



Leather Hip Pouch

Products Used

Up and Away (Sku: ESP11821-1)

Steps To Complete



I don't consider myself a terribly girly girl. I try my best, but heels and I don't get along well, and "girl world" rules confuse me. Why do we go to the bathroom in herds? Why is it bad my dress is similar to yours? Does it matter that I don't know how to operate an eyelash curler? The thing looks like a torture device to me.

OK, I can handle most "girly" things, but the one mystery that girl world has never really explained to me is the clutch purse. Now, don't get me wrong, I love purses, and tote mine around everywhere, but if I'm going out for a night on the town and don't want to be weighed down by a big swingin' purse, why is it better to have a little purse you have to constantly hang on to? I lose my keys in five minutes and I lose my glasses on my head. A cute itty bitty purse is going to be a lost cause with me. Luckily, I have a plan...

Not only am I going to make a cool little hands-free holder for my ID and a few dollars, but I thought I'd try embroidering on a whole new medium, one that's especially fun to try out - leather!



Leather is a hot ticket item right now. Raw, natural materials are making a strong comeback in the design world, and as part of [this week's Design Threads installment](#), I thought I'd show you how to use your embroidery skills on some classic cowhide.

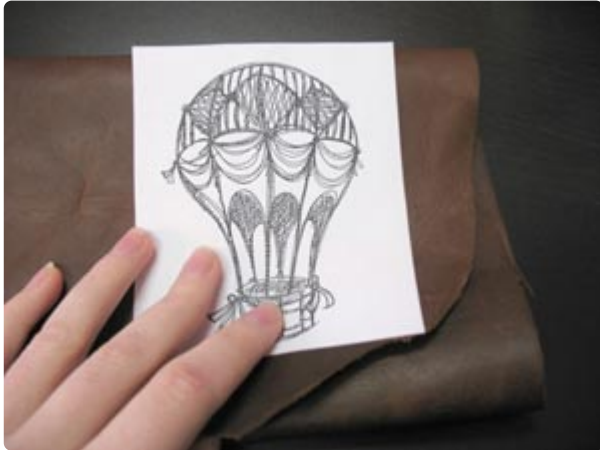
To make your little leather satchel, you'll need a piece of nice thick raw leather, about 15 inches long and 6 inches wide, plus a few scraps for belt loops. Also, have a few scraps of muslin or soft cotton around.



For embroidering or sewing on leather, you'll want to pick up some leather needles. The thing about sewing on leather is that the holes your needle leaves behind won't be invisible like when you sew on regular cloth, and you want a small, special needle to keep the damage and tear-age to your leather at a minimum. Large needles can actually perforate your leather enough that you basically just punch off a section. Not what we're going for here.

A note to veggie heads: if you're looking for animal-friendly alternatives, you can use pleather like any regular cloth – you don't need to use special needles, or even special designs! Just stitch away.

The next most important thing to know when embroidering on leather is what designs will work and what designs won't. In general, really heavy stitch designs, especially anything with satin stitching, is bad for leather, because the repeated punches of the needle will punch out your design and you might find the whole thing just pops out when you're done. You want simple, light stitching designs... designs just like [scribbles!](#)



Grab [your favorite scribbles design](#) you think will look swank on leather. To make our holder, we're just going for a simple folded pouch. Fold one side of your leather inside for the inner pocket, and then fold a piece on top that will be the outer flap. You'll need this flap to be a fairly generous size in order to fit a nice little scribble on it.

I picked our new [Victorian-inspired hot air balloon](#). It fit just fine on the front of my pouch.



To embroider your design, you'll want to back the leather with some regular cutaway stabilizer. Spray the stabilizer with some adhesive and smooth it firmly on to the back of your leather.



Now, when it comes to hooping leather, you need to take a few extra steps to avoid a particularly nasty case of “hoop burn.” Hoop burn, if you’ve been fortunate enough to avoid it ‘til now, is when your hoop leaves a mark on your fabric from compressing it too much. Hoop burn on regular fabric can usually be solved by rubbing a little bit of water onto the mark, but hoop burn on leather is there to stay. To avoid leaving marks on your leather, lay down a few strips of muslin or cotton where your hoop is going to be.

Make sure your hoop isn't too tight – if you're using thick leather you'll probably have to open the hoop up more than usual to accommodate it. Press the hoop down over your fabric strips. Once it's hooped, you can trim away the interior excess fabric if it looks like it's going to interfere with your design.



One reader wrote in to recommend another option: adhesive backed stabilizer. You hoop the stabilizer by itself (sticky side up), use a pin to score through the backing of the stabilizer and remove it, then stick the leather down. The stabilizer holds the leather in place and so you don't hoop the leather at all, thus avoiding hoop burn. As with any hooping workaround, you'll have to keep close eye on it to make sure the leather doesn't shift. Give it a try and see if it works for you!



Stitch out your design with your new leather needle. If the leather is really thick, you might notice a little more friction with the needle, and the leather might pull up and down a bit. If you can, slowing your machine down a bit will help with this. It doesn't usually cause many problems.

When your design is done stitching, unhoop it (hopefully without burn marks!) and cut away the excess stabilizer. Yay! You just embroidered on leather. Even a slightly heavier scribble like our little balloon design stitched out just fine.



Fold your little pocket back up, with your newly embroidered scribble on top. All we need this little holder to fit is some ID, credit cards, and maybe a little cash, so it doesn't need to be very complicated.



Trim up your pouch so all the edges are flush and even, and cut the flap to suit your look. One side of my leather already had a fun raw edge, so I thought I'd go with it and cut the other side up in a similar fashion.



Now for the back straps. We're going to add two loops so you can easily slip this on to a belt and look all groovy all night long. No dangly straps to swing about when you're dancing, no little clutch purses to keep track of. This will stay snug on your belt and keep everything out of the way.

To place your straps, keep your pouch folded up, and flip it over. I cut two straps out of leftover scraps, about 2.5" by 3/4" wide, and laid them out on the back. Because we don't want to use pins on leather (it will leave permanent holes) I'd recommend taping them in place with some masking tape.

Before you begin sewing, I'd try playing on a piece of scrap leather. Getting your stitches just right can be tricky. First, set your machine to stitch the widest stitch you can manage. Your thread will bunch less, and if the stitches are too close together, we can get a similar "punching out" effect where the needle simply cuts through the leather. Also, play around with the tension a bit.



When you do sew on your straps, start a little ways down from the edge of your leather, and then back stitch back up for extra security, and to avoid any excess punching of the leather.

Sew a seam across the top and bottom of both of your straps.

Finally, sew a seam down either side of your pocket. If you're having difficulty getting your thick leather to slide through your sewing machine, try a little baby powder on the back of your leather to help it glide more smoothly. Because I think one of the joys of leather is its beautiful rawness, and the fact that leather doesn't fray, I left the edges in their raw state.





To wear your fabulous new pouch, slip a belt on, but leave the last few loops off, then loop your belt through the back straps of your pouch and cinch it all closed. You can loop it at the back if you're carrying non essentials, or loop it near your front if you've got some valuables you want to keep an eye on.



Now you've got a hands-free, totally stylin' way to tote around your goods. Even I would have to have an especially blonde moment to lose something that was strapped to my waist.

Make a whole bunch to slip on a belt and you've got one sweet utility belt. A pouch this size will fit everything from credit cards and cash to a passport if needed, and makes a great travel pouch. Make a smaller, daintier one for more dressy outfits in need of a little spice. You can customize it to any shape or any need.



Now with these tips and tricks, you can embellish today's hottest new material with ease, using the right techniques and type of designs. [Scribbles designs](#) are perfect for stitching on leather, but most light stitching designs will work as long as the leather is thick enough and you're using a proper needle. Experiment a little and in no time at all you'll be creating all sorts of embroidered leather goods. Finally, I've overcome my inability to use clutch purses, and found something that I can't possibly lose.

Now where did I put my darn keys?