

Altered Composition Books with Style!

You can find simple instructions for altering composition books at several sites on the Internet, including www.hobbitskorner.com .

I prefer to cover and embellish the books so you can't tell that they started as a simple composition notebook. Therefore, the instructions that follow are more detailed, and will take more time to complete...but the end result will be wonderful! And remember, you DON'T have to use acid-free products on a comp book, so don't use up all your scrapbooking tape just for this...buy the less-expensive double-sided tape or tape runners for this project.

I recommend gathering the following materials together prior to starting:

1) 4 sheets of 8-1/2 X 11" paper (2 for outside covers, 2 for inside covers)

2) Binding covering(s) of choice

This can be strips of fabric, velvet or suede paper, homemade papers, or anything that is pliable and glue-able. most of the time I will cover the entire black binding...this is a matter of choice for you. Often, a piece of 1" wide ribbon can be glued to the front side only over the black binding...this will leave the back binding uncovered.

3) ADHESIVES of SEVERAL types:

a) Matte or glossy finish **Mod Podge** and **small** (approx. 1" wide) **paintbrush**
OR

large Xyron (using your Xyron can get expensive if you're doing more than one book!)

b) **Alene's Tacky Glue** (I prefer to use the "Thick Designer Tacky Glue" in the pink labeled plastic bottle)

c) **Tape runner** or **double-sided Scotch tape**

d) **E6000**, or **Glue Dots**, or whatever glue you prefer for embellishments

4) Heavy brayer or **wallpaper seam roller** (my roller of choice)

5) Scissors and **paper trimmer**, and **pencil**

6) Ribbon trims (or just some 3/8" ribbon if you only want to use it for a "ribbon bookmark")

7) Embellishments

Have fun gathering these...use up your "stash"! Think of the front of the book as a mini scrapbook page, and have fun! Decorative and patterned papers, buttons, charms, brads, ephemera, magazine pics, playing cards, dominos, game pieces, beads, wires, polyester/silk flowers, fabric swatches or pieces from old cut-up jeans or other garments, stamps, inks, chalks, embossing powders, acrylic paints, modeling paste, lumieres, pearl-ex, sandpapers...whatever you feel like...let your imagination run free! But keep in mind that when the front of the book is flipped open, and people are writing on the backs of the pages inside, if the front is so bulky that it causes it NOT to lay flat on a table, it will make it difficult for the user to write in it!

OUTSIDE COVERS:

Start by laying out your comp book, front cover open, on the back side of the paper you've chosen for your outside cover. Place the black binding edge of the book along the edge of the paper...this will save you the time of cutting this side. Trace the shape of the book, from the edge of the black binding, around the entire 3 remaining sides. Instructions on the internet will tell you to cut on this line...this will give you a paper

cover that goes right to the edge of the book. I've found with some of my earlier books that with repeated use, (and since these books aren't always treated with TLC) that eventually the edges of the paper can start to unpeel. For this reason, I now **cut the outside covers 1" larger than the traced line**...this leaves me a "hem" of paper around the three sides to turn and tape to the inside. The bulk of the "hem" does sometimes show through the paper you use to line the inside, but it's really not that objectionable, the paper adheres more permanently, and all the edges are covered this way.

A NOTE OF CAUTION ABOUT MOD PODGE-ING THE COVERS OF YOUR BOOK:

If you attempt to apply Mod Podge to the outside papering of your book, and HAVEN'T used Mod Podge to apply the paper originally (even if you've used your Xyron to coat the entire sheet with adhesive), the paper(s) will probably buckle when you apply the mix to the top. This CAN work to your advantage if you're trying to get a crinkled, leathery look, though. If that's the look you're after, apply the Mod Podge, let it dry just a while, then go back, and with your fingertips, flatten the paper by letting it form folds and creases as you flatten it down.

If you want a SMOOTH look, I recommend using Mod Podge both under the paper to hold it to the book, and over the top after adhering the papers.

INSIDE COVERS:

Trace around the cover of the book from the center binding, around the outside edge. I **cut** these pieces approximately **1/8" inside** the traced line, so the inside lining piece does not go over the edge or too close to the binding after gluing it down.

a) Do the following twice...once for the front, once for the back of the book:

Using a small (approx. 1" wide) flat paintbrush, brush the cover of the book, from the black binding to the outer edge, with a thin, even coating of Mod Podge, and place your cut cover paper over the front, lining the straight edge of the paper along the black binding line and leaving approximately the same overhang at the top and bottom. Smooth the paper down with your fingers, then use your brayer or seam roller to smooth it out more, and get any air bubbles out. Turn the book to the inside, and run your tape runner or place double-stick tape on the approx. 1" "hem" of paper left. Turn the papers to the inside and stick down, making 2-3 folds or pleats at the corners to help them follow the rounded corners at the outside of the book cover.

b) Before gluing down the inside paper covers, decide what method you want to use to secure the book closed.

On many books, I attach small tags to the OUTSIDE or INSIDE of the front and back covers, run string or ribbon through the eyelet at the top of the tag, and tie it. BUT, if you want to use just a piece of ribbon to tie the book closed, you'll want to lay the ribbons on the inside of the front and back, and secure/glue them down, BEFORE you glue the inside papers down. So, give some thought to this before adhering your inside lining papers!

Also, if you think you'll be wanting to make **holes for brads, attach eyelets, or other "penetrable" objects on your front embellishments, and you DON'T want the backs to show when you open the book, you'll want to attach these embellishments to the front BEFORE you attach the inside lining paper to the front cover.** This way, the lining paper will cover the backs of the eyelets, brads, etc., and will have a smooth finish for the end user.

With the paintbrush, brush a thin, even coating of Mod Podge on the inside lining paper, then place the paper on the inside cover, smoothing down as you did with the front cover. Try not to get the paper too close to the binding where the lined paper starts, or it could tear up with repeated opening and closing of the book.

Attaching the binding covering:

As I stated earlier, you can use fabric remnant strips, wide ribbons, suede or velvet papers, handmade papers...lots of different options for covering your bindings. Or, you can leave them uncovered and black if it matches the theme/color of your altered book! Just be sure the material you use is pliable and won't crack or break with repeated opening and closing of the book.

Most comp books are 9-3/4" high, so when I work with **FABRICS**, I work with strips 10-3/4" long by 3" wide. I turn down 1/2" at the top and bottom edges, and machine-stitch these. If you don't sew, you can use fabric glue or any other type of glue that will hold this hem in place. I like to run a line of stitching down the long edges, 1/4" in from the edge, then unravel this edge up to the stitching to make a small fringe. Then, using the paintbrush again, brush an even coat of Tacky Glue to the black binding, align your fabric or paper along the binding line, smooth down well. Then turn the book over, apply glue again to the back side of the binding, and smooth down the remaining binding cover material.

When working with papers, I cut strips 9-3/4" long by 2-3/4" wide, since there's no hems or unraveling issues. They're adhered in the same way as the fabric coverings.

Ribbon Bookmarks:

I make this as easy as possible..LOL! I cut a piece of 3/8" ribbon approx. 23" long. I glue one end inside the front cover, right along the edge of the lining paper next to the binding, from the bottom of the book to the top, leaving the long unattached end free to run back down the book as a bookmark. This makes a nice "trim" to the glued paper edge. You could also do this on the back cover if you prefer, or even on both inside covers, to have two bookmarks.

Now you're ready to start to embellish the front (and even the back if you wish,) outside covers. The sky is the limit here! Some hints:

-make sure your embellishments are glued down well and **SOLIDLY**. I even tack down the ends of ribbons and fibers, just so they don't swing loose and snag on anything. I like to use E6000 for bulky embellishments...and remember, with E6000, "a little dab'll do ya!" If using your Xyron, permanent adhesives work best. Note that Glue Dots will work, but I have found with some of my older books that bulkier embellishments originally adhered with Glue Dots tend to fall off easier after a few months of heavy use.

-REMEMBER that this book will be used for WRITING...the bulkiness of the front (and the back) will affect the ease with which the end user can write with the book opened, so keep that in mind when embellishing your book!

Sometimes I let the pattern of the paper(s) on the cover, or the colors on the outside, "inspire" what I want the theme of the book to be. Other times, it will be a quote that I've seen that will inspire the book. Don't get "hung up" on picking all your embellishments in colors that match perfectly...get brave and use complementary colors...or even colors that you would normally not pair together at all.

If you feel a little "intimidated" at first with wondering what to do with the cover, try this trick...a large, embellished tag along with a quote box often are all you need to decorate the front of a comp book! So, concentrate on making an embellished tag...one about 3" X 5" to start. Then find a quote you like, print it on the computer, mat it a way that you like, and attach the quote and tag to the front with a strong adhesive. You'll be surprised how the inspiration for another will hit you while you're working on one book!

Also, look to greeting cards, magazine ads, scrapbook pages in your idea books or in the Gallery, tag ideas and illustrations...all these things will help give you inspiration for your album cover.

Now the fun begins...play around and have some !!!