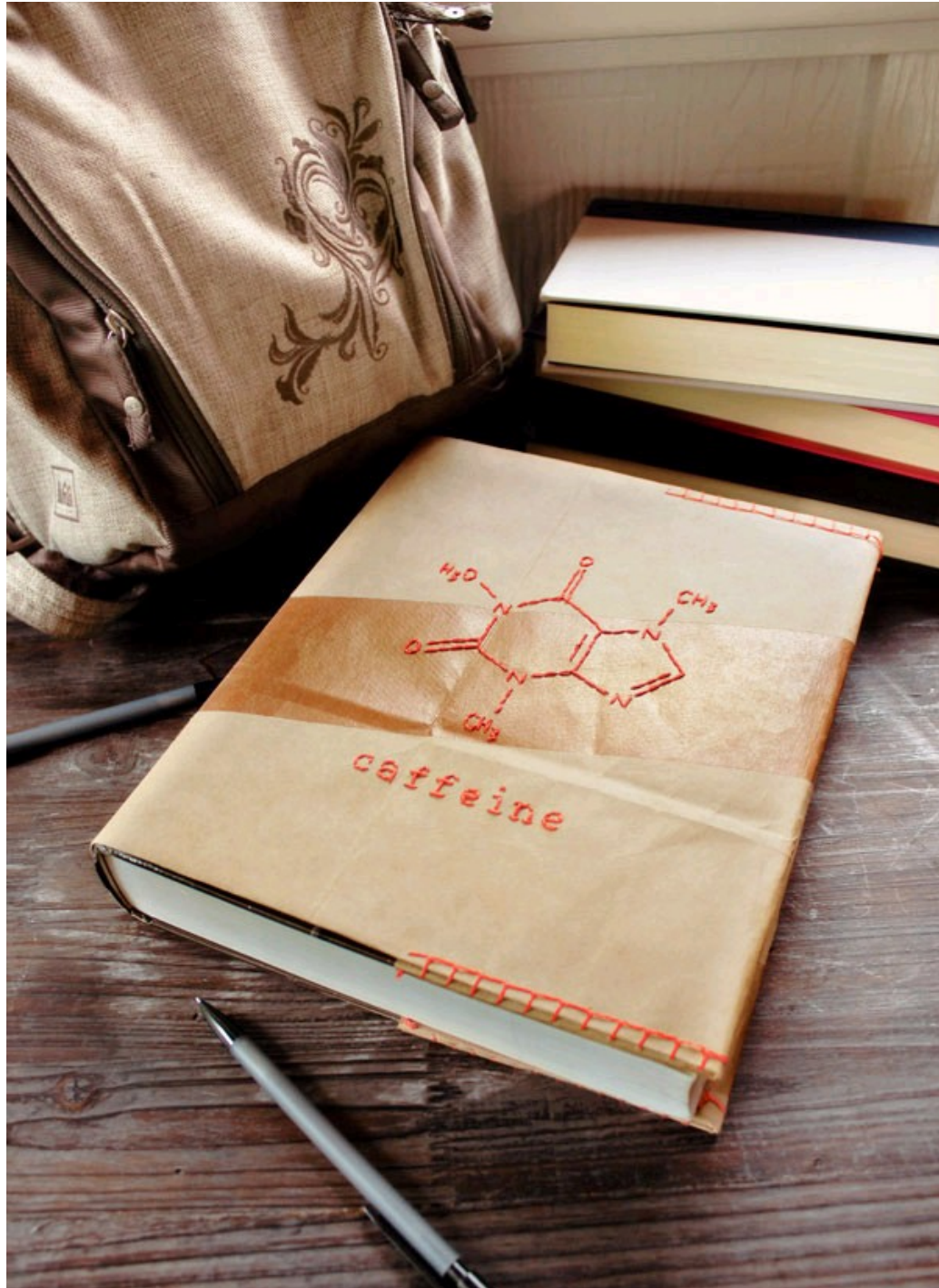


Embroidered Paper Book Cover



Everyone remembers these things, right? The good ol' brown paper bag book cover? These things were upcycling before upcycling was cool. The great joy of these things for me was usually the ability to add any and all decoration in the form of doodles and stickers to personalize all my books. Well, I may not have to lug around big textbooks anymore, but with school just around the corner, there are plenty of folks who will be. Only this time, we're ditching the pen and giving our doodles dimension... with embroidery!

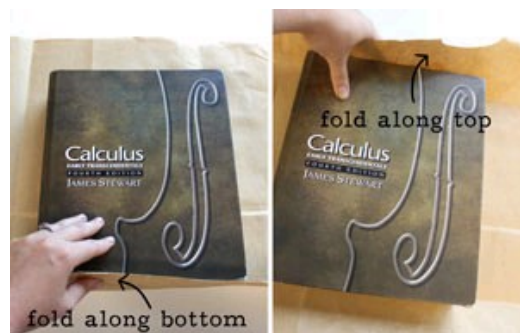
Yup, good old fashioned hand embroidery makes this an easy, cheap and accessible project for

anybody, and a great project to learn embroidery if you're just starting out. To make your cover, you'll need:

- Brown paper bag (plain, if you can get it)
 - Your textbook for measuring
- An embroidery design of your choosing (I picked our [caffeine design](#), since it was what I was most in need of when staring at textbooks.)
 - Embroidery floss and needle
 - Scissors
 - Pencil
- Spray paint and tape (optional, but neat)



Let's start with how you actually make one of these. Some of you might be pros, for others, it might have been awhile. Start by cutting down one side of your bag, towards the bottom. When you reach the bottom, continue cutting until you've removed the entire bottom piece. You should be left with one long piece of paper, like this.



In order to get the proper fit for your cover, you're going to need your book as a guide. As a side note, no, I am not currently taking calculus. My husband keeps this book in his office. I asked him once why. He said "just in case". Oh yeah, you never know when life will call for an emergency round of calculus...

Anywho, you'll want to fold a crease along the top and bottom of your book. You'll probably find for your bottom crease, you can use a fold that's already in your paper. This will help cut down on unnecessary folds on the cover.

Once you have those folds marked, fold both of them down flat. The piece of paper you have should now be just about as tall as your book, but much longer.





Next, put your book back inside, and fold one flap over the cover. Then fold the excess length at the sides inside the hard cover of the book. If you have too much excess, you can snip it off, but keep at least 4 or so inches to fold inside.

Is this all coming back to you know? I tell you, I had flashbacks to high school. There were braces involved. It wasn't pretty.

Ta da! A really boring book cover.

Or, if you look at it another way, a promising blank canvas! I always try to look on the more optimistic, embroiderable side of life.



This part is totally optional, but I think quite fun. You can jazz up your canvas and make it a little more exciting for your embroidery with a little more paint. You can go crazy and freehand it, or just do something simple like me.

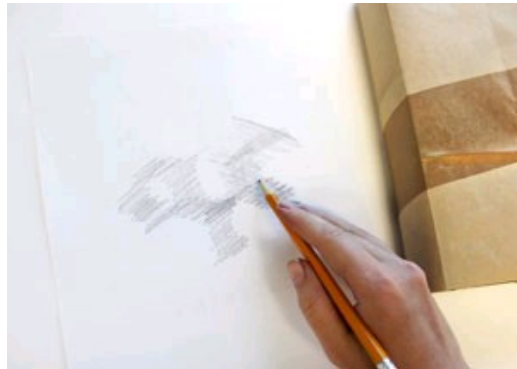
I'm going to paint a metallic line across my cover, to give it a dash of glamour. I used my masking tape to mark out my painting area and get a clean line.

I continued the tape all the way around the book, so my streak of paint would be even all the way around. Make sure not to press your tape down too hard, or it will lift up your paper surface when you try and remove it.



In order to reduce overspray, use the excess scraps of paper from the bottom of your bag to mask off the areas you don't want painted. Once it's all marked off, go somewhere well ventilated and give it a dash of pizzazz.

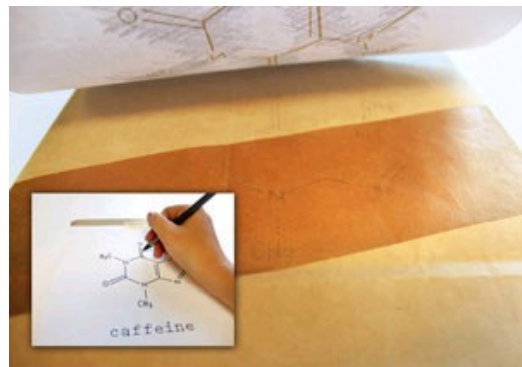
When your paint is dry, carefully remove your excess paper and paint. Now you have a glamorous splash of metallic across your cover, and it's ready for its final touch. Embroidery!



First we need to get our design onto our canvas. If you hand embroider quite a bit, you probably have transfer paper about, and you can use it here.

If you don't, never fret. There are all kinds of tricks to use when transferring an embroidery design, and as we're only transferring it onto paper, this one is easy. Just turn your printed template over, and use a pencil to heavily shade the area behind your design.

Once it's shaded, tape in place on your book and trace over it firmly with a sharp pencil or pen. You can carefully lift up your paper from time to time to see that it's transferring.



Here's my final transfer. You can see that the graphite lightly transferred into the brown paper, and in some cases left indentations that are easy to follow.

Now it's time to hand embroider! If you've never done it before, it's easy. Start by grabbing your floss. You'll notice that it's actually a number of tiny strands (usually 6) that make up one thick one. You can choose to use all 6 or split your thread and only use some.

I decided I didn't want my thread to be too thick going through the small paper holes, so I separated off four strands to use.



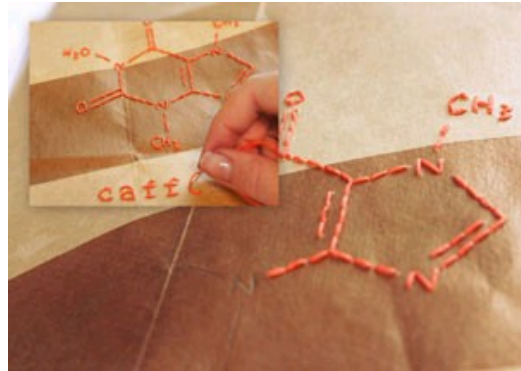


Now, how does one embroider on paper? Easy, if you know a few tricks.

One, you're not going to be able to tell from the wrong side where your needle is going to come up, so in order to know where you're going, you're going to want to poke your needle holes in the paper ahead of time. That way you can find your spot from the back side of your paper and come up exactly where you need to. For this simple project, I'm using a back stitch. Want to brush up on your stitches? [Click here](#) for a refresher of some of the common ones.

I usually worked by poking 4-5 holes in ahead of time, stitched them, and then judged where I wanted the next few to be. Some folks may choose to poke them all out at once. It's totally up to you!

Despite the somewhat unusual method of embroidering, the stitches will hold up well on your paper canvas. Just don't tug too hard to avoid any tearing.



Once your stitching is done, it's time to get your book cover in its final place. Take those edges you folded inside the cover before, and slip that fold over the cover itself, sliding it down so it makes a neat little pocket to hold the cover.

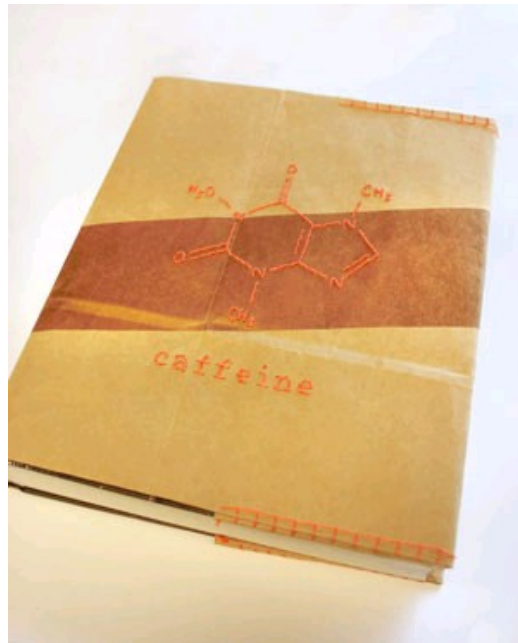
Now, the thing I used to always hate about these pockets is that while they kept your book corners safe, they never really sat right. There was always a strip of paper that was trying to poke out the side and look ugly, like so...



Luckily for us, we have embroidery floss and we can use a cute stitch to solve the problem. Cause we're crafty dang it.

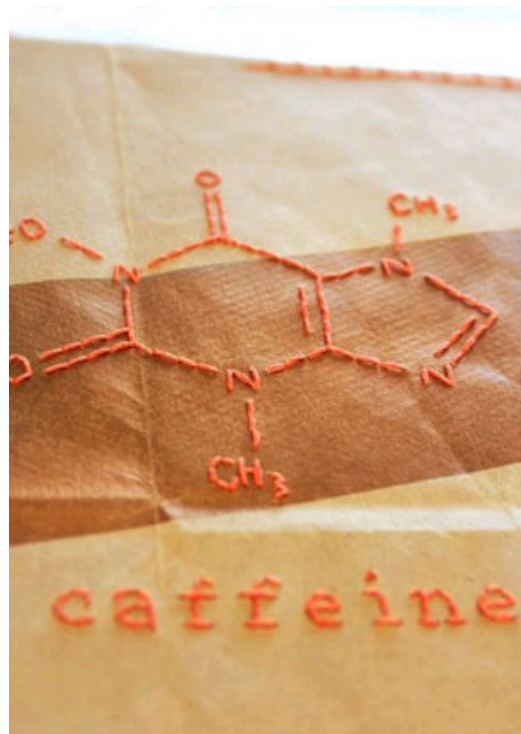
Use a basic blanket stitch to secure that inside flap to the top cover. If you're unfamiliar with the blanket stitch, you can see how it's formed in the picture. When you come up for your next stitch, pull the floss from the previous stitch across the back, so it hooks it into an "L" shape.

You can use this cute stitch on just the edge to keep the two flaps together, or take it all across the bottom of the book for a full decorative effect.
Stitching to the rescue!



Your classy new upcycled book cover is complete. A jazzy stripe, some pick-me-up embroidery, and a neatly stitched edge means your book is ready for anything, and is guaranteed to look like no one else's.

Your embroidery stands out neat and clear on the cover, a doodle like no one else's. Better yet, keep an embroidery kit on hand, slip off the cover, and continue "doodling" all year long, to eventually create a truly amazing embroidered piece.





Let your crafty side shine no matter what you're doing, and remember that almost any blank canvas is a good excuse for stitching, even paper!

Feeling left out, machine embroiderers? Never fear, here's a [tutorial on how to stitch on cardstock](#) and we used a similar technique to make this [cool card](#). Craftstylish also has some [great tips](#). Want something even more foolproof? Try [Kiwi Paper](#), which is designed specifically to be stitched and embroidered on!
