

How-To Repair Books Using Household Materials

By Krystal Williamson

Supplies You'll Need:

- A damaged book that you or one of your friends own
- Sharp Cutting Object (Sharp Scissors, Box Cutter, X-Acto craft blade, or Small Knife)
- Glue* (Clear Drying works best for this)
- Colored Paper (Cardstock works best)
- Wax Paper or Parchment Paper
- Thin Dense Cardboard**
- Scrap Fabric or Embroidery Mesh (it works best if the material is a thin cotton)
- Clear Packing Tape

*It is best if you use glue that doesn't wash away with water like a craft glue, but if you only have something like Elmer's Glue that's okay. Just try to be extra careful not to get the book wet or you'll undo all your hard work!

**The best places to look for thin dense cardboard at home are in the pantry (cereal, pasta, soft drink 12-packs, and box meals often have cardboard good for reinforcing paperback books). If you're only able to find corrugated cardboard (that's the type with the little zigzags between the layers), you can thin it out using a sharp knife by cutting through the corrugation and gluing the pieces together before you flatten it out. If you use this method please let the glued corrugated cardboard dry with something heavy on top of it for 24-hours before moving on to repairing your books.

Fixing Hardbacked Books

1. How-To Fix Spine Damage on Hardbacked Books:
 - a. First you need to diagnose how bad the damage is – has only part of the spine come away from the spine backing, or is the whole spine coming away from the book cover?
 - 1a. How-to fix partial spine damage:
 - a. If the spine is only broken in one place and not coming away from the book cover, you can do a one-time repair with some clear packing tape.
 - b. Take your packing tape and adhere it to one of the pages where the damaged spine is pulling away from the book cover.
 - i. Press out any air bubbles on the taped page before proceeding. It's okay if there is tape hanging over the page.
 - c. Put the book down on a flat surface with the untaped side of the book up in the air where you can move it around freely.



- d. Line up the two damaged spine pieces so that there is little to no space between the detached pages and hold the back of the cover on the side of the book where you have not yet applied tape with one hand.
 - i. Make sure that the pages are lined up as straight and level as possible, so you don't end up with a crooked spine!
 - e. While you are supporting the untaped side of the book with your hand on the back of the cover use your free hand to press the packing tape down onto the other side of the spine damage.
 - i. Press out any air bubbles on the newly taped page.
 - f. Gently close your book and press both ends of the book together to make sure that any tape gets stuck to itself or to the spine.
 - g. If you have any tape hanging over the pages that you just fixed use your scissors or cutting implement to carefully cut that tape as close as you can to the page.
 - h. If there is any tape left over that you cannot remove go to the page where the spine damage has taken place and carefully fold over any excess tape to the other side of only that page so that you don't end up with multiple pages stuck together.
- 1b. How-To Fix Complete Spine Damage on Hardbacked Books:
- a. If the damage to the spine is not all the way down the page this is where you should take something sharp, line it up with the space between the pages on the book's spine and make a clean cut the rest of the way down the book's spine.
 - b. If the damage has made the entire spine pull away from the book cover then you can move onto the next step. If the spine has not pulled away from the entire book cover see if this is something that you can easily make happen with a sharp cutting object without making the pages jagged. If you cannot easily and cleanly remove the rest of the spine from the cover that is okay. Just move on to the next step.
- 1b1 If your book spine has only pulled away from the cover and is not broken in multiple places please follow this set of instructions:

- a. For this you will only need some water resistant and slow drying liquid glue that dries clear and some parchment or wax paper. Examples of this type of glue are: craft glue, mod podge, and book glue.
- b. Important note: Do not use instant drying glue. Examples of instant drying glue are super glue, crazy glue, etc. You also cannot use stick glue for this project. They will not properly fix the problem.
- c. First cut out two pieces of wax or parchment paper so that it is at least an inch and a half wide for each piece. You will need these later.
- d. Apply the liquid glue around the perimeter of the spine, and in a zig-zag pattern inside of the perimeter.
- e. Repeat this process on the inside of the cover where the spine of the book sits.



- f. Lay the book cover flat with the inside facing up, and using both hands line up the spine where it fits into the cover as flush as you can.
- g. Once the glued pieces are put together carefully lay down one strip of the cut wax or parchment paper between the spine and the cover so that any excess glue adheres to the wax or parchment paper instead of to the cover pages.
- h. With the protective wax/parchment paper down use one hand at a time to close the book. This is your time to make sure that the spine and cover lay as flat as possible against the desk to ensure that the glued sides press together as much as possible.
- i. Leave this book standing up on its spine to dry overnight. You can put other books on either side of this damaged book to help it stay up overnight to dry.
- j. The next day open up the covers and remove the wax/parchment paper as cleanly as possible.
- k. To reinforce your cover use some clear packing tape and apply it to the “hinge” between the spine and the cover of the book. For a more detailed description follow the steps of the “How-to fix partial spine damage” section up above.

1b2 If your book spine has pulled away from the cover and is broken in multiple places, please follow this set of instructions:

- a. For this repair you will need wax paper or parchment paper; clear packing tape; a spare piece of cotton, mesh ribbon, or embroidery mesh; slow drying liquid glue such as book glue, craft glue, or mod podge; and a box cutter or other sharp cutting implement.
 - a. Important note: Do not use instant drying glue. Examples of instant drying glue are super glue, crazy glue, etc. You also cannot use stick glue for this project. They will not properly fix the problem.
- b. First cut out two pieces of wax or parchment paper for every section of the spine that has broken. You will need to cut these so that they are at least an inch and a half wide for each piece. You will need these later.
- c. Next you will need to cut a piece of fabric, mesh ribbon, or embroidery mesh so that it is the same width of the book’s spine and at least a full inch longer than the book’s spine. You will need this later.
- d. If the damage to the spine is not all the way down the page this is where you should take something sharp, line it up with the space between the pages on the book’s spine and make a clean cut the rest of the way down the book’s spine.
- e. Put the pieces of the book in the proper order. Make sure any loose pages have been put back as far as possible so that the glue actually adheres the loose pages back into the book’s spine.
- f. Take your pieces of wax or parchment paper and put those pieces between the pages of the sections of the spine that have broken apart to keep glue from seeping through and sticking the reading sections of pages together. Repeat this process on the inside of the cover on either side of where the spine sits as well.
 - a. If you hate sticky hands now is the perfect time to put on gloves.



- g. Apply the liquid glue around the perimeter of the detached book's spine, and then again in a zig-zag pattern inside of the perimeter of glue.
- h. Take the piece of fabric that you cut to follow the perimeter of the spine, and line it up so that there is at least a half an inch hanging past the top and an inch and a half past the bottom of the spine. Using your hands press this fabric into the spine so that the glue completely saturates the fabric. Give this at least twenty minutes to start to dry and bond the spine back together.
- i. Repeat this process on the inside of the cover where the spine of the book sits.
- j. Lay the book cover flat with the inside facing up, and using both hands line up the spine where it fits into the cover as flush as you can.
- k. Make sure that once the glued pieces are put together you carefully lay down one strip of the cut wax or parchment paper between the spine and the cover so that any excess glue adheres to the wax or parchment paper instead of to the cover pages.
- l. With the protective wax/parchment paper down use one hand at a time to close the book. This is your time to make sure that the spine and cover lay as flat as possible against the desk to ensure that the glued sides and spare pages press together as much as possible.
- m. Leave this book standing up on its spine to dry overnight. You can put other books on either side of this damaged book to help it stay up overnight to dry.
- n. The next day open the book and remove the protective wax/parchment paper as cleanly as possible.
- o. To reinforce your cover, the parts of the spine that came apart, and each of the previously loose pages you'll want to use some clear packing tape and apply it to the "hinge" between the spine and the book pages / cover of the book. For a more detailed description follow the steps of the "How-to fix partial spine damage" section up above.

2. How-To Fix Cover Damage on Hardbacked Books

1. First you need to diagnose how bad the damage is – are the outside corners of the book covers dealing with some damage, or is the cover torn up and needs to be reinforced?
 - 2a. How-to Fix Damage to Cover Edges on Hardbacked Books:
 - a. For this process you will need some scissors and some clear packing tape.
 - b. For damaged cover edges you will need to cut a piece of tape into a two inch strip.
 - c. Take the piece of tape and put it on the corner edge of the book at an angle so that the cover faces you like a triangle. This should leave at least a half an inch of tape in midair on both sides of your "triangle".
 - d. Take the end strips of both tape pieces and tuck them in to the backside of the cover and repeat this step to the other end strip.
 - e. Repeat this process for each of the damaged cover edges



2b. How-to Reinforce Your Covers on Hardbacked Books:

- a. For this process you will need a box cutter or some equally sharp implement like a knife, a pair of scissors, or a craft knife; some slow drying liquid glue such as kraft glue, mod podge, or book glue; dense and thin cardboard; clear packing tape; and some fun paper such as scrapbook paper, wrapping paper, or even nicely colored cardstock.
- b. If there are portions of the cover that have cracked or split that just need some reinforcement you can apply clear packing tape to help reinforce the broken areas.
- c. If the cover's book board has started to peel away in layers go ahead and use your box cutter or other cutting implement and carefully peel away the areas that are coming away from the cover.
- d. Take a dense and thin piece of cardboard and cut it to match the book cover's size.
- e. Carefully apply your liquid glue to both the inside of the cover, and to the cardboard piece then press them together.
- f. Smooth out any possible chances of bubbling and carefully wipe away any excess glue that has come out from the edges. Allow the glue to dry for at least two hours before proceeding.
 - a. Note: If you are worried about the cover sticking to the front pages you can apply a piece of wax / parchment paper in between the cover and the first pages while you wait for the glue to dry.
 - b. Tip: It is best if you give the glue the chance to dry overnight.
- g. Once the glue has dried cut a piece of decorative paper so that it is at least the size of the inside cover, or if you would like, the size of the inside cover and the first page of the book.
- h. Carefully apply glue to the repaired inside cover and affix your decorative cover paper so that it completely covers up the repaired internal book cover. Leave this to dry for at least two hours.
 - a. Note: If you are worried about the cover sticking to the front pages you can apply a piece of wax / parchment paper in between the cover and the first pages while you wait for the glue to dry.
 - b. Tip: It is best if you give the glue the chance to dry overnight.
- i. Repeat this process for the other cover if that is also damaged.

Fixing Paperback Books

1. Spine Damage

- a. First you need to diagnose how bad the damage is – has the cover started to pull away from the spine, or are only certain pages coming away from the spine?
- 1a. How-to fix partial spine damage:
- a. If the spine is only damaged around the edges of the cover, but the book is still holding itself together please follow these instructions.
 - b. For this process you will need some scissors and some clear packing tape.



- c. Note: Do not try this process with regular tape, masking tape, painter's tape, or any double-sided tape. These types of tape will not be strong enough to stick to your cover for any real length of time and are not strong enough to properly reinforce your book covers.
 - d. Cut a piece of tape so that it is only a little longer than the length of the spine.
 - e. Carefully adhere the piece of tape on the spine and trim off any excess pieces that might hang over the edge of the spine onto the pages of the book itself. If you would like to reinforce the rest of your cover along with your book spine keep reading. Otherwise you have finished your book repair.
 - f. For damaged cover edges you will need to cut a piece of tape into a two-inch strip.
 - g. Take the piece of tape and put it on the corner edge of the book at an angle so that the cover faces you like a triangle. This should leave at least a half an inch of tape in midair on both sides of your "triangle".
 - h. Take the end strips of both tape pieces and tuck them in to the backside of the cover and repeat this step to the other end strip.
 - i. Repeat this process for each of the damaged cover edges
 - j. If you would like to reinforce the entire cover take your clear packing tape and cut it into strips that are an inch longer than the length of your cover.
 - k. Apply the tape slowly to the front of the cover leaving at least a half an inch to hang over the top and bottom of the cover and then smooth out any bubbles in the tape.
 - l. Once the tape is in place without any air bubbles wrap the excess tape over the edge of the cover and adhere it to the inside portion of the cover. Repeat this process until both the front and back cover are fully reinforced.
- 1b. How-to fix total spine damage:
- a. If the spine is falling apart, or if individual pages (or even entire chunks of the book) are falling apart follow these instructions.
 - b. For this repair you will need wax paper or parchment paper; clear packing tape; a spare piece of cotton, mesh ribbon, or embroidery mesh; slow drying liquid glue such as book glue, craft glue, or mod podge; and a box cutter or other sharp cutting implement.
 - c. Important note: Do not use instant drying glue. Examples of instant drying glue are super glue, crazy glue, etc. You also cannot use stick glue for this project. They will not properly fix the problem.
 - d. First cut out two pieces of wax or parchment paper for every section of the spine that has broken. You will need to cut these so that they are at least an inch and a half wide for each piece. You will need these later.
 - e. Next you will need to cut a piece of fabric, mesh ribbon, or embroidery mesh so that it is the same width of the book's spine and at least a full inch longer than the book's spine. You will need this later.
 - f. If the damage to the spine is not all the way down the page this is where you should take something sharp, line it up with the space between the pages on the book's spine and make a clean cut the rest of the way down the book's spine. You will also want to detach the front and back covers from the book spine at this time.



- g. Put the pieces of the book in the proper order. Make sure any loose pages have been put back as far as possible so that the glue actually adheres the loose pages back into the book's spine.
- h. Take your pieces of wax or parchment paper and put those pieces between the pages of the sections of the spine that have broken apart to keep glue from seeping through and sticking the reading sections of pages together. Repeat this process on the inside of the cover on either side of where the spine sits as well.
- i. If you hate sticky hands now is the perfect time to put on gloves.
- j. Cut a piece of dense but thin cardboard to match up with the original spine of the book – this will act as your new spine.
- k. Apply the liquid glue around the perimeter of the new book spine, and then again in a zig-zag pattern inside of the perimeter of glue.
- l. Take the piece of fabric that you cut to follow the perimeter of the old spine, and line it up so that there is at least a half an inch hanging past the top and an inch and a half past the bottom of the old spine. Using your hands press this fabric into the spine so that the glue completely saturates the fabric. Give this at least twenty minutes to start to dry and bond the spine back together.
- m. Repeat this process on the inside of the cover where the spine of the book sits.
- n. Using both hands line up the old spine to where it fits onto the new spine as flush as you can.
- o. Make sure that once the glued pieces are put together you carefully lay this book with the cover facing downwards on top of a piece of wax or parchment paper to ensure that it does not stick to your workspace.
- p. Leave this book standing up on its spine to dry overnight. You can put other books on either side of this damaged book to help it stay up overnight to dry.
- q. To reinforce your cover, the parts of the spine that came apart, and each of the previously loose pages you'll want to use some clear packing tape and apply it to the "hinge" between the spine and the book pages / cover of the book. For a more detailed description follow the steps of the "How-to fix cover damage" section down below.

2. Cover Damage

- A. First you need to diagnose how bad the damage is – are the outsides of the cover torn or frayed around the edges, or is the whole cover barely holding the book together anymore?
 - 2a. How-to fix frayed cover damage:
 - a. For this process you will need some scissors and some clear packing tape.
 - b. Note: Do not try this process with regular tape, masking tape, painter's tape, or any double-sided tape. These types of tape will not be strong enough to stick to your cover for any real length of time and are not strong enough to properly reinforce your book covers.
 - c. For damaged cover edges you will need to cut a piece of tape into a two-inch strip.



- d. Take the piece of tape and put it on the corner edge of the book at an angle so that the cover faces you like a triangle. This should leave at least a half an inch of tape in midair on both sides of your “triangle”.
- e. Take the end strips of both tape pieces and tuck them in to the backside of the cover and repeat this step to the other end strip.
- f. Repeat this process for each of the damaged cover edges
- g. If you would like to reinforce the entire cover take your clear packing tape and cut it into strips that are an inch longer than the length of your cover.
- h. Apply the tape slowly to the front of the cover leaving at least a half an inch to hang over the top and bottom of the cover and then smooth out any bubbles in the tape.
- i. Once the tape is in place without any air bubbles wrap the excess tape over the edge of the cover and adhere it to the inside portion of the cover. Repeat this process until both the front and back cover are fully reinforced.

2b. How-to fix overly damaged covers:

- a. For this process you will need some scissors, some clear packing tape, some slow drying liquid glue such as kraft glue, mod podge, or book glue; dense and thin cardboard, and some fun-colored paper such as scrapbook paper, wrapping paper, or even nicely colored cardstock.
- b. If the cover is coming away from the spine take the opportunity to carefully use your cutting implement to cut it as close to the spine as possible and then follow the steps to reinforce your cover before reattaching it to the spine.
- c. Take a dense and thin piece of cardboard and cut it to match the book cover’s size.
- d. Carefully apply your liquid glue to both the inside of the cover and to the cardboard piece then press them together.
- e. Smooth out any possible chances of bubbling and carefully wipe away any excess glue that has come out from the edges. Allow the glue to dry for at least two hours before proceeding.
 - a. Note: If you are worried about the cover sticking to the front pages you can apply a piece of wax / parchment paper in between the cover and the first pages while you wait for the glue to dry.
 - b. Tip: It is best if you give the glue the chance to dry overnight.
- f. Once the glue has dried cut a piece of decorative paper so that it is at least the size of the inside cover, or if you would like, the size of the inside cover and the first page of the book.
- g. Carefully apply glue to the repaired inside cover and affix your decorative cover paper so that it completely covers up the repaired internal book cover. Leave this to dry for at least two hours.
 - a. Note: If you are worried about the cover sticking to the front pages you can apply a piece of wax / parchment paper in between the cover and the first pages while you wait for the glue to dry.
 - b. Tip: It is best if you give the glue the chance to dry overnight.
- h. Repeat this process for the other cover if that is also damaged.



- i. To reattach the covers to the spine you will need to use your packing tape and some scissors.
- j. Cut a piece of tape so that it is only a little longer than the length of the spine. If the spine is thicker than your packing tape you can cut more strips until you have enough tape so that it will overhang off of sides the spine.
- k. Carefully adhere the piece/pieces of tape on the spine so that there is some tape hanging over the width of the spine, and then line up the detached cover as close to the spine as possible.
- l. Fold the tape hanging off of the side of the spine onto the outside of the cover so that they can be reattached. Remember to smooth out any air bubbles. Repeat the previous step and this step for the back cover.
- m. Trim off any excess tape pieces that might hang over the edge of the spine onto the pages of the book itself. If you would like to reinforce the rest of your cover along with your book spine keep reading. Otherwise, you have finished your book repair.
- n. For damaged cover edges you will need to cut a piece of tape into a two-inch strip.
- o. Take the piece of tape and put it on the corner edge of the book at an angle so that the cover faces you like a triangle. This should leave at least a half an inch of tape in midair on both sides of your "triangle".
- p. Take the end strips of both tape pieces and tuck them in to the backside of the cover and repeat this step to the other end strip.
- q. Repeat this process for each of the damaged cover edges
- r. If you would like to reinforce the entire cover take your clear packing tape and cut it into strips that are an inch longer than the length of your cover.
- s. Apply the tape slowly to the front of the cover leaving at least a half an inch to hang over the top and bottom of the cover and then smooth out any bubbles in the tape.
- t. Once the tape is in place without any air bubbles wrap the excess tape over the edge of the cover and adhere it to the inside portion of the cover. Repeat this process until both the front and back cover are fully reinforced.
- u. If you would like to cover up the dense and thin cardboard used as part of this cover repair - then keep reading. Otherwise, you are done with your repair.
- v. Cut a piece of decorative paper so that it is at least the size of the inside cover, or if you would like, the size of the inside cover and the first page of the book.
- w. Carefully apply glue to the repaired inside cover and affix your decorative cover paper so that it completely covers up the repaired internal book cover. Leave this to dry for at least two hours.
 - a. Note: If you are worried about the cover sticking to the front pages you can apply a piece of wax / parchment paper in between the cover and the first pages while you wait for the glue to dry.
 - b. Tip: It is best if you give the glue the chance to dry overnight.
- x. Repeat this process for the other cover if that is also damaged.

