

This brochure will show you how to prepare and attach Etched Decorated Plates and Conchos to leather items.

Required Items:

- Sheet of 320 Grit Sandpaper, Wet or Dry
- Hot Glue and Glue Gun
- 2-Part Epoxy -- 3 or 5 minute type.
- Pair of Nippers or Side-Cutters -- to remove parts from their frame
- Masking Tape or other type of tape
- Hobby Knife
- Small Fine Tweezers
- Toothpicks
- Small Needle Files, Optional -- to smooth out connector tabs from the parts
- Piece of 1/4" Wooden Dowel about 6" long.
- Wooden Craft Stick

Standard Hi-Temp hot glue will work nicely. We recommend a small glue gun and if possible, a small tip. Use hot glue for large or long parts, and parts attached over areas that are curved, and tack items that may be bent or flexed.

The 2-Part Epoxy works best for tiny items such as rivet and keeper covers, tips and smaller conchos as it is easier to work with the glue for these items. Epoxy should not be used on areas where the leather will be notably flexed with use. We used Loc-Tite brand 3-minute epoxy with good results.

STEP 1

Rough up the Back Side of the Plates

You will need to "scuff up" the back side of the plates to give the glue some "tooth" to adhere to. This step works best if you leave the plates in their "frame" rather than cutting them all apart, especially the small/tiny items.

A larger sheet will be easier to work if it is cut into smaller segments. Large items such as corner plates will work acceptably if separated from the frame. Small and tiny plates are best left attached to the frame for easier sanding and to prevent losing them.

Buckles do not need to be sanded (but it won't hurt if they are)

Place the sandpaper, rough side up on a flat working surface. To avoid the scuffing your work surface, place a few sheets of newspaper under the sandpaper before you begin.

Place the sheet or segment of a sheet of plates — with decorated side UP on top of the sandpaper. Press down on the parts with your fingers and gently rub the back side of the sheet/plates around on top of the sandpaper. Check the back side of the parts to see that the surface is fairly evenly "roughed up" a bit.

STEP 2

Cut the Parts from the Frame

Take a piece of masking tape (regular scotch tape can also work) and place it sticky side up nearby. As you cut each plate from the frame, you can stick it onto the tape to avoid losing it.

With the nippers, cut the plates from the frame one by one. You may need to clip away sections of frame to get a clear shot at the connection points.

Cut the plates from the frame, leaving a lot of "connector" on the plates. Once the plate is separated from the frame, it will be much easier to fine-trim the connectors off.

Try to clip the connector as closely and evenly to the plate as possible with the nippers for best results.

Don't throw away the frame just yet! -- The parts of the frame will come in handy to practice and experiment on!

STEP 3

Removing "Burs" from the connector areas

Using a small piece of sandpaper (320 grit, wet-or-dry), or a fine needle file, gently sand or file off any "rough" spots or "burs" where the connectors attached to the part.

Be careful to avoid scuffing the top surface of the plate... angle the file or sandpaper towards the back of the plate as you work.

You may need to use a pair of tweezers to hold some of the smaller plates.

STEP 4

Bend or Form Plates that require it

Many plates will require a certain amount of bending or shaping to fit properly on various tack items. For example, nosebands, browbands, and one-ear plates require quite a notable amount of "bend" to fit appropriately. Breastcollar plates and saddle corner plates may require a mild amount of bend, or none, depending upon size of the plate and where it will be placed.

Plates requiring only a small amount of bend, can be carefully formed with your fingers. Gently and slowly bend it to the shape it needs to be. (Fine tuning can usually be done once the part is glued into place)

For plates requiring more extreme forming, (such as nosebands for halters) take a 1/4" wooden dowel (or other small round cylinder) and use it as a "mandrel" to bend the plate around.

It is best if you practice a little bit first. This can be easily done by using sections of the frame the parts were attached to.

Nip off any extra connectors or burs from a section of the frame, and practice forming it with your fingers. Also practice forming pieces (from 1/2 to 3/4" long) around the wooden dowel to familiarize yourself with how the metal bends, how much force is needed, etc. It also may be useful to you to "purposely screw up", by bending things too sharply on purpose and so forth to get a "feel" for how much pressure is needed to wreck a plate.

AVOID using any metal tools such as pliers of any type to help with this operation, as it is very easy to mar and/or kink the part by doing so.

You may hear some faint "crinkling" or "cracking" sounds, which is normal. With gentle forming, the plating should not break or crack off.

To form a Noseband — Gently use your fingers, pressing firmly from the center of the plate outward toward the ends to form a smooth, even curve around the dowel. The parts may be a little resistant, and will want to "spring back" a bit, so keep working the part slowly until it is shaped as you desire.

The very ends of the plate may not wish to bend "enough", so use the tip of a wooden craft stick to press those ends down along the side of the wooden dowel to get the required amount of bend in this area.

Check the plate against the leather part (or a model) for overall shape and fit before gluing the plate into place.

To form a One-Ear Plate — These are a little tricky, because they need to be both bent a bit, and twisted just a little. Most of this can be done with your fingers (check the plate against a model or your tack item as you go). Use your wooden dowel mandrel, and craft stick as needed.

STEP 5

Glue the Parts into Place

Have your leather item prepared and ready to have the plate added. Any dye, finish or other leatherworking effects should already be completed and the leather allowed to completely dry (if necessary).

Note that some plates are best added before you do the final assembly on your tack item, while others are easier to attach after the parts are already put together.

Examples: Slotted Halter Plates, Breastcollar Center Plates with lacing tabs, Buckles, Dee Rings etc. will need to be attached to the halter during the assembly process

Corner Plates, Halter Plates can usually be glued on top of the leather after the tack item is complete (or mostly completed).

While you can apply the parts while holding them in your fingers, very small parts such as strap tips, keeper covers, small conchos etc. are best handled with a fine, tiny tweezers.

"Eyeball" where on the leather you intend to place the part. A small faint indentation on the leather with a fingernail can help "mark" where the edge of a part should line up (to help with centering and proper locating).

Working with Hot Glue

NOTE: Use Hot glue for large and long plates, and any plates that will be used on an area that will be flexed, as the glue will flex some with the leather.

2-Part Epoxy should only be used to attach very small plates to leather that won't be subject to flexing or bending, and it is easier to work with on tiny items, than the hot glue.

Heat up your glue gun

For larger plates, you can apply the glue either to the leather or to back side of the plate itself. Hold the plate with tweezers while applying the glue.

Quickly position the plate, then press it into place, before the glue cools.

If the glue does cool, you can touch the side of the glue gun's TIP (make sure it is clear of any glue residue!) to the top side of the plate, to re-warm the glue until it sticks.

Small and tiny plates can be tricky, since hot glue tends to "string" a bit. However, most of this can be removed later.

Squeeze a tiny amount of glue from the tip so there's a small bead of glue there. Have your part ready (it may pay to stick small parts upside-down to a piece of masking tape so that they will stay put)

Using a toothpick, quickly get a little glue on the end of the toothpick then dab it onto the center of the BACK side of the small part.

NOTE: since the amount of glue in this case is so minimal, it will be nearly impossible not to add small parts in two steps. Therefore, go ahead and add a dab of hot glue to each small part you will be gluing on.

Pick up a small part with your tweezers and position it where on your tack item. If the part does not wish to "stay" in place long enough to re-warm the glue, you can use a very tiny smear of Sticky Wax to hold it temporarily.

Touch the side of tip of the hot glue gun to the top of the part and allow it to warm until the glue melts. Use a toothpick to push the plate into position.

Extra glue can usually be removed carefully with the tip of a hobby knife— although you will need to be very careful to not scrape the leather while doing so. Re-warming the glue a little may help remove extra glue or "strings".

Working with 2-Part Epoxy

Hot glue has a disadvantage with small parts in that it is hard to get a tiny amount of glue on a tiny part, and keep it warmed up and prevent

"stringing". Attaching tiny parts to leather with a standard 2-part Epoxy is easier and less hassle. For attaching the tiniest parts to leather, we recommend epoxy.

Do not use epoxy for large plates, plates that may be bent with use or plates on areas where the leather will be flexed under the part.

Do not use Gapoxio.

We used Loc-Tite 3-Minute Epoxy. It is clear and worked very well. We also tried an old standby "JB Weld", which is silver/grey color. JB Weld does take longer to cure (overnight is best) but it has the advantage of being visible. If you use a tiny amount... you can see where you have placed the epoxy easily. Of course, you can just as easily see it if it gets put in the wrong place or smeared!

Squeeze out a little of both A and B parts into two separate little puddles onto a folded up piece of paper, or a metal lid etc. (Any object that can be thrown away).

Using one toothpick each for parts A and B, scoop up a little of each A and B parts; try to keep the amount of each even, and put them into a small "pool" together and mix with the tip of a toothpick. When the epoxy is well-mixed, wipe the excess from the tip of the pick with a tissue.

Use the tip of the toothpick to scoop up a small amount of epoxy and place it in the middle of the spot on the leather where you will attach the item.

Grasp the part with your tweezers, and carefully place it where desired onto the base leather. Be sure to wipe the tweezers clean with a tissue as needed to keep it free of residue.

Use the tip of your tweezers, or a clean toothpick to gently press the plate into the epoxy, and to shift the plate into the desired position. Since the epoxy does not begin to really cure immediately, you should have plenty of time to get the part placed accurately.

Use the tip of a toothpick or hobby knife blade to remove any excess epoxy that may ooze out from under the plate. Be sure to wipe the epoxy off your tools as you go.

Once the mixed epoxy starts to get "gummy", just mix up a new little batch for further attachments, rather than fighting the gummy epoxy.

Allow the epoxy to set the minimum amount of time recommended on the packaging, and add a few minutes (especially when temperatures are cool). You can place the parts under a lamp to keep them warm during the curing process.

STEP 6

Final Forming

Once the plate is in place (and the glue has cooled, or cured), you should be able to do any small adjustments in terms of bending the part for an ideal fit. Go slowly and gently with your fingers, bending both the plate and the leather together, as needed.

If the plate should "release" from the leather (using hot glue), just rewarm the glue after the plate has been correctly formed and press back into place.

A plain undecorated nickel or gold plated item should require no further care or maintenance, and stay bright and shiny for years.

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