

THE BLANK CARTRIDGE

The process of rolling cartridges is somewhat tedious but relatively easy. You can do it while watching TV. I can fabricate about 30 tubes during an airing of "Jeopardy." You will need:

1. Black powder (FFg or FFFg) in an appropriate container. FFg is better for live ammo shooting. FFFg is generally better for reenactments as it ignites easier. NO artificial powders (like Pyrodex) should be used. They do not function properly in flintlocks.
2. Appropriate paper for rolling the cartridge. Good brown wrapping paper can be obtained from office supply and postal supply shops. Don't use grocery bags unless you've got mighty strong teeth! Some white wrapping papers are okay, but stay away from newspaper and other lightweight papers. They are not strong enough and will fall apart. I prefer 20 lb.. typing paper, it's available and better yet - it's cheap.
3. A wooden dowel to use as a former. It should be slightly smaller in diameter than the holes in your cartridge box block. The smaller the diameter of the rolled cartridge, the stronger the cartridge - but the more likely to fall out of the box while you are running. I have found that a 5/8-inch diameter dowel 7 to 8 inches long works well.
4. *Several* "Glue Sticks." These are available at any craft store and at Office Depot.
5. A powder measure (which can be made up from any number of things). About 90 to 120 gr. is a good, safe charge.

The pattern for a blank cartridge, when laid on a single sheet of 8 ½" x 11" paper, will make two cartridges. (See figure 1)

The following dimensions for the pattern work well:

- Length A to B - 6 inches
- Length B to C - 5 inches
- Length C to D - 2 and ½ inches

To make the cartridges:

1. Lay the paper on a hard surface as shown in figure I below.
2. Put glue along both the vertical edge (A-B) and the slanted edge of the paper (A-D). This will keep the seams tightly closed.
3. Place the dowel so it is parallel along the bottom edge of the paper (B-C) and flush with edge A-B.

4. Roll the paper over the dowel, moving from the bottom edge of the paper up to the point (A), keeping the dowel perpendicular to edge A-B. You should end up with a tube.
5. Withdraw the dowel slightly, about ½ inch from the end of the tube formed by edge A-B.
6. Fold the edges of the tube down flat against the end of the dowel so that the end resembles a shotgun shell or penny roll. Crimp the edges and then, using a slightly smaller dowel press the center of the folded end down into the tube about ¼ inch.
7. I then seal this end by dripping a small amount of wax to cover the seams of the fold. I have found that this keeps the powder from leaking out of a poorly crimped end.

Fill the tube with a measured charge of powder and fold the top part down in two separate ½ inch folds, again applying glue from the " Glue Stick" to the inside of the folds. Fasten the top temporarily with a paper clip until the glue dries (about 5 minutes). If you want to really finish off the cartridges nicely, you may now dip the finished cartridge in a melted solution of 50% beeswax and 50% Crisco to waterproof them.

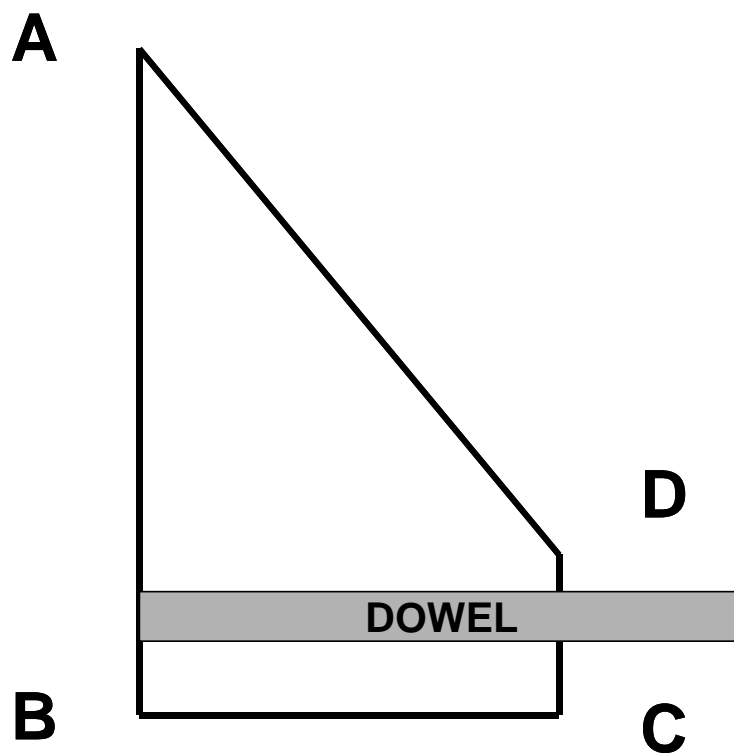


Figure 1: Paper Pattern