

Making Button-Badge Ornaments

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If you've ever spent time on sites like Cafe Press or Zazzle, you'll have seen those flat disc ornaments, usually ceramic, that can be personalized with your own photos and slogans. They normally run about \$26-\$36 CDN each (around \$20 when they are on sale).



I love the idea of personalized ornaments as gifts and stocking stuffers, and over the years I've made dozens for extended family and for friends and acquaintances: something like fifty in the past couple of years alone. If I'd bought them on line, even on sale at \$20 apiece, I'd have spent – yikes! -- about \$1000, not including shipping. But I have a better idea!

Instead of purchasing my personalized ornaments from an on-line store, I've been making them myself, using – what else? -- my 2 1/4" button machine. These ornaments aren't ceramic, but they look just as pretty on the tree as those purchased ones, and they are also lightweight and unbreakable.



I already own a machine, but if I didn't, I might consider buying one just for this purpose. At this writing, I can purchase a top-of-the-line button machine, circle cutter, and parts to make 500 buttons for much less than the cost of buying those 50 ornaments on line. Since I make more than 25 ornaments every year, the machine would soon pay for itself. And I can also use it to make other stocking stuffers: mirrors, bottle openers, magnets, and more.

It's possible to make a simple ornament using a single flat-backed button, sandwiching a length of ribbon between the front and back to make a loop for hanging. This makes an ornament with a design on the front and a plain metal back. It's nice, but personally I prefer my ornaments to have designs on both sides, like this Eaton's Toyland ornament.



For each ornament, I use two buttons glued back-to-back, so my method is a bit more involved.

To prepare the button parts, I use a metal punch to make a small hole near the edge of the blank shell and also in the button back.

This is done before making up the buttons, since attempting to punch the finished button may damage it. The hole will allow the addition of a jump ring.



backs on hand, so I'm using one of those. I'll simply remove the pin before proceeding.

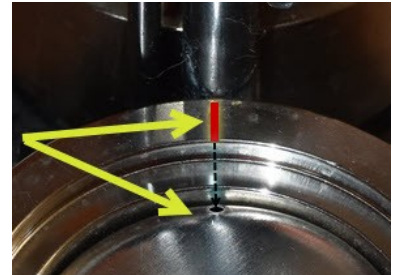
The button back I'm using is pin back style; I could have used a flat back instead, but I happen to have a lot of the pin



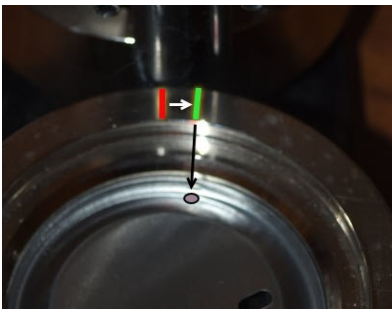


The trick to producing a successful ornament is to ensure that the pre-punched holes are properly lined up in the machine as you make up the button.

To facilitate this process, I used a Sharpie to mark a point on the pick-up die where I want to align the punched hole. (You can see the line marked in red on the photos).



When I place the button shell into the die, I line up the punched hole with that registration mark. The button image goes in next, with the top toward the mark; then I add the mylar, rotate the dies, and press.



I made a similar mark on the crimp die (left), but I've found, at least with my machine, that the parts tend to move just a fraction during pressing. To compensate, I position the button back with the hole rotated to the right by just under 1/4" (the green mark in the photo). Then I complete the button as usual.



If everything has worked as it should, the holes will line up perfectly. I'll use an awl to poke through the paper and mylar, to make way for a large jump ring, which I'll close up using pliers.



After inserting the jump ring through both buttons, I'm gluing them back-to-back using GOOP; I've spread a generous line of the glue around the back edge where the two button surfaces will meet. Then I'll align the buttons back-to-back, keeping the edges even.



Once that's done, I'll clamp them for several hours, or even overnight, until the GOOP has set completely.



I like to finish my button ornaments with trim around the perimeter: a decorative braid or narrow bead trim is perfect.

For my Eaton's Santa, I've chosen 4mm red metallic fused beads; I'll cut a length to just fit around the perimeter of the ornament and glue it into place using Beacon 3-in-1, applying a line of the glue all around



the edge, in the groove where the two buttons meet. While the glue is still wet, I'll press the trim into place, starting and ending at the jump ring.

With my fingers, I'll press and hold the trim until the glue grabs, which takes only a minute or so.

All that's left is to add a bead embellishment to the top of the ornament. For this one, I've chosen a selection of red, green, crystal, and gold beads, strung onto 18-gauge craft wire, which I'll attach to the jump ring at the top of the ornament.



Here's a view of the completed ornament with the beaded component attached. I love these vintage images from Eaton's, the iconic but now defunct Canadian department store.

The beauty of these ornaments is that you can make them using any images you wish, personalize and then embellish them with your choice of trims. If you like, you can even add a spinner (the kind used on fishing lures), to allow the ornament to rotate freely when it's on the tree.



In addition to making gifts, I also create ornaments for my sister's craft show booth, so I generally create several dozen annually. See some more of the ones from this year's output on the next two pages.



Snoopy and Charlie Brown look very festive in front of their Christmas trees. I made this for a friend, but liked it so well that I also made one for my own tree.

Here's one to delight Whovians everywhere! My friend will be tickled pink . . . or is that blue?



I'm sure Jersey's family will be thrilled with this memento. I've made several ornaments just like this for our own tree, featuring the cats whose company we've enjoyed over the years.



This Fezziwig's Ball ornament illustrates how changing the trim transforms the look of these ornaments. I really like the classy framed look that this Christmassy twisted braid gives the ornament.





This fun Henery Hawk ornament was made with a slightly smaller button size (1 3/4").

I punched a second hole at the bottom to accommodate the additional dangle. This is the first time I've used a tinsel stem as perimeter trim, but I like the effect and will use it again.

This Santa Claws ornament will look great on my Looney Tunes tree. I linked tiny Sylvester and Tweety mini figures for extra interest at the top of the ornament.



Finally, here's a fun ornament for a Harry Potter fan. There's even room to personalize it by adding the recipient's name just above the train.

These ornaments are beautiful and infinitely variable. I love them!