

Shop Tip:

The 7 P's

By Ric Harber

Originating in the British military, and with other versions used in various countries' military branches, "The 7 P's" (Prior Proper Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance) is a motto to live by and has its uses –even in leatherwork!

When making a complex project, I find it helpful to develop a detailed checklist of the steps required. Doing this before you start can help you optimize your process and can help make sure that you don't find yourself having to take a project apart to be able to do something that should have been done before. Your checklist can then be verified and refined as you complete the steps and your project. The end result is a road map you can use the next time you need to make the same or a similar project or that you can use if you have to make multiples of a project. It can also be a help when pricing your work or justifying your price to a client.

Doing this has both helped and frustrated kids in my 4-H Leatherworks Club; it has helped by developing their understanding of a project and frustrated them by making them think through the process. Both have been good for them!

As an example, I'm about to make a number of rifle slings with rattlesnake inlays. Here are the steps:



An organized and clean shop ensures you know right where everything is

1. Decide on the type and pattern for the sling, including the size, shape and location for the inlay.
2. Transfer the pattern to the leather.
3. Cut out the pattern piece(s).
4. Mark stitch lines, including around the inlay.
5. Mark holes.
6. Punch holes.
7. Do any stamping or tooling required.
8. Cut out the leather for the inlay.
9. Cut backing leather.
10. Color the sling body.
11. Oil the sling body.
12. Resist the sling body (if applicable).
13. Antique the sling body (if applicable).
14. Seal the sling body.
15. Color the backing leather.
16. Oil the backing leather.
17. Resist the backing leather (if applicable).
18. Antique the backing leather (if applicable).
19. Seal the backing leather.
20. Edge the ends of the backing leather where it will not be fully accessible when attached to the main body.
21. Burnish the ends of the backing leather where it will not be fully accessible when attached to the main body.
22. Wax/seal the ends of the backing leather where it will not be fully accessible when attached to the main body.
23. Trim the leather cut out to be used as the inlay plug.
24. Edge the inlay plug.
25. Burnish the inlay plug (two separate steps).
26. Edge the inlay hole.
27. Burnish the inlay hole.
28. Color the inlay hole.



Making and finishing multiples simultaneously saves time and adds value



The 7 P's put to the test

29. Wax/Seal the inlay hole.
30. Cut the rattlesnake inlay pieces.
31. Glue the inlay snake pieces onto the inlay plugs.
32. Glue the inlay assembly into the main body.
33. Apply the backing leather.
34. Sew the sling together.
35. Trim the backing leather.
36. Sand and clean up external edges.
37. Edge the main body.
38. Burnish the main body.
39. Color the main body.
40. Wax/Seal the main body.
41. Add hardware.

Making a list of tools and materials for each project also helps to ensure that you are not wasting time looking for the right supplies at the time you need them, and that you charge properly for any supplies leaving your shop.

Keeping a detailed list like this may seem over-done at first, but if you tend to get side-tracked or pulled away from your work periodically, it always helps to bring you right back to where you left off. ↑

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