be careful: in some places you'll be stitching three layers of leather at the same time, so do a test with scraps to make sure your machine is up to stitching the leathers you have chosen.

Dimensions: 5" × 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ " for size 1 (for a telephone 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ " wide, 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high, and $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick maximum) and 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ " × 4" for size 2 (for a telephone 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ " wide, 5" high, and $\frac{5}{16}$ " thick)

You'll need:



Striped suede calf skin: 6" × 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ "



Black and silver elastic:

7" long for size

6 $\frac{3}{4}$ " long for size 2



INSTRUCTIONS

- Install a leather needle and Teflon presser foot onto your machine. Set a straight-stitch length of $\frac{1}{8}$ ". On each of the three pieces of leather, do a decorative straight stitch $\frac{1}{16}$ " from the edge: on the upper edge for the two main parts; on the upper edge and the right side (from point A to point B) on the front pocket (1).
- Fold the elastic band in two, right sides together. Place it on the location marked on the pattern on one of the main parts of the case (placing the end of the band $\frac{3}{8}$ " in from the edge), and fix it in place with masking tape (2).
- Place the second main part of the case over the first, wrong sides together, then stitch around the three sides at $\frac{1}{8}$ " from the edge, doing a backstitch at the start and at the end (3).
- Place the pocket on the front of the case and stitch the left side and bottom side (from point B to point A) at $\frac{1}{8}$ " from the edge (4).
- Fold the elastic band around the case to keep it in place (see the photo on the next page).

CUTTING

- **Main part of the case:** Cut the pattern twice out of the leather.
- **Front pocket:** Cut the pattern once out of the leather.



-1-



-2-



-3-



-4-

Smartphone Case: Pattern

