

Better Results with Your BAM

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Like a lot of crafters, I began my button-making with the Badge-a-Minit hand press. It's an inexpensive option for a hobbyist who wants to make a few buttons now and then, but doesn't want to spend a lot. Even today, the BAM starter kits are only about USD \$49.



The buttons are 2 3/8" size, perfect for a magnet, mirror, or Christmas ornament as well as for a wearable badge, and you can use any image of your choice, including your own artwork!

Unfortunately, some users report a high failure rate: as much as 70% . . . yikes! It is true that there's more room for error with this press than with more expensive button machines, but with practice, you *can* consistently get good results. In this post, I'd like to share my best tips, gleaned from my years as a BAM user.



When a button fails, it's typically because the paper and mylar didn't wrap and tuck properly, as in the photo above. Some users assume that this happens because the mylar is too small, but that's not the case, and for that reason, cutting a larger mylar won't fix the issue. In fact, adjusting the size of the mylar might result in *more* failures, since the button paper and the mylar must fit *exactly* into the blue ring, as shown at left.



Nope: it's more likely to be an issue of paper selection and/or of uneven pressure.

1. For best results with your BAM hand press (or any button machine), do not use paper heavier than copier weight (24lb).

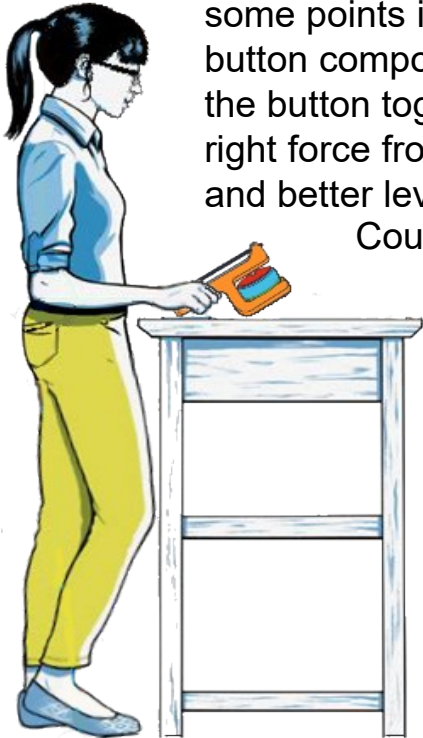
Using cardstock or thicker scrap-booking papers will cause the button to fail. You can use printer paper, wrapping paper, magazine and calendar images –

really any lightweight paper – but do not use thick materials. These will interfere with the machine’s operation and prevent the mylar from wrapping properly. Paper that is too thick is one of the most common cause of button failures.

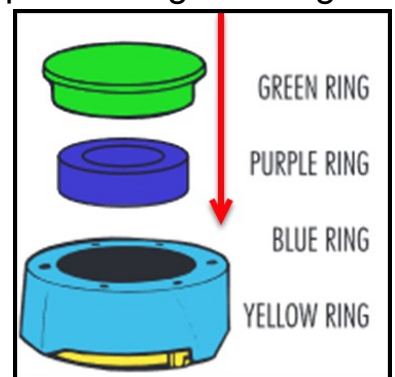


2. Work standing up. This might not be immediately obvious, but at some points in the process you need leverage to push the button components to and fro in the rings, and to squeeze the button together in the final step, and it’s hard to get the right force from a seated position. You’ll get better control and better leverage if you do these steps standing up.

Counter height is perfect.



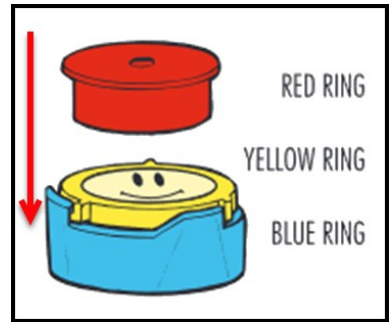
3. Step #3 in the BAM directions asks you to insert the purple ring into the assembled yellow/blue rings, then place the green ring on top and press down. To do this step correctly, ensure that you are standing, that you place *both* hands on the green ring, and that you apply *even*



pressure. You should hear a single “snap” when the rings move downward; a double snap means that the pressure is not even. Uneven pressure at this stage can pull the mylar to one side, so that the button cannot wrap neatly.

This is the second most common cause of button failure. You should practise this step until you can snap the rings smoothly in one motion.

4. Complete the first part of Step 4, inserting the red ring into the assembly on top of the button face and pushing down, again using firm pressure from a standing position. Before moving to Step 5 where you insert the button back, you should perform an extra step not covered in the instructions that came with your machine.



When you turn the assembly over, you will see the edges of the paper and mylar sticking out from around the rim of the button shell.



To help ensure that the mylar will wrap correctly beneath the button back, I like to take a few seconds to run my thumb nail around the edge, pulling the paper and mylar definitively to the inside of the shell. Once that's done, complete the assembly process. Your buttons will be much neater and better



finished if you add this fail-safe step into your routine. My button has wrapped beautifully, with a lovely smooth edge.

While I can't guarantee a perfect result every time, I can promise that these steps will up your Badge-a-Minit button game. So . . . to summarize: *Use the right weight paper, stand up to work, apply even pressure, and mold the paper/mylar with your thumb nail before adding the button back.*