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# To Make a Scabbard for an SCA Rapier

From Moondragon

Good scabbards for SCA rapiers are also pretty rare. This is how I make mine. Basically it's a leather cylinder (because SCA rapier blades aren't flat, like their historical counterparts.)

Start by measuring the widest part of the weapon you're working with. This will usually be the tip, but it may be the blade near the hilt.

Scabbard, 4 measuring the tip.JPG

Cut a strip of leather that's an inch, maybe an inch and a half wider than that circumference, to accommodate the thickness of the leather. Make the strip two or three inches longer than your blade, because the leather tends to shrink while being worked, and it's *much* easier to trim a bit off the end than to have to re-do the entire scabbard because you underestimated.

Scabbard, 6 checking against the blade.JPG

As a rule, you'll want something fairly stiff, at least eight or ten ounce leather. Alternatively, you can use a piece of PVC pipe inside the leather (I had to start doing this when I began using a Del Tin blade, because otherwise the balance was off and it wouldn't hang right.) If you're using the pipe, make sure it's longer than the blade, and that the leather cover is longer than both of them.

SCabbard, 3.5 PVC setup.png

Punch or drill holes along both long edges, spaced 1/4 inch apart.

Scabbard, 9 marking the sewing holes.JPG

If you want to dye the leather, do so at this point. You could probably tool it too, if your fancy runs that way. If you prefer the natural leather look, proceed to the next step.

Scabbard, 13 dyeing the leather.JPG

Once the dye has thoroughly dried, soak the strip of leather in water so it's soft and pliable.

Scabbard, 14 wetting the leather.JPG

Start at one end and roll it into a tube so the long edges meet. Sew the edges together. The inside stitches should run lengthways, so they won't be cut by the blade sliding in and out of the scabbard.



The outside stitches go across the seam. I'm using red thread here for greater visibility; the actual stitching will be done with black thread.



While the wet leather is fairly pliable, once it dries, it will harden into its new shape.

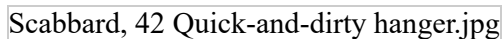
To finish off the end, squeeze the tube together and cut it off into a curve or fairly blunt point. Punch a few more holes and sew the end together.



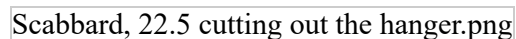
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There are a couple of options for making the hanger. Historically, scabbards were hung from some sort of hook off of a ring on the belt. There are several nice pictures here: [http://www.karlrobinson.co.uk/Gallery\\_hangers.html](http://www.karlrobinson.co.uk/Gallery_hangers.html)

The "quick and dirty" method is to cut a triangular or elongated "D" shape--at least six inches by twelve. Wrap the end around the top of the scabbard and sew it in place. Mount some kind of hook at the apex of the curve. This is one of my older scabbards, showing that method. (When it wears out, I'll replace it with a nicer one.)



A more elaborate and historically accurate method is to make the "D" from a long piece of leather, folded over on the sword side. This can be a lighter weight and more flexible leather, I usually use four ounce. Typically these hangers were split into two or even three sections, as can be seen in the website linked above.



The folded edge is cut into a series of strips, to make loops which slide over the scabbard.



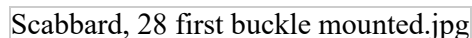
Cut carefully, to make sure the loops are the right size to fit onto the buckles, without being too wide or too loose. It's better to end up with a lot of scraps from cautious trimming than to ruin the whole piece by over-eager cutting.




The "buckles" are actually sliders that are used to give a friction-fit on the scabbard. To make the sliders, get several small buckles from Tandy (or wherever) and remove the tongues.



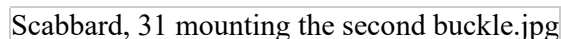
Slide them up the loops before inserting the scabbard.



Then slide them down the loops toward the scabbard to hold it in place.



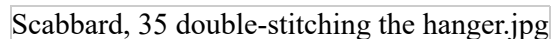
Repeat this process with the other straps. (Note that the straps are slightly narrower at the buckle end, to make them fit better without losing too much overall width.)



All the buckles mounted.



Sew the two flaps of the hanger together. In this case, I decided to use red thread to make it more decorative. Functionally speaking, a single set of stitches is sufficient. I double-stitched this one to make it look better.



Before stitching the top point closed, you'll need to add the hanging hook. This can be a fairly simple hook sewn between the two sides of the hanger.



Or it can be a more elaborate mounting.



The finished hanger, ready to mount on the scabbard.

Scabbard, 36 finished hanger with hook attached.jpg

One potential problem with this style of scabbard is that the hanger could slip off the end if it's not restrained. To prevent that, take a small strip of the same leather you used to make the scabbard, and sew it around the top edge.

The cut, dyed and punched strip.

Scabbard, 39 cut, dyed and punched stop ring.jpg

Sewn to the end of the scabbard to keep the hanger from sliding off.

Scabbard, 40 Stop ring installed.jpg

The finished scabbard and hanger.

Scabbard, 37.5 finished.jpg

Final points:

If, like me, you tend to wear the scabbard whenever fighting, and especially if you fight on a rough surface (our local fighter practice is on a concrete tennis court, for example) then over the years, the tip of your scabbard will get abraded and worn away. Rather than replace the entire scabbard, I trimmed off the abraded end of the leather, put a cap over the end of the PVC pipe and built a secondary tip cover. (I expect at some point that I'll have to do the same for the scabbard I built for this article.) This way, I can replace the tip cover as needed, and leave the rest of the scabbard intact.

Scabbard, 41 repaired tip.jpg

I do not recommend using PVC pipe by itself for your scabbard, especially if you use the scabbard as a parrying device. In cool-to-cold weather, PVC becomes brittle fairly quickly. See here.

For real blades I use a different method.

Basically I make a sandwich of two pieces of leather that are slightly longer and wider than the blade itself. I then add a spacer that's basically a very long "V" shaped piece of leather. Punch or drill holes 1/4 inch apart and sew everything together. The hanger design is the same as above.

Scabbard, 44 new hanger on my black rapier.jpg

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