

LAYOUT & PRINTING FOR A SEWN SECTION BOOKLET

Quite often, the bookbinder will be asked to bind a small book of poems, short stories or anecdotes, or someone's life story, into a small book.

There are several scenarios which the binder is often faced with:

1. The booklet has already been printed by the author on single-sheets.
2. The book is ready for printing and advice on layout is required.
3. The text has been sent on disk or by email for printing and binding.

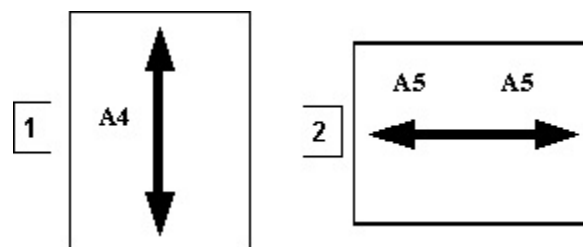
While single-sheet binding is most often the only option for an A4 book, a sewn section book has the advantages of being:

1. able to be opened flat; and
2. more easily and securely bound.

The task then is—How to print the booklet so that it can be bound into sections, and how to arrange the printing so that all the pages follow logically when the book is bound.

PAPER CHOICE

The mistake many people make is to take regular A4 printer paper, turn it sideways and fold it to make A5 pages. This will not work, because A4 paper is 'long grain' i.e. the fibres in the paper are running down its length. (Diagram 1), so that when the paper is turned and folded, the grain will be running across the paper (Diagram 2) which will cause the paper to ripple when glued, and the book will be difficult to open.

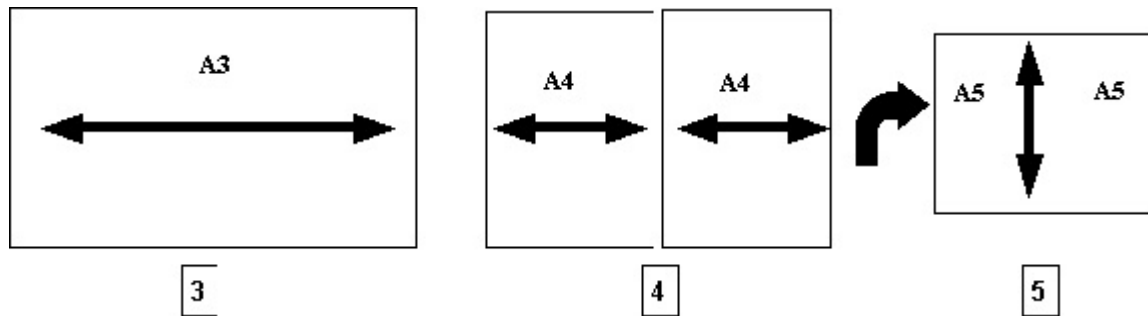


Before choosing your paper you need to determine which way the grain runs. You can do this by folding a sheet to see which way it creases most easily, or (if nobody is looking!) by doing the 'lick' test—lick the top edge and one side edge and see which one ripples. The paper grain runs towards the edge which ripples when damp (the moisture is going between the lengths of fibre). On normal A4 printer paper, the top and bottom edges will ripple, so the grain is running as shown in Diagram 1.

You could also tear a spare sheet. Paper tears neatly along the grain, and untidily against it.

For a successful sewn binding, the grain needs to run from top to bottom of the page, parallel to the spine of the book.

To achieve this, it is best to buy A3 paper which is long-grain, cut it in half to make A4 sheets, and then fold these sheets to make A5 pages. (Diagrams 3, 4 & 5). Commercial A3 paper is nearly always long-grain, but you should test it to be sure.



*(To print an **A4** book in sections, buy A2, cut it into A3, fold to A4 (check grain first). The additional problem here is that printing will need to be done on an A3 printer.)*

There are many lovely papers available these days, and so long as care is taken to check the grain, there is lots of choice. The only other consideration is to choose paper which is dense enough so that if you are printing on both sides of the pages, the print will not show through on the other side.

SETUP

To make a sewn booklet, the pages will need to be organised into sections of approximately four sheets (this will make 8 leaves—four each side of the fold—and 16 pages of print if you are printing on both sides of each page).

HINTS

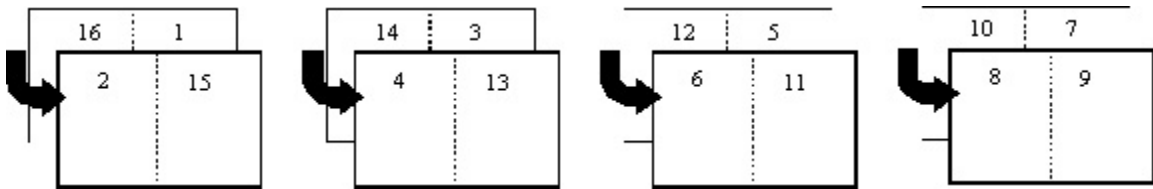
- If you know how many pages of printing you will have at the end—for instance, if you have a number of poems to print, one to a page— sort them into sets to see how many sections you will need. You may find that the last one will need five or three sheets to make up the numbers.
- If you don't know how many pages you will need, set up your publishing program to print (using draft mode) on A5 pages, type up the document first so you can see how many pages you will have and then calculate the number of sections you will need. Don't fuss with the layout or font at this point—you have much more setting-up to do later on.

- Remember to allow for title pages, chapter breaks (new chapters usually begin on a right-hand page), decorative section titles, page headers and numbering.
- CHECK AND CHECK AGAIN FOR SPELLING ERRORS, TYPOS AND FORMATTING BLUNDERS. You will be disappointed if you find, after all your hard work, that you missed an error. Get someone else to read it through. It is common for the author or typist to miss errors, because s/he has the story in his/her head and is not able to look dispassionately at what is on the page.
- Choose a suitable font which is easy to read. Save fancy fonts for headings and title pages.

LAYOUT

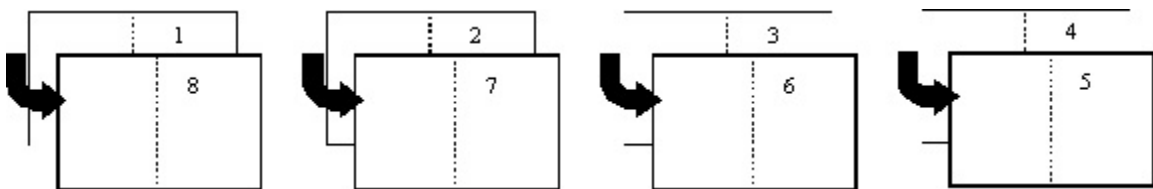
You now need to organise the text so that it prints in the right order on the pages.

If you are printing on the back and front of each page and your section has four sheets, the page numbering will look like this:



The next sections will follow this pattern (next set will be 32/17, 18/31, 30/19..., etc).

If you are printing on one side of each page only (e.g for a small book of poems), the page numbering will look like this:



The next sections will follow this pattern (next set will be 9/16, 10/15, 11/14, etc).

NOTE: If you are going to need an uneven number of sheets for the last section, it is OK to make a section which has five sheets of paper rather than the usual four. If you are going to need to make more than one five-sheet section, space them evenly in the book. If you do, be careful with the page numbering, and make sure everything will fit together in sequence when you are finished. It is also acceptable to have a section with only three sheets of paper.

PRINTING

When printing a sectioned book, it is probably best to print it a section at a time, especially if you are printing multiple copies. This is less wasteful of paper if your printer has a hiccup, rather than letting it print the whole book and then having to sort everything out. To do this, you will have to tell your printer to print just the page numbers for that section.

HINT: It is a good idea to make a mock booklet of all the sections out of scrap paper and pencil the page numbers and titles on where they have to go. Then you will have something to go by if (when?) the printer misbehaves.

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