

## Embossing Photographs onto Leather with Andrew Kuebeck

*With just a little patience and a lot of pressure it is possible to get incredible results embossing etched imagery and text onto chamois leather for use in any project.*



### What You'll Need:

- Chamois Leather (the thinner the better, sold in the automotive aisle of most stores)
- **Sealed** Etched Metal Plate
- Liquid Shoe Polish
- Paper Towels
- Bowl To Hold Water
- Bench Vise
- Wooden Blocks (to compress plate and leather between)

Begin by selecting a **sealed** etched plate whose imagery or text you would like to have embossed onto a sheet of chamois leather (note: if your etched metal plate is not **sealed** before it is embossed against your wet leather, it will cause the leather to discolor as it dries).

For this technique it is important to note, that your final leather piece will be darker wherever the etched recesses of your metal plate are, and will also be a mirror image of the plate.



*Once you have your plate:*

Cut a section of chamois leather large enough to completely cover your etched plate and immerse the leather into water. Allow the leather to become fully saturated (this typically takes 3 minutes for thin chamois). Take note of the differing surfaces of each side of the leather. One side will appear smoother and more regular in texture than the other. Place this smoother side in contact to your sealed etched metal plate.





Place a doubled over paper towel on top of the wet leather. The paper towel serves a double purpose as a blotter as well as providing excess material to help push the leather into the recesses of your etched plate. Sandwich the paper towel, leather, and metal plate between two wooden blocks, trying to keep the leather and etched metal plate as centered as possible. These wooden blocks should be cut so that they are larger than both your plate and leather piece.



Evenly place the wooden block sandwich between the jaws of a bench vise, centering it between the jaws to ensure even pressure across the plate. Hand tighten the vise, compressing the wooden sandwich together.

Keep under pressure until the leather no longer feels wet, or optimally overnight.



Once the leather has dried, remove the wooden blocks from the vise and carefully separate each material from one another.



Where the leather was forced into contact with the raised sections of the plate it will appear burnished and smooth. Where the leather was embossed into the recesses of the etched metal plate it will have a fuzzy texture. These fuzzy areas of the leather are more absorbent than those that appear burnished, and can soak up liquid colorants more readily.



Commercial liquid shoe polish is an excellent colorant, already specifically designed to work on leather surfaces. Many varieties and packages are available, but I personally prefer those that have a foam applicator.

Squeeze the polish onto the applicator tip and swipe across your embossed leather. The polish will soak into the embossed areas of the leather darkening them, creating a higher contrast embossed image.

Once the shoe polish is applied allow the leather to fully dry once again. I typically apply a final coat of commercial leather sealant spray to the piece on the front and back to ensure that it is water tight.

Leather is an incredibly versatile material which can be manipulated in countless ways. Here the leather was stretched, cut, sewn, and set to create a finished brooch.

