

Glassdance Manual #4

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Making Chamois Finger Gloves

Section 1

Background Information

The quotation below is from [Glassdance_Components_Manual-1.pdf](#), p. 25.

“Lead crystal glass is an extremely hard material. One cannot use conventional tungsten carbide tools to cut crystal glass; only diamond tools work. Due to this hardness, crystal glass has a very smooth surface that is difficult to play. To increase the friction, I have experimented with many materials and liquids. For me, the best combination is handmade chamois leather finger gloves dipped in denatured alcohol. After making the gloves, repeatedly soak the material in alcohol and then air-dry it. This removes most of the tanning oils in the leather. Play the glasses by regularly dipping the gloves in a container filled with denatured alcohol.”

The best chamois leather for playing the Glassdance is white in color, which indicates that the leather contains only *tanning oils*, or does not contain *tanning dyes*. Dyes cause the gloves to slip and slide on the glass and, thereby, produce squeaking sounds. In contrast, white chamois gloves grip the glass.

After making chamois finger gloves, cure the material by soaking it in denatured alcohol and then air-drying it. Alcohol evaporates the *tanning oils* and dries out the leather. After three to five soaking/drying cycles most of the tanning oils are gone and playing the glasses is now easier. Also, depending on the leather, curing with alcohol shrinks the gloves; so, for a comfortable fit, make them a little larger.

Although some chamois appears white in color, it may nevertheless include other slippery additives that can be very difficult, if not impossible, to remove. Because chamois is an organic material that contains many different substances, finding the right leather may require numerous experiments.

The chamois leather in the photographs below has the following description on eBay:

- (1) Natural Chamois Leather Car Cleaning Cloth Washing Absorbent Drying Shammy Towel.
- (2) Sold by an eBay company called Gets_AutoParts.
- (3) Part #387488790490.

Gloves that last a long time require thicknesses between 0.031–0.039 in., or 0.8–1.0 mm.

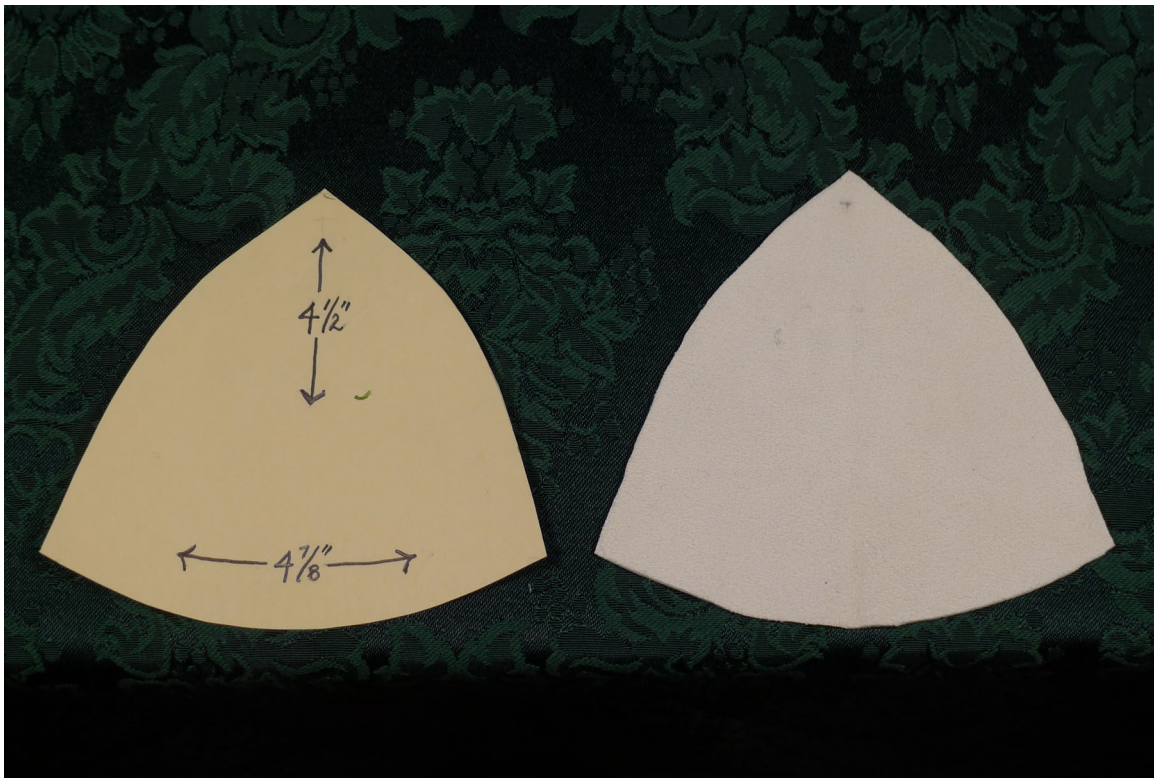
Secure each glove to the finger with two small diameter rubber bands.

Finally, the sewing techniques described below are the work of my lovely wife, Heidi Forster.

Section 2

Making Chamois Gloves

1. Make a cardboard template in the shape of a rounded triangle. For Cris' finger, the dimensions of the triangle are $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. from top to bottom, and $4\frac{7}{8}$ in. from left to right. Trace around the template onto a piece of chamois and cut it out. Use the smooth side of the leather as the outside playing surface.



2. Stretch the leather over a wood form with the dimensions of the player's middle finger. At the top of the triangle, pull the leather $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. over the tip of the form and tape it to the form.



3. Pull out two “wings” of leather from the sides of the finger form and bring them together in the middle of the form. Make sure to leave a distance slightly larger than $\frac{1}{2}$ in. at the top between the two upper folds. I prefer a distance of $\frac{9}{16}$ in. because the denatured alcohol will shrink the chamois leather. Note carefully, if this distance is too narrow, the glove will not have a flat top, but a pointed tip. When one lifts the finger away from the glass, this tip has a tendency to make a squeaking sound against the glass.



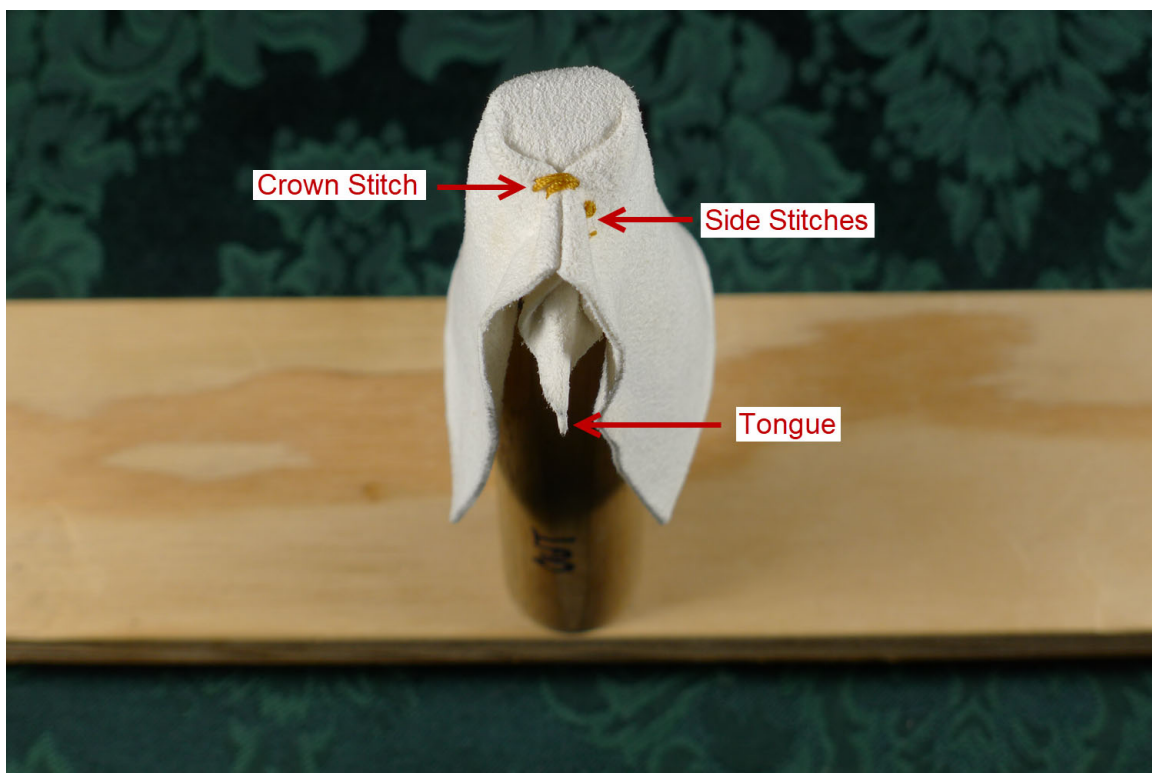
4. Now, with a double strand of heavy duty thread, bind the two upper folds together with a ***crown stitch***. Loop the thread around at least four times. This will require a thimble and pliers to push and pull the needle through several folds of leather.



5. With the top of the glove still taped down, bring the leather on both sides of the form evenly together. Using another double strand of heavy duty thread, join the leather with two *side stitches* right under the crown stitch.



6. Now make a seam that will run down the back of the finger. Untape the top of the glove — which I call the “tongue” — from the form and pull it out between the two sides of the seam. The “tongue” must be secured within the seam. Smooth the fabric at the crown stitch and watch that the leather does not buckle or crease at the tip. Baste through the “tongue” and the two sides, using thimble and pliers. Once the “tongue” is completely stitched in, the rest of the seam will be easier to baste.



7. Continue basting the seam from the side stitches to nearly the bottom of the glove. Pull the glove off the form and make sure that the seam running down the back of the finger is straight and even.



8. With a sewing machine and regular thread, stitch just outside the basting line. Start at the bottom and stitch upward. Stop about $\frac{1}{32}$ in. away from the crown stitch at the top. Now, remove the basting stitch. Trim the seam running down the back, leaving enough leather for the player to pull it on easily. Finally, make another glove like the first and then mark each glove with a stitch of colored thread to identify them as a pair.

