

Shrunken Books

Using Shrinking Plastic with embossing powder

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This workshop shows a step-by-step guide to making tiny books suitable for use as a brooch, key ring or bag ornament. I attach them to cards with pretty ribbons. You will need:

- Shrinking Plastic (I like the Polyshrink, opaque brand)
- Acrylic Paint
- Ultra Thick Embossing Powder (UTEE)
- A small amount of 'ordinary' embossing powder
- Metallic wax or metallic paint
- Paper for pages, not too thick
- 10mm jump rings
- Heat tool
- Soldering Iron
- Heat-proof surface
- Craft scissors
- Hole Punch
- Round end pliers

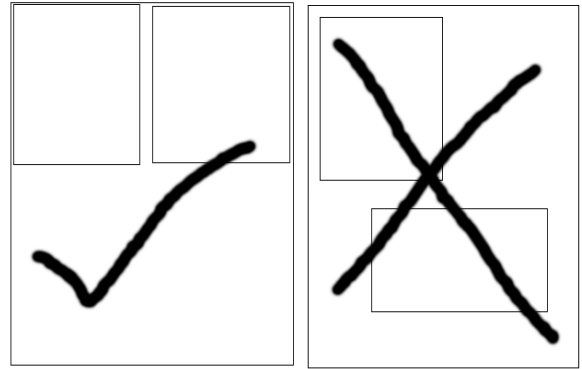
Cover all surfaces with newspaper this is going to get messy. Begin by making a paper pattern - just cut a rectangle 10 x 13 cm (4 x 5 in) from paper to use as a cutting guide. This will give you a book size of 3.5 x 5 cm (1.5 x 2 in) when the plastic is shrunk, depending on the make of plastic used.

This can obviously be adjusted to any size you like but it is a good starting point as it makes two books from one sheet of plastic with no waste.

Fold in half and then half again to give three fold lines. Dots on these mark the places where the holes will be cut. This saves a lot of measuring. Just make a mark on the folds a little way in from the edge, as shown.



Now lay the shape over the plastic and cut two rectangles – orientation is very important. If shapes need to match cut them the same way on the plastic as it shrinks more in one direction. Think fabric and straight grain. See diagram, right.

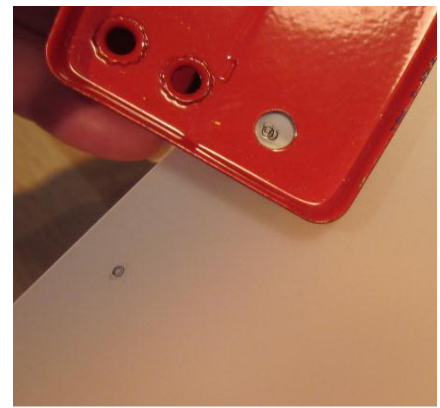
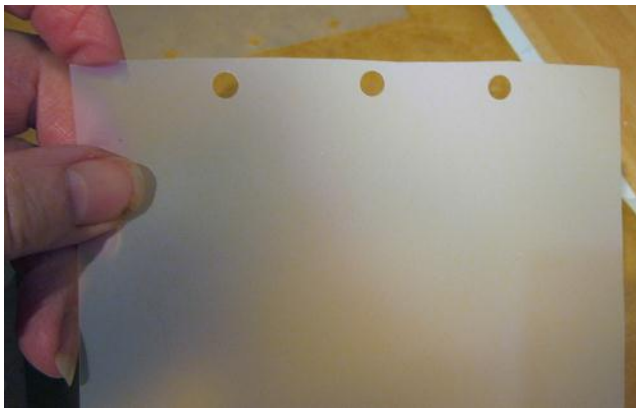


Mark the holes on both pieces of plastic – just lay them over the pattern and use a pen. Cut out with a hole punch, making sure that you do not cut the hole too close to the edge.

The hole will look enormous but remember the shrinkage.

If you use an office punch take the tray off, turn it upside down and look through the aperture for your dot. This tip may be the single most useful thing that you will ever learn – see below, right!

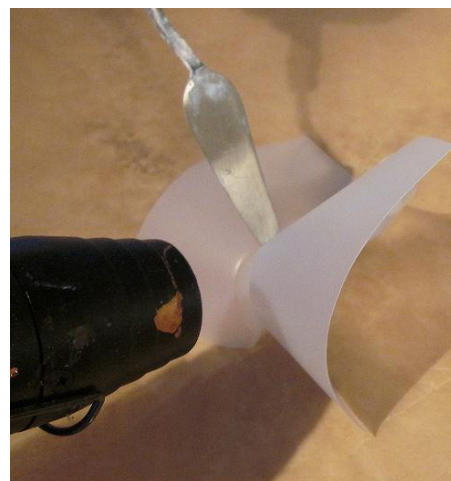
Hold the plastic pieces against each other and check the holes line up.



OK, now the fun begins. The two pieces of plastic make the front and back of the book with jump rings forming the joining mechanism. Shrink the plastic before decorating it. Work like this.

Have a flat rubber stamp handy. On a heat proof surface lay a piece of non-stick baking paper.

Place one of the cut plastic pieces on top and heat with the tool. It may try to blow away so have a palette knife or end of the scissors handy to keep it in place. Do not press down on it or it will mark.



The plastic will go through all kinds of contortions but will eventually regain its rectangular shape. If there are any bulges, it has not shrunk enough. As soon as it is done, press the flat side of the stamp on top to encourage a flat surface. You are not trying to make an impression with the stamp – just flatten the plastic. This is what your two pieces should look like – below right. Check that the holes still line up.

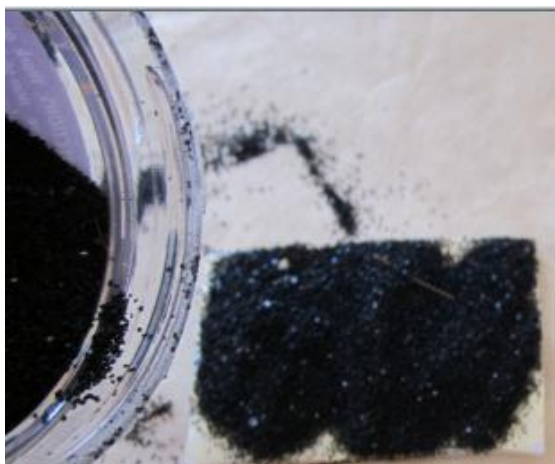


The next step is to gather together your embossing powders and your stamp. Any rubber stamp will do but I favour molding mats, especially those with small patterns that suit the scale of the books. Make sure that you are working on a heatproof surface with baking paper on top.

Working on one piece of plastic at a time, paint with a thin layer of acrylic paint. The paint is crucial; it must not be the runny version of acrylic paint but the kind that comes in tubes. It should be thick enough to hold a layer of embossing powder but not so thick that it oozes through the powder when melted. Perhaps shrinking down a couple of spare bits of plastic is a good idea – a trial run will be useful.



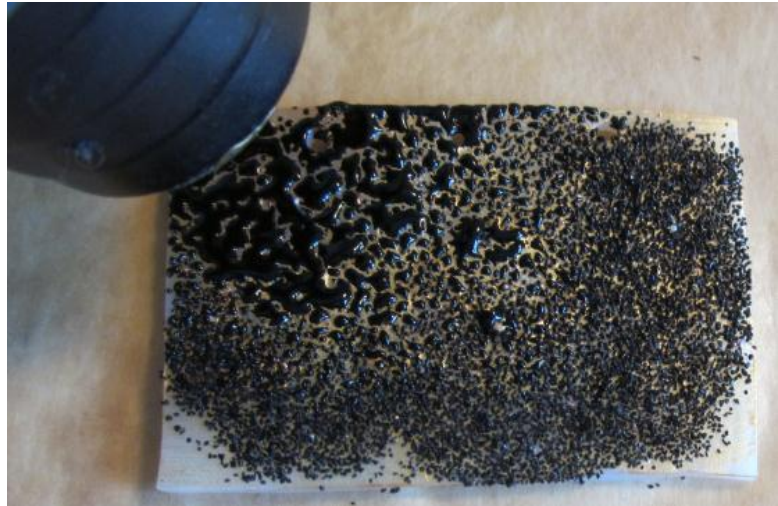
Before the paint has set, pour a generous layer of UTEE on top and tip the excess back in the pot – see below. Tip any powder from the baking paper in too.



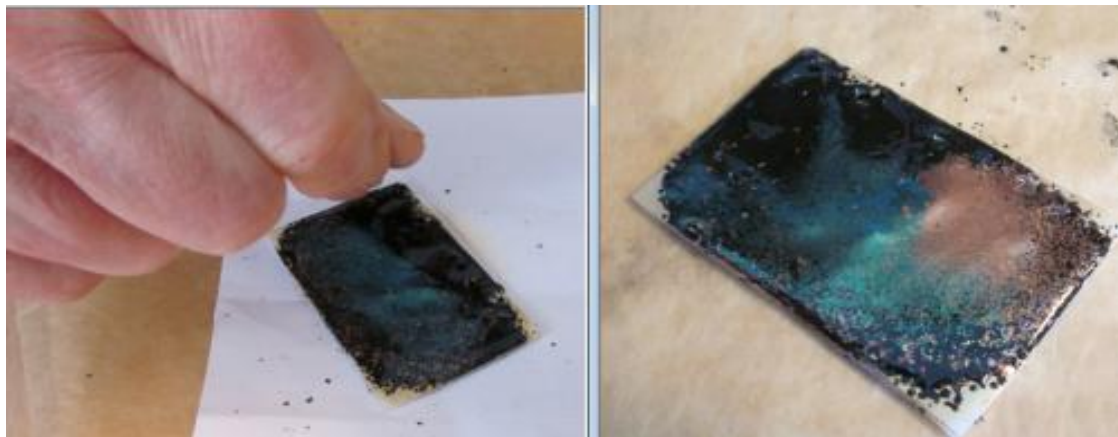
Then heat with a heat tool until it bubbles. IT WILL BE VERY HOT, TAKE CARE.

I like to start with black as it adds a depth to the finished surface but use whatever you have to hand.

While the powder is still hot and runny, add more UTEE. I tend to do this by taking a pinch of powder and, keeping the heat tool well out of the way, sprinkling it on top.



Do not get your fingers near the heat tool or the melted UTEE. When you have a good covering of UTEE, use the sprinkle method to add highlights with another colour powder. This can be UTEE or ordinary embossing powder, as shown below.



Give it another blast with the heat tool and then quickly lay the stamp, patterned side down on top and press lightly. **Mind your fingers, as before.** Leave for a moment before removing the stamp.



You will probably have lost the clean edges of your covers but just trim back to the plastic with scissors.

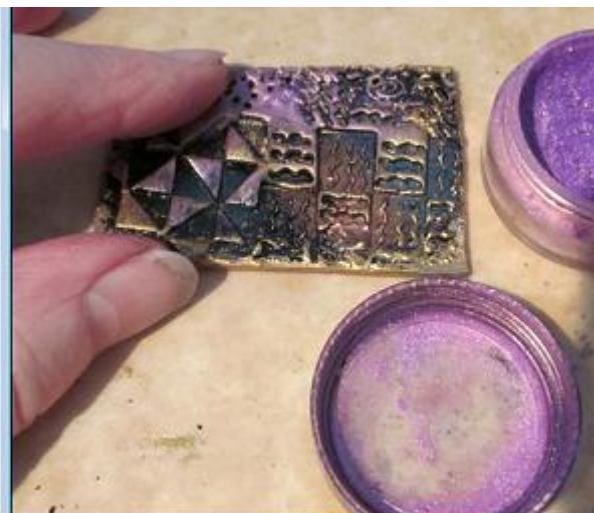
The one on the right, here, has been trimmed. Do not worry if the edges or corners are bare of UTEE. They will be painted or waxed.



The holes for the jump rings will almost certainly be clogged with the powder so push a big blunt needle through to clear them.

Time for a bit of glitz. Apply some metallic wax, such as Treasure Gold or Liberon, very sparingly. Pretend the surface is hot and you will be more cautious. See below.

The inside of the book covers will probably look a bit tatty so wax them as well. If you don't have wax, use an almost dry brush of metallic acrylic paint. Both the wax and the paint will hold a little pearly powder but, again, be mean and don't flood the surface.



Making the Pages

Having made the covers, which should be looking something like the ones shown below, you will need some attractive paper for the pages and jump rings to join it all together.



Using fine paper, tear three or four rectangles, the size of a double page. On the right, the covers are laid side-by-side to check the width of the paper.

In mine, the pages are all odd sizes – that's the way I like them. Make them smaller than the covers.

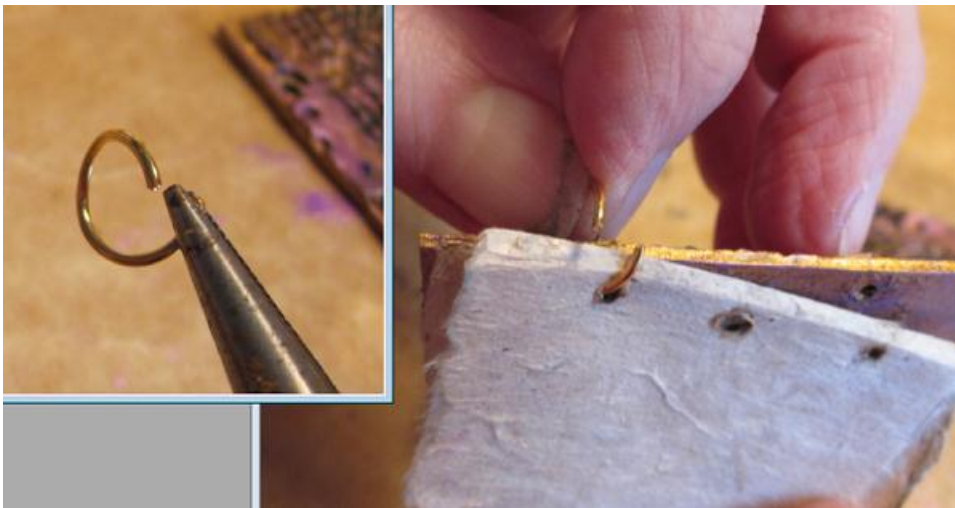


Fold each signature in half and stack them up under a book cover. Push a pen or pencil through the hole and mark them on the pages – see below right. Heat up a soldering iron and push the tip through the stack of pages, taking care to keep them in line. This gives a neat hole with a cute, dark outline.



Using round nosed pliers twist one of the jump rings sideways (don't just pull them apart). Thread it through the cover and all of the signatures, as shown, below.

Then thread the back cover on the rings and twist the ring back into a circle. Repeat with the other two rings.



Decide which is the front of the book and add a smaller jump ring to the top spine ring. Finally add a wrapped cord or ribbon through the small top ring.

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