

Tall Boots That Last and Won't Cost a Fortune

By

HE Don Diego

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Basic Tools Needed:

1. Rotary Punch with a size “0” punch
2. A rotary stitch marker (I recommend a “5”)
3. A knife or scissors for cutting leather (I recommend a rotary knife as well)
4. A roll of artificial sinew
5. A measuring tape
6. Sewing needles with a large eye, i.e. Crewel needles

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This is a clever cheat that some of my friends and I discovered years ago. The result of this process is a pair of boots that looks period, are comfortable, waterproof, and relatively inexpensive.

The process literally alters a pair of commercially available boots that can be purchased at any Western Store or online. All of the attempts to recreate a period setting for an extended frame of time have had difficulty when it came to footwear. Creating the actual foot of either a shoe or a boot is the most difficult part of making any footwear. With this process, the work of making the foot or bottoms of the boots is literally by-passed.

First, order or purchase a pair of modern western boots that fit. These boots can run in varying prices, but most Western Stores have bargain boots for as little as \$50

dollars or so. I have seen some boot offered for as little as \$30 but those are rare. As long as the foot of the boot is leather, they will be fine for use. Make sure that the boots are comfortable. They should be snug but not tight. As you wear the boots, the leather foot will mold to your foot for a very comfortable feel. To add to the comfort, for my own boots, I purchased them about a half size larger then added name brand athletic inserts to them. These inserts in addition to making the boot more comfortable also provide an arch support. Thus the boots I wear are very similar to wearing sneakers.

Second, take an Exacto Knife or similar blade and cut the uppers or the barrel of the boots off of the foot. There is a seam on the boots where these two pieces meet. Cut just above the seam where the foot overlaps the upper and remove the original barrel. Next decide where you want the seam of your new barrel to be. I recommend that this seam be either on the inseam or out-seam but is entirely up to you. I do not recommend that you put the seam on the back. Since as you wear the boots, put them on, and remove them, you heel will be rubbing along this seam and stretching both the leather and the seam, eventually wearing out the seam and causing it to break. Having you heel rub against a single piece of leather will stretch the leather, but will not endanger the stitching or the seam. Next split the original upper or barrels where you want the seam to go. These split barrels are not the templates for the new barrels you are going to make.

NOTE: Make sure that you match the correct barrel to the correct boot. Splitting only one barrel will likely result in making two boots for the same foot. Next lay the split barrel onto the leather that you wish to use. Trace the bottom of the barrels only adding about a $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch on either end, the bottom of the barrels, meaning the part of the barrels that are attached to the foot.

Next measure how high up the leg you want the boots to rise. This should be done while wearing shoes, and should begin from the top of those shoes. If you want to make the bucket style boots, take this measurement up higher on the leg. I recommend at least to about mid-thigh. Once you have this measurement, on your leather, measure from the center of the traced outline up that distance. At the top of that distance, measure another equal distance that is bisected by the original line. From either end of this line, connect the end to the ends of the traced lines of the bottom of the barrels. What you should have traced out is a pair of large inverted cones. These inverted cones should have a height that is equal to its top length.

If sewing by machine, sew the bottom of the new barrel to the foot of the boot. Then sew up the barrel from the foot. If hand sewing, use the stitch marker to plot where the stitches should go. Pre-punch the holes in the bottom of the barrels. Then mark and punch a double row of stitches up both sides of the seam of the barrel. Sew around the ankle of the boot, and then sew up the leg from the foot.

The stitch that I use comes from the Museum of London Textiles book. It has the advantages of being period and it makes the boots waterproof without having to treat the boots. The finished product lasts for a considerable period of time. It is not unusual for a pair of these boots to last seven years or more.

