# Lenape Medicine Pouches

*A Medicine Pouch is a traditional Lenape vessel that contains various items such as many kinds of herbs, stones, and other items used for healing and remembrance. It is also used to maintain personal harmony with the physical and spiritual realms. Some might start with a small medicine pouch, but as they add life experiences and objects over time, they will often need to replace it with a larger bag.*

*Things added to the medicine bag include items related to a spiritual journey, such as stones, sweet grass, sage, bone items, hair or fur, dried flowers, roots, leaves, or feathers. Each item has special significance in the life of the bag's owner and is usually added during a major event to commemorate it. The contents of the bag are considered sacred and good medicine for that person alone. It can be traditional items or anything else important to the one who carries it. When one receives a bag as a gift, it may contain an item of goodwill from the giver.*

*There are many styles of medicine bags, and no two are alike or have the same reasons. There are very basic ways of constructing the Lenape medicine bag, some made into soft pouches, some made of tanned animal hides (usually deerskin), and one made of stiff untanned rawhide. There are scallop shells and turtle shells as well. The medicine bags are different, with a personality of their own.*

## Delaware Lenape Pouches

Pouches played an essential role in the daily lives of the Delaware Lenape, crafted from various materials like leather, gourds, shells, and woven fibers, and adorned with intricate designs that reflected their cultural identity and practical needs. M.R. Harrington remarks, *"The Lenape created pouches of many shapes and sizes, each tailored for its specific purpose, whether for storing herbs, seeds, or other small items, often embellished with symbols signifying spiritual protection or clan identity."* These pouches served both utilitarian and ceremonial purposes, with their decorative elements often linked to the natural environment or spiritual beliefs.

Frank Speck highlights the decorative artistry of Lenape pouches, noting that *"The designs, whether painted, etched, or sewn onto leather or gourd surfaces, frequently incorporated the double-curve motif—a symbolic representation of harmony in nature and the cycles of life."* This motif, along with geometric patterns, animal imagery, and plant-inspired designs, communicated a deep respect for the interconnectedness of all living things. Pouches were also crafted from scallop shells and turtle shells, particularly for sacred uses. The use of natural materials like gourds and leather was not merely practical but also symbolic, reflecting the Lenape's sustainable relationship with the land.

This tradition of pouch-making exemplifies how Lenape artisans merged utility with cultural expression, transforming everyday items into objects of beauty, meaning, and spiritual significance. Each pouch told a story, its design carrying messages of identity, tradition, and connection to the natural world.

*Harrington, M.R. The Indians of New Jersey: Dickon Among the Lenapes, Rutgers University Press, 1938; The Double-Curve Motive in Northeastern Algonkian Art, Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914*

Copyright Tyiese Bright FLower

# Medicine Pouch Instructions

**Small Rounded Drawstring Pouch (Soft Leather)**

## Materials Needed

### Base

- Soft leather (deerskin or similar), pre-cut or large enough to cut your pattern
- Leather lace/cord for drawstring (or strong cord)

### Sewing & Assembly

- Leather sewing needle(s)
- Waxed nylon thread
- Awl or leather hole punch (for stitch holes and drawstring holes)
- Sharp scissors (or leather shears)

### Measuring & Marking

- Pencil/pen/marker for light guide marks
- Ruler or measuring tape (optional)
- Paper (for making a template)

### Optional Embellishments

- Beads (for fringe, drawstring ends, or decoration)
- Small concho/button/toggle
- Feathers, fur, small leather fringe strips
- Personal sacred items to place inside (added later)

### Safety (recommended)

- Thimble or finger protector (optional)
- Good lighting and a stable work surface

## Before You Start (Planning)

- Decide the pouch size (small personal pouch).
- Sketch your pouch shape on paper first.
- Make a paper template so you can trace and cut cleanly.

## Step-by-Step Instructions

### 1) Make the Template (Rounded Shape)

1. Draw a rounded pouch body on paper (like a soft oval/rounded rectangle).
2. Add extra height at the top for the drawstring channel (fold-over area).
3. Cut out the paper template.

### 2) Cut the Leather

1. Trace the template onto the leather.
2. Cut **two matching pieces** (front and back).
3. Keep edges smooth; clean cuts make cleaner stitching.

### 3) Mark the Stitch Line

Copyright Tyrese Bright FLower

1. Place the two leather pieces together (good sides facing outward).
2. Lightly mark a stitch line around the sides and bottom perimeter.
3. Leave the **top open** (this is where the drawstring channel will be).

### 4) Punch Stitch Holes

1. Use an awl/hole punch to make evenly spaced holes along the stitch line.
2. Keep spacing consistent (small, even holes look best and hold strong).
3. Do **not** punch holes across the top opening.

### 5) Sew the Pouch Body (Choose Your Stitch)

Pick one stitch style you prefer (your "personal stitch" choice). Common strong options:

- Whip/overcast stitch
- Blanket stitch
- Saddle stitch
- Backstitch

Sew around the sides and bottom, then secure your thread ends tightly and trim.

### 6) Create the Drawstring Channel

1. At the top opening, fold the leather edge inward to form a channel.
2. Punch a row of holes around the folded edge (even spacing).
3. Stitch the folded edge down (using your preferred stitch) to lock the channel in place.

### 7) Thread the Drawstring

1. Attach the lace/cord to a needle, or use a small safety-pin-style threading method.
2. Thread the cord through the channel holes all the way around.
3. Pull both ends to cinch the pouch closed.

### 8) Finish the Drawstring Ends (Optional)

- Add beads to the cord ends
- Add a small toggle
- Tie secure knots so beads/toggles don't slip off

### 9) Add Embellishments (Optional)

- Fringe strips
- Beads or small conchos
- Feather/fur accents

  Keep embellishments balanced so the pouch still closes smoothly.

### 10) Fill With Intention

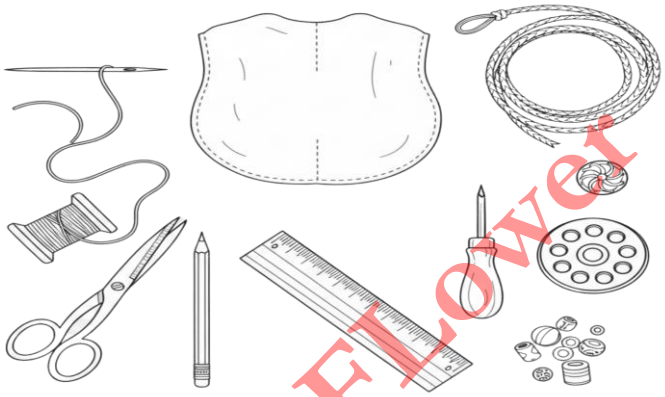
- Add personal items over time (herbs, stones, small keepsakes).
- The contents are sacred and personal, meant for the carrier alone.

Copyright Tyrese Bright FLower

# Medicine Pouch Instructions

### Small Rounded Drawstring Pouch (Soft Leather)

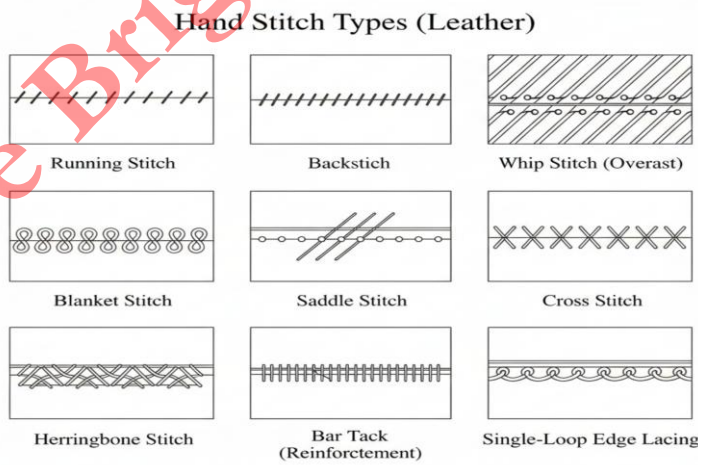
## Materials



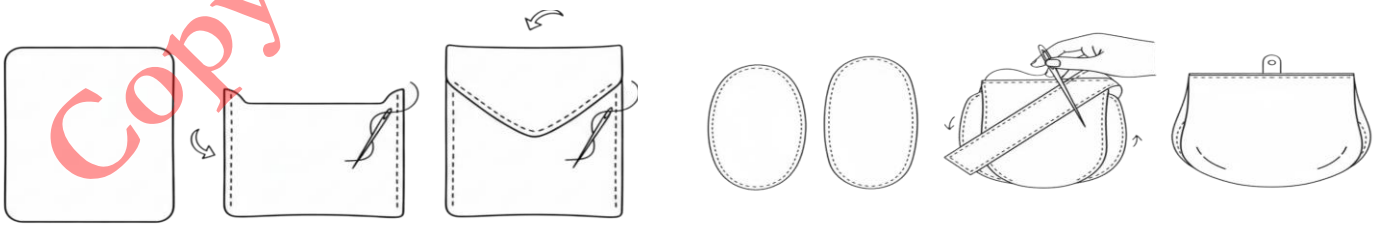
- Soft leather (2 pieces)
- Waxed nylon thread + leather needle
- Awl/hole punch
- Drawstring cord/lace
- Scissors
- Paper template + pencil/marker
- Optional: beads, concho/toggle, fringe, feathers/fur

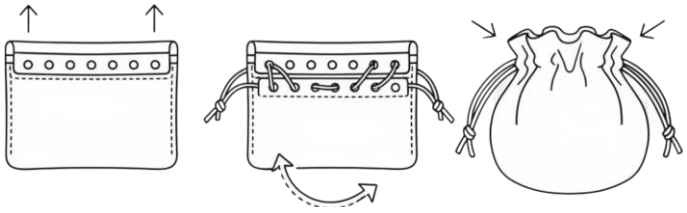
## Build Steps

1. Make paper template (rounded pouch + extra top for channel)
2. Cut 2 leather pieces
3. Mark stitch line (sides + bottom; leave top open)
4. Punch stitch holes
5. Sew perimeter (choose your stitch)
6. Fold top to form channel
7. Punch channel holes + stitch channel down
8. Thread drawstring + knot ends
9. Add embellishments (optional)
10. Add contents with intention




### Shapes and Types of Pouches





Copyright Tyrese Bright Flower