

# Tooling Leather – in Doll Scale

By Valkyrie

## Tools Needed:

1 or 2oz vegetable tanned leather (finding it is the hardest part of the whole shebang)

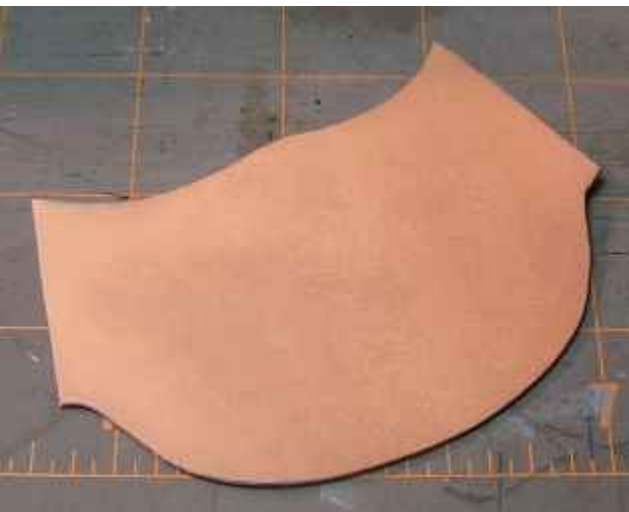
A pencil sharpened dowel

A VERY small exacto blade

A ‘background’ stamp (found in any leather tooling kit, you can pick them up at Wal-Mart)



Take a damp rag or washcloth and dampen the smooth surface of your leather until it's a uniform ‘dark’ color



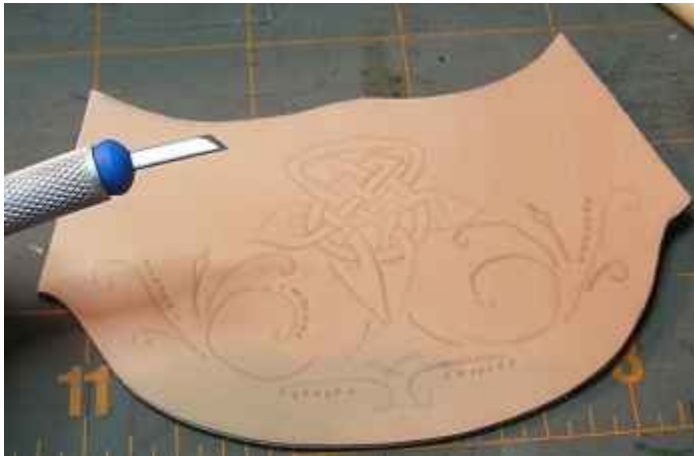
Lay your pattern design on top of the damp leather – you can attempt free-form if you like, I find using a pattern design a LOT easier.

Trace over every line of the pattern with your sharpened dowel, you don't need to press hard, even a gentle stroke will show. (in other words, watch



your fingernails... grin)

While holding the pattern in place, lift it to make sure you've gotten all of the lines, if you missed some, lay the pattern back down and get the rest.



Now the persnickety bit and a bit of rambling... they make leather working tools, they're great to work with, designed FOR this.... And almost uniformly too big to work in doll-sized designs. SO – I use a very small exacto blade to trace over the

lines of the design. The usual goal in tooling leather is to cut approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  way through the leather, but with leather this thin simply cutting through the top 'skin' is all you want. Be careful not to cut all the way through. Also, the cuts must be made perpendicular, with no angles or bevels. It should look something like this when you're done slicing.

If you're tired or uncomfortable in any way – now is the only time available for you to take a break.

The rest of the work **must** be done all at once.



If your leather has dried completely during your break, you may, after everything has been sliced, dampen it down again, but not at any other time or the leather will 'heal' itself and you'll lose your work. Again, working in leather this thin has some disadvantages; it WILL dry faster than thicker weights. Your leather can be worked for about an hour or so, it will lighten to its original color very quickly, but can still be worked in that state.



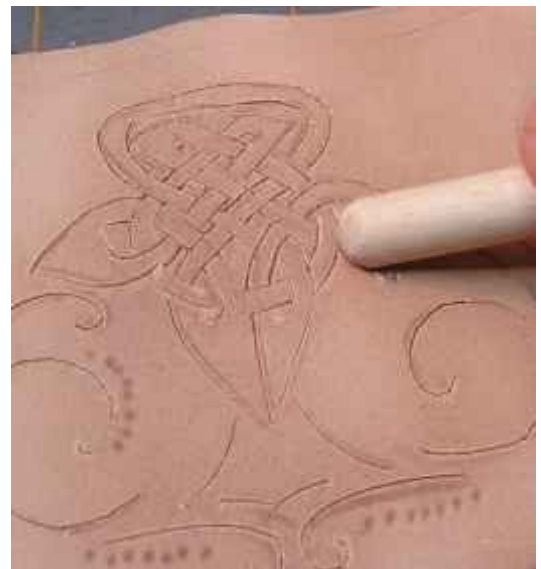
SO –The next step and my favorite tool. I had to make it – it's the other end of my pencil sharpened dowel, sliced in ½ with a rounded tip. If you have a leather 'beveling tool it should function fine.

With the flat side next to your cuts push **FIRMLY** (or strike with a mallet, but in thin leather that's not truly necessary) all along the outside edge of your design.



Now with the point go through the inside portions of the design and pressing firmly push them down, getting as close to the cut edges as possible.

With the flat edge of the beveler **very** carefully go over and shade the knotwork, pushing down on the overlapping pieces to giving it some shading and depth.



Back to your pencil point, and holding it vertically, strike the dots. Holding it at an angle (or using the beveler, I used the pencil point for more control) shade the rest of the design.



The only 'official' leather working tool I used. It's a 'background' stamp and you will need to use a mallet with this. Stamp it (over and over) along all of the 'blank' leather.

And your finished piece! **Grin**



**Ooooooh, I can just HEAR everybody saying – Wait!, Stop! – you're not done yet!**  
Grin –ok – fine, but the hard bit really is done?

Keep Reading.....

## “Dying” Your Leather

See the quotations around the word ‘dying’? – They’re there for a reason.... Never EVER use ‘leather dye’ on anything that’s going to be anywhere near any of your dolls. IT WILL rub off of whatever you’ve applied it to and IT WILL permanently stain your lovelies. No matter how well you’ve rubbed it in, no matter how well you’ve rubbed it OFF – no matter how much wax you’ve put on top of it. IT WILL cause you problems. Lots of them.

Me? – I used acrylic paint. (yup)

I used a textile medium to help keep it flexible, but that probably wasn’t necessary.

A couple thin washes of the base color sealed the tooling nicely. I did detail work with a dark green and highlighted the knots with a metallic.

I DID use a clear wax over the finished pieces though – does that count?



The Armor patterns and construction bits are in a separate tutorial....