

Concertina binding

The concertina is a stitchless, folded binding that can be assembled with or without adhesive. It is easy to make and offers a versatility that can be creatively adapted to an enormous range of projects.

The concertina, or accordion binding, is an ancient binding method that sits somewhere between a modern sewn book and an ancient scroll. It was the first binding to take the book form—it can be read like a book, but its contents are displayed on one continuous folded sheet. Previously, concertinas would be limited to the size of a single sheet of paper, but contemporary versions are often made from a number of glued sections that overcome this limitation. This enables you not only to increase the size of your book, but also to change the

papers within the concertina at any point along its length. Here you will learn the principles of concertina binding, as well as one method of casing a concertina into a cover.

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

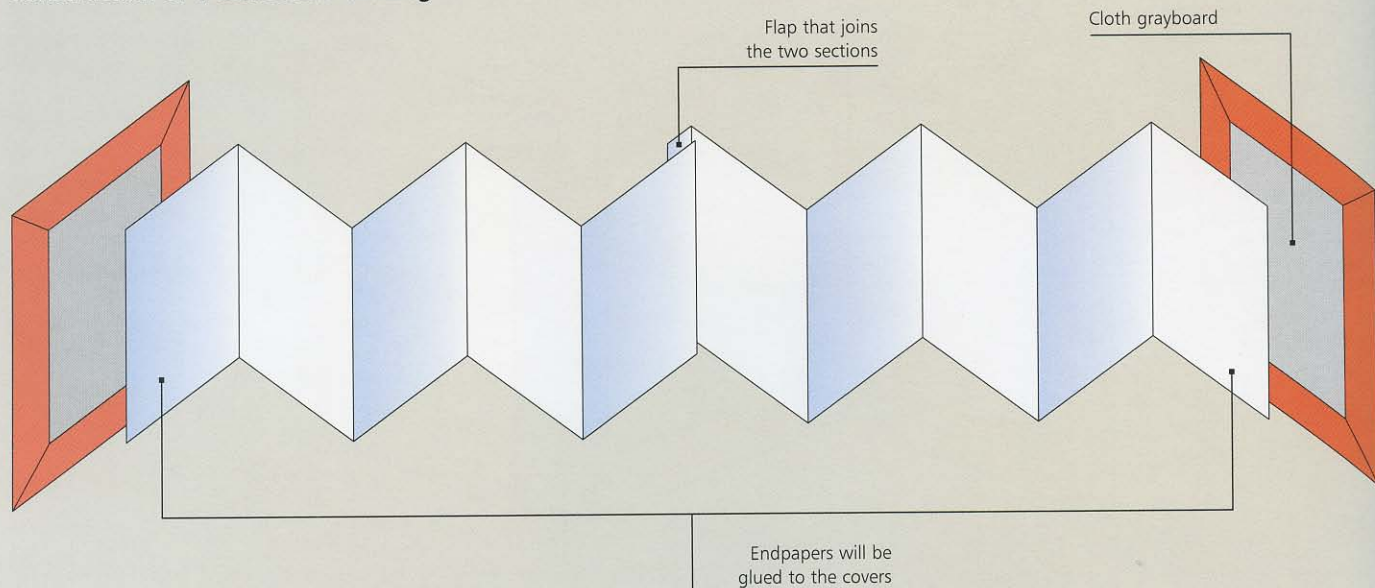
The concertina is made by the repeated, counter-folding of a sheet of paper—the flat surfaces between the folds constitute the pages. The folds allow the finished object to be held in the hand and read like a book, but when opened fully, the single sheet may be several feet long. By

its nature, the concertina book offers two distinct sides: the front, which is usually the side presented to the reader, and the back, which is often, although not always, left blank. The pages can be left unbound or can be cased either in a single board at front and back, or a case binding, similar to a sewn book.

See also

A Diction, on page 110, is a concertina book with an altered page shape.

Construction of a concertina binding

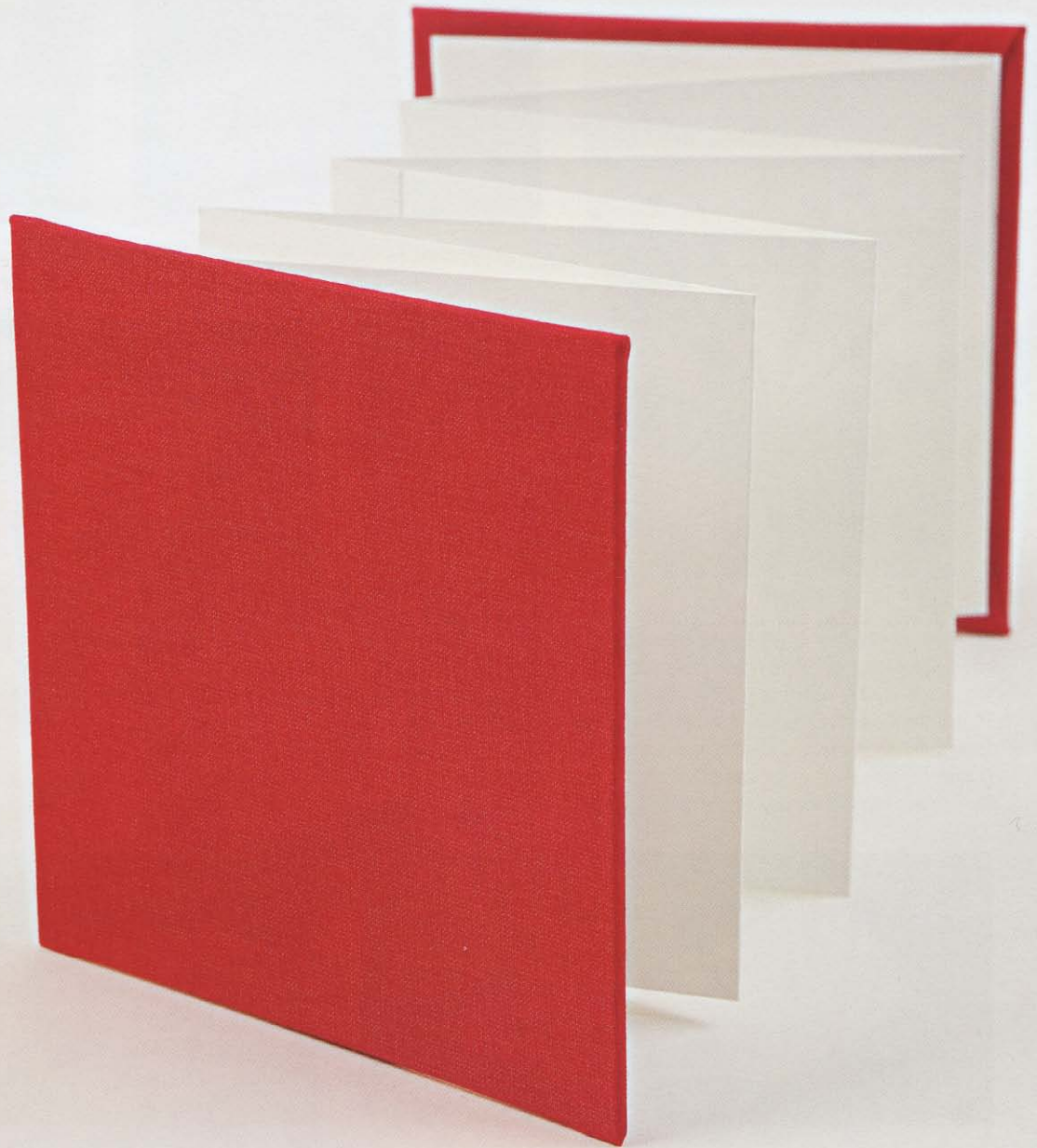


Materials

- ♦ Book block: one sheet 100 lb (220 gsm) paper, 3¾ x 18¾ in. (9.5 x 47.5 cm), with grain parallel to the short edge; one sheet 100 lb (220 gsm) paper, 3¾ x 19¼ in. (9.5 x 49 cm), with grain parallel to the short edge
- ♦ PVA glue
- ♦ Book cloth: two pieces, 6 x 6 in. (15 x 15 cm)
- ♦ PVA/paste mix
- ♦ Grayboard: two sheets ⅞ in. (2 mm) thick, 4 x 4 in. (10 x 10 cm)
- ♦ Scrap paper

Tools

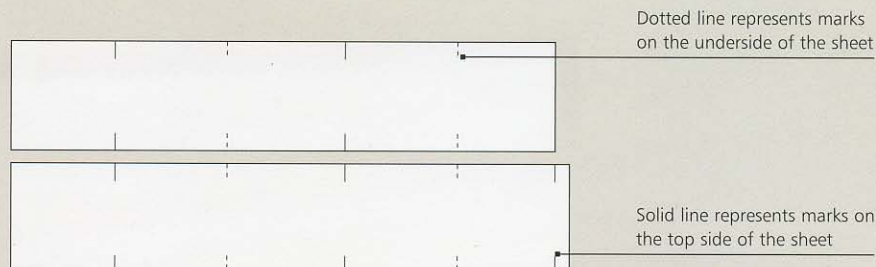
- ♦ Pencil
- ♦ Ruler
- ♦ Bone folder
- ♦ Glue brush
- ♦ Scalpel, steel ruler, and cutting mat
- ♦ Book weight or heavy, flat object



MAKING THE CONCERTINA BOOK BLOCK

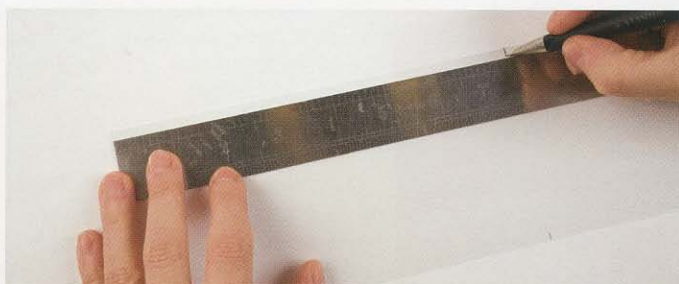
Follow the step-by-step instructions to create a concertina book block made from two strips of paper.

Marking the fold lines



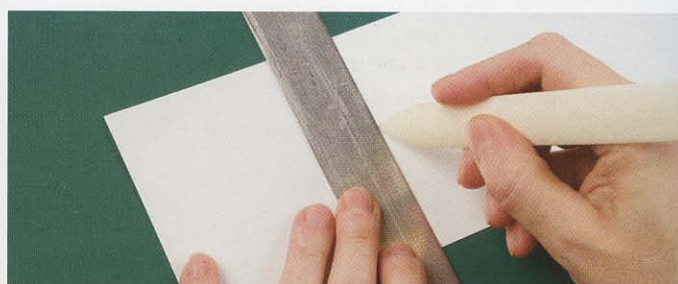
NOTE:

If you are using thinner paper—for example, around 70–90 lb (100–180 gsm)—you can make all of your marks on the same side of the sheet, because it is less liable to crack along the score marks when folded the “wrong” way.



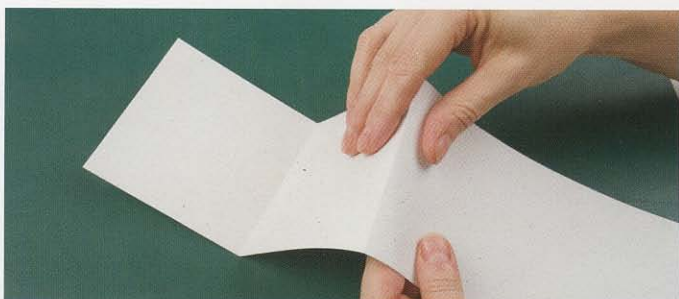
Step 1

Take the shorter sheet of paper and, with a pencil, mark the top and bottom edge of the sheet at $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. (19 cm) intervals. Turn the sheet over and mark the back every $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. (19 cm), but starting $3\frac{3}{4}$ in. (9.5 cm) in from the edge, so that the marks are positioned in between the marks on the other side. Repeat this on the second sheet of paper. You will be left with a $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (12 mm) extra portion at the end of the second sheet, which will become the flap used to join the two sheets together.



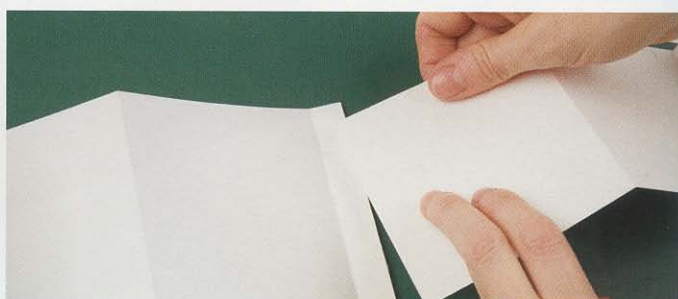
Step 2

Use the end of a bone folder along a steel ruler to lightly score the paper between the points you have marked. This will ensure that your paper folds over easily and cleanly. Repeat on the second sheet.



Step 3

Start with the shorter strip and fold the first crease backward, the next crease forward, and carry on in this way until you have folded all the creases. Do the same with the second strip of paper. Your score marks should end up on the inside of the “V” of the fold—this will prevent the paper from cracking when folded.



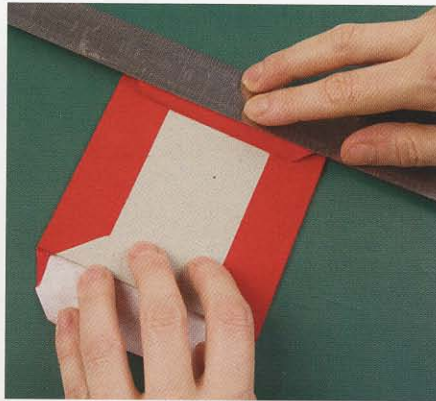
Step 4

To join the two strips together to make a single sheet, lightly glue the inside of the short flap on your longer strip. Join the two parts together so that the short flap is behind the end of the shorter strip. Dry this joint under a flat, heavy weight for ten minutes. Use a scalpel and steel ruler to trim any paper protruding at the top or bottom of the join.

MAKING AND ATTACHING THE COVERS

**Step 1**

Glue out one of the book cloth pieces, starting from the center and working outward, then place a piece of grayboard at the center. Cut off the four corners of your glued book cloth to about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (5 mm) from the corner point of the grayboard. With the aid of the steel ruler, fold the two opposite sides of the cloth onto the grayboard, and press firmly down.

**Step 2**

Tuck in the corners of the book cloth then fold over the remaining two sides. Again, press these firmly down. Repeat Steps 1 and 2 for the second cover board, and dry both covers under a flat weight for 20 minutes.

**Step 3**

With the concertina folded, place a sheet of scrap paper under the top sheet. Glue out this top sheet lightly but thoroughly.

**Step 4**

Pick up the glued end sheet of the concertina with both hands and lightly position it on the reverse of one of the cover boards. Once you are sure it is centrally placed on the cover, firmly press it in place. Repeat Steps 1 and 2 for the back cover.

VARIATION

It is also possible to bind your concertina into a single-piece, case-binding (see pages 28–29). Binding it in this way makes it easier to handle, but also allows you to obscure the reverse of the concertina and play with this concealment using cut-throughs or hidden text.

