

## PREPARATORY PROCESSES

*IN the making of fancy leather goods there are certain processes involved which are common to the production of all types of articles whether large or small, and a measure of skill should be gained by the study and practice of each of these before the learner attempts the making of complete articles. These processes are cutting, paring or skiving, turning over, and creasing.*

### CUTTING

Cutting is the preliminary process of manufacture as all leather, reinforcements, and linings must be cut to the required sizes and patterns. The bulk of this work is performed with the hand knife, press cutting tools, by means of which parts are stamped out by machine, being employed only for the mass production of the cheaper grades of leather goods.

The cutting or "clicking" of leather parts from the hide or skin is usually the province of expert employees having a considerable knowledge of leather and experience in its economical cutting. Since leather is an expensive material, provision has to be made not only for its cutting but also for its storage and handling. Skins of leather can be damaged by undue exposure to heat, damp and strong light. The careless rolling or folding of skins may also mark the grain in such a way as to make certain areas unusable, and so the organization of a leather goods factory includes a cutting department in which leather and the more expensive materials are stored, cut, and then passed to the bench workers, the leather parts being cut exactly to required sizes whilst the fabric parts are cut exactly to size or slightly full according to their nature and purpose. The cutting of fabrics oversize is advisable if they are inclined to fray at the edges and are intended for pocket linings, and also when they are to be adhered to reinforcements and the combination subsequently trimmed to exact size.

Papers and board reinforcements are often given out in sheet form.

It then falls to the maker-up to cut to size the reinforcements and linings necessary for the articles to be made, together with any trimming of leather parts which may be required.

Where much cutting of leather parts has to be performed, as

in the making of cut-edged fancy leather goods, a cutting “board” composed of a number of close-grained wood blocks clamped together with the end grain forming the surface is used. A cutting board of this type is ideal for its purpose as the slightly rough surface grips the flesh side of the leather, so preventing movement before the knife, and the knife edge is not blunted.

The surface of the cutting board is kept in condition by occasionally scraping with a cabinet maker’s steel scraper and afterwards rubbing in a little neat’s-foot oil or a mixture of two parts linseed oil and one part terebene.

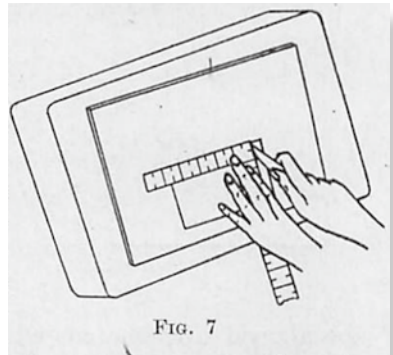
For ordinary cutting purposes a piece of stout strawboard or other soft pulpboard is satisfactory, or a piece of stout zinc may be used, and either may conveniently be placed on the paring stone, a level and firm foundation being essential.

Straight cutting is performed with the aid of the square.

The material is first placed on the cutting board or zinc, and the square is then pressed firmly on to the material by the extended thumb and fingers of the left hand. The cutting knife is grasped in the right hand, the handle being covered by the palm and the second joint of the forefinger pressed on the back of the blade. The hand should be advanced as far as possible towards the point of the knife so that the greatest pressure can be applied to the cutting edge. The cut is made by resting the blade against the edge of the square, pressing downward until the cutting edge has pierced the material, and then drawing the knife steadily towards the body, so severing the material (see Fig. 7).

The blade must be kept upright and not pressed against the square, and sufficient downward pressure with the right hand should be applied to cut materials of thin and medium substance at a single stroke. To achieve this the knife must be sharp and the initial piercing of the material before the actual cut is commenced must not be overlooked. Care should be observed not to commence the cut beyond the end of the square or the knife may run on to the square and cut the fingers.

The knife, too, should be held at a low angle, the handle inclining to the material



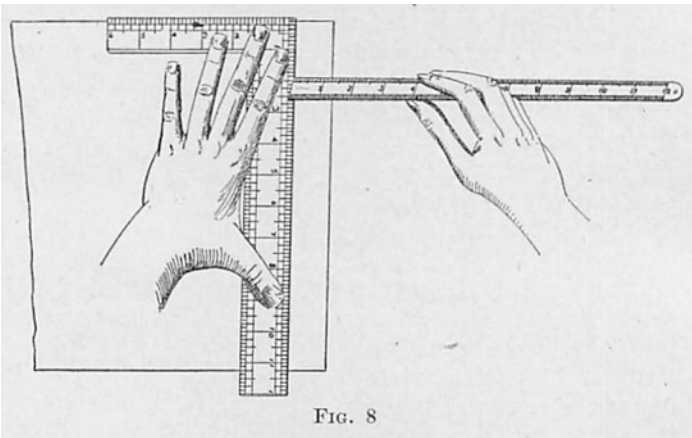
at about 30 degrees. This not only reduces the risk of running on to the square but also helps towards straight cutting, as the knife is less likely to wobble and lose direction while so much of its cutting edge is in contact with the material.

As far as possible all cuts should be commenced at a point away from and directly in front of the right shoulder, the knife being drawn forward to complete the cut, and the cutting board turned with the material to permit of cutting adjacent sides.

The knife can be better controlled and greater pressure applied when drawn forward than if the cuts are made in a direction parallel to, or away from, the worker.

Squares and rectangles of stiff paper should be cut for initial exercises, first straightening one side of a roughly cut or torn piece of paper, then turning the cutting board so that the short edge of the square may be aligned with the cut edge and cutting against the long edge, repeating for the two remaining sides. The cut pieces can be tested by doubling the paper and bringing the opposite edges together.

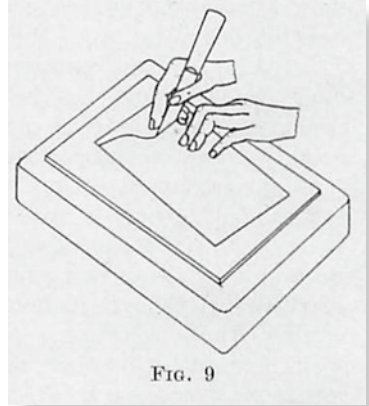
Light materials may, with practice, be cut without turning the board, but insufficient pressure can be exerted to cut stout materials in directions away from, and parallel to, the worker.



**To cut strips of definite widths** the steel rule is brought into use. The square is placed on the material and held with the left hand. The farther end of the square is then set to the required width by means of the steel rule and pressure exerted with the fingers (see Fig. 8). The steel rule is then moved and the lower end of the square set to the same measurement, applying pressure with the thumb, the farther end tested to see that no move-

ment has occurred, and the cut made. The cut strips should be tested for parallel cutting by doubling, the width at the bottom end being checked with the width at the top and intermediate parts of the strip.

The **cutting of curved edges is performed freehand**, the knife being held at an angle of about 60 degrees between the thumb and fingers of the right hand, with the forefinger, extended along the back of the blade and the remaining fingers pressed closely against the side of the blade. The knife should be held by the blade, not by the handle, and as closely to the point as possible so that the maximum power can be directed to the cutting edge (see Fig. 9).



For **curved outlines** the point of the knife is used, and the cutting may be done to a marking or to the edge of a prepared zinc pattern. The general direction of cutting is towards the body as in straight cutting, the work being held firmly with the fingertips of the left hand, and the knife point pressed through the material and drawn steadily forward to complete the cut. The avoidance of inward pressure against the pattern edge is still more important for zinc is a soft metal and the curved edges will be quickly worn out of shape. Should the pattern edge become accidentally jagged it should be immediately smoothed with emery cloth, for a second cut against a damaged edge will almost certainly cause the knife to overrun the pattern and inflict a nasty cut on the fingers. Early exercises may take the form of cutting round large coins and miscellaneous small curved patterns, a number of cuttings to one pattern being put together and checked for irregularities.

**Patterns of combined curved and straight outline** should have the curved edges cut freehand and the straight parts cut with the aid of the square or steel rule. When a zinc pattern has one or more straight sides, the steel rule may be overlaid on to the pattern and used as a guide to cut against when dealing with the straight edges, so protecting the soft metal from wear and consequent distortion.

**Rounded corners of less than ½ in. radius** are more easily cut by “chopping” than by the free-hand method, the corner

being trimmed by a series of downward cuts with the knife held in the hand as for straight cutting, the large waste pieces and then the small projecting points being removed until the desired curvature is obtained.

A number of layers of thin material may be cut at one operation by pressing the square or pattern very firmly on the pile to prevent movement of the inner layers. The pattern must not be removed or pressure relaxed while the cutting board is turned to enable an adjacent side to be cut. The knife must be frequently sharpened in the correct fashion so that the long cutting edge and point are retained. The cutting of soft materials requires a particularly keen edge, this being attained by further application to the leather strap surface. The cutting of blotting paper with the hand knife requires not only a keen knife but a smooth-surfaced cutting board.

## PARING

Paring or skiving is the process by which leather parts are reduced to suitable substances to enable them to be turned over at the edges to enclose reinforcements, linings, and other interior parts; to thin entire areas for gussets, bindings, the linings of small parts, etc.; to remove substances at certain parts to facilitate the folding up of articles and flaps, and to bevel the edges of leather parts which are to be lapped on to and joined to other parts.

The bulk of paring is performed by machines specially designed for the purpose, but in the making of fine leather goods a certain amount of hand paring is carried out by the worker after the parts have been machine-pared, edges being touched up and corners and other places being further reduced to simplify subsequent making-up processes and to ensure the best appearance and finish of the completed articles.

Paring is a fundamental process in the making of all turned-edged leather goods and much depends on its correct performance — not only the appearance and durability of the finished articles but also the time and labour expended in making.

A knowledge of hand paring also helps the worker better to understand and appreciate the use of the paring machine and so reap the fullest benefit from its immense labour-saving application.

The paring of turnovers is the greater part of that involved in the production of turned-edged leather goods, and two styles