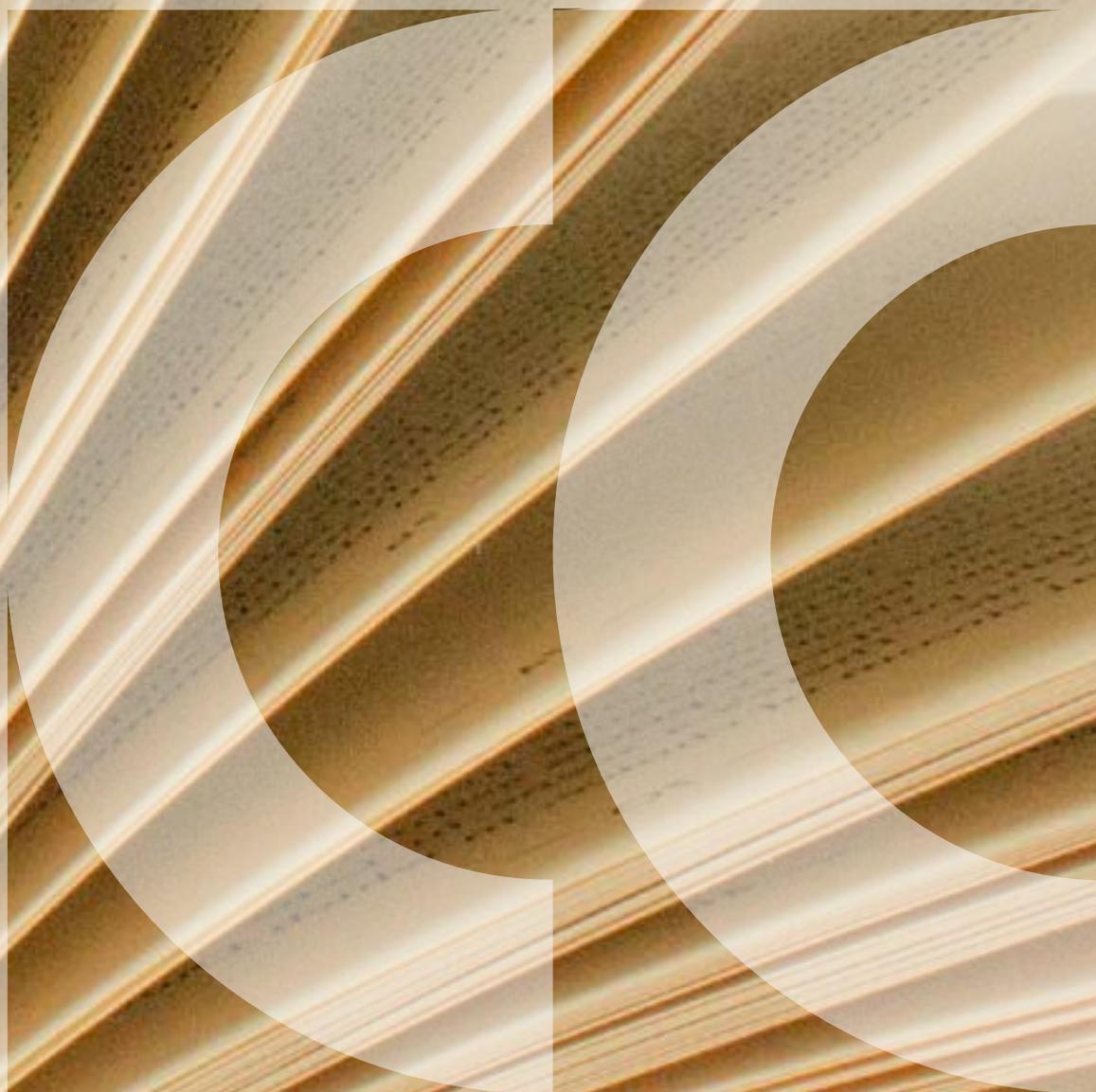


**Crafts Council
Education
Craft Careers**

How to become a Bookbinder



What does a craft bookbinder do?

Craft bookbinders work by hand, using traditional materials, such as cloth or leather, to cover and bind books.

Tasks would typically include...

- Hand-binding small numbers of books, such as family histories or books for libraries, museums and special collections
- Using specialist hand tools to make bindings for books and to sew pages
- Adding decoration, such as gold lettering and edging, or marbled end-papers

This role may also involve restoring and repairing antique books, cleaning discoloured pages or using leathers and papers to match those originally used.

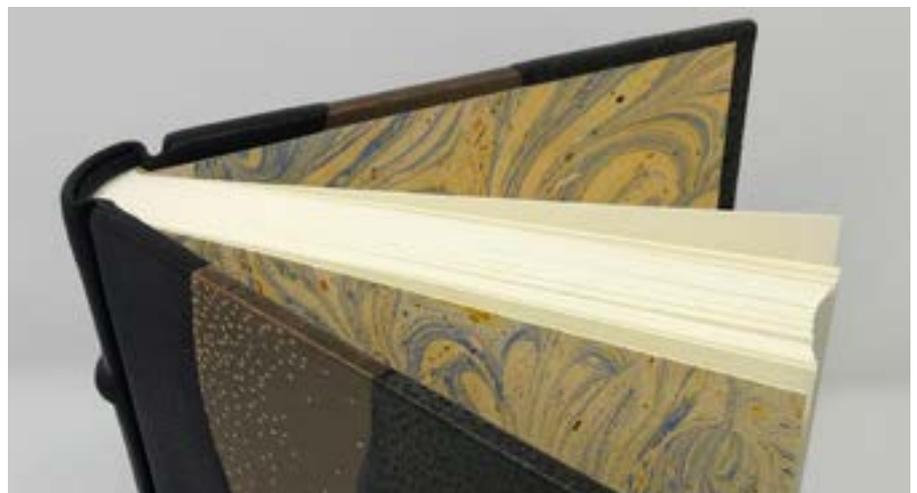
You could work for a book-binding company, be employed by a museum or archive, or work as a self-employed bookbinder.

Key skills.

- Technical skills.
- The ability to work well with your hands.
- Creativity.
- Attention to detail.
- The ability to work on your own and as part of a team.
- Patience and the ability to remain calm in stressful situations.

If you are dealing with the public, you also need to have customer service skills. If you are creating bespoke pieces, you need to be able to explain your creative ideas to customers.

If you're self-employed, you need business skills too, so you can market your goods and services, deal with finances and develop your business.



Book by Gavin Rookledge. Photo James Balston

Career path and progression.

With experience, you could work for a specialist bookbinders or develop your own business.

As a craft bookbinder, you could improve your job prospects by joining the [Society of Bookbinders](#) or [Designer Bookbinders](#).

How do I become a craft bookbinder?

University

You could do an art and design foundation degree or a degree in:

- design crafts
- fine art printmaking
- art conservation and restoration

You'll need to check that your chosen course covers methods used in bookbinding.

You'll usually need:

- at least one A level for a foundation degree
- two to three A levels for a degree

Apprenticeship

You may be able to get into this type of work through an apprenticeship scheme. The range of apprenticeships available in your area will depend on the local job market and the types of skills employers need.

You'll usually need:

- some GCSEs, usually including English and maths, for an intermediate apprenticeship
- 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C), including English and maths, for an advanced apprenticeship

Direct application

You could apply directly to become a bookbinder. Employers will expect you to have some relevant experience in the printing trade.

You may find it useful to have GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C) or equivalent qualifications.

Other routes

You could take short specialist courses in craft binding and finishing. These are offered by universities and colleges across the UK or be done through organisations like the Society of Bookbinders and Designer Bookbinders.

Find out more.

- [British Printing Industries Federation \(BPIF\)](#)
- [Society of Bookbinders](#)
- [Designer Bookbinders](#)
- [Heritage Crafts Association](#)



Bound book, Gavin Rookledge.
Photo by James Balston

Craft Careers

Craft generates £3.4 billion for the UK economy each year, with the contribution of the wider creative industries now growing at twice the rate of the UK economy. British craft has never been so sought-after and craft skills are revolutionising industries from aerospace to architecture.

To learn more about craft careers visit:
www.craftscouncil.org.uk/learning/craft-careers

