

# Origami Boxes

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Remember those nifty little cardboard gift boxes that used to come with costume jewellery? They were just the thing for gifting a pair of handcrafted earrings or a brooch. Nowadays if you want such a box, you have to pay for it (they can be had from Amazon.ca at just over \$3 apiece: \$16 plus tax and shipping, for a pack of six).

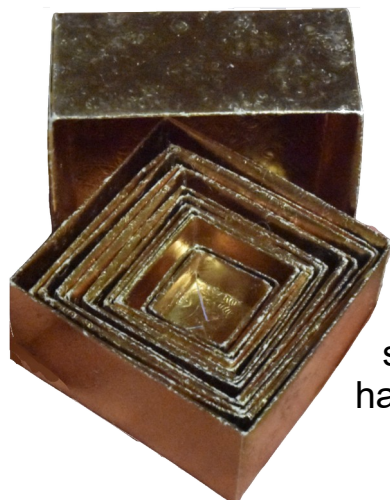
Or . . . you can make your own.



It's easy to craft a little box from two squares of lightweight card stock, like the kind sold for scrapbooking. I also generally save odd bits of lightweight card to recycle into boxes: discarded file folders, stiff calendar pages, covers from catalogues and fliers, even photos or greeting cards, as long as they are lighter than index card weight (110 lb).

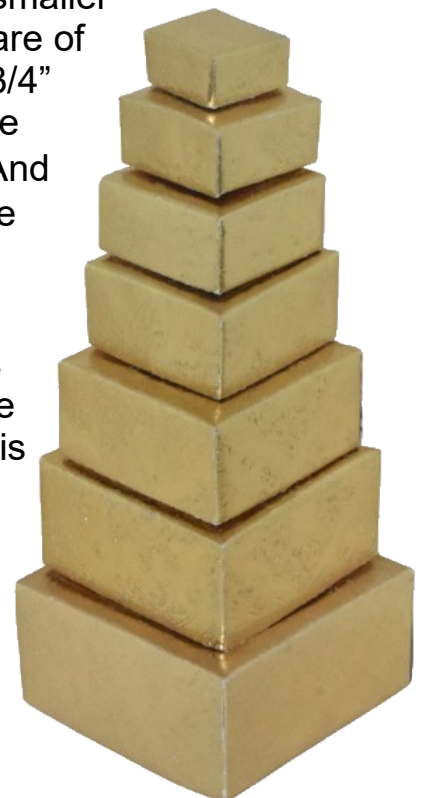
An 8" square is a good size to work with, and makes a box approximately 2 3/4" square; a larger or smaller starting square will yield a correspondingly larger or smaller box. (For instance, a 5" square of card produces a box about 1 3/4" square; a 14" square makes one

about 5" wide, the largest size that works for these boxes. And as a rule of thumb, the smaller the box you wish to make, the lighter the card stock you'll use, and vice versa.)



I started building origami-style boxes back in the 1990s; over the years I've made hundreds of them, including this graduated set in gold foil.

I call them origami-style because, unlike "pure" origami, they involve some cutting and gluing. My method has evolved somewhat over the years, to make what I think is a better box. Read on to find out how.





In addition to adding scissor cuts and glue to the making of these boxes, I've also eliminated a couple of the folds and have adjusted the method of crafting the lid for a better fit.

All of the boxes begin with two squares of lightweight card stock. In traditional origami, the bottom square is cut about 3/8" smaller than the top one. By contrast, I use two squares the same size and make an adjustment during the folding process to form a lid.



In some of my sample photos, I am recycling some stiff calendar pages. (The numbers on this sheet will be folded inside the box and won't be seen in the finished product.) We'll make the box bottom first.

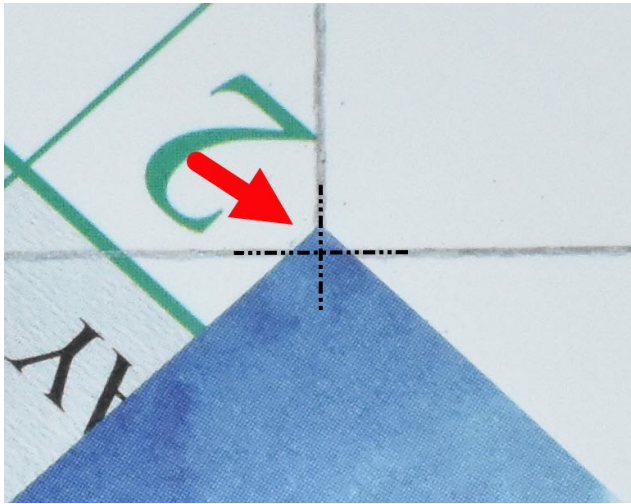
Begin by pencilling two lines diagonally from corner to corner on the "wrong" side of the paper, forming a guideline for subsequent folds.

In traditional origami, this guideline would be made by folding the square on the diagonal, but that method leaves visible fold lines across the top of the finished box, as you can just see on the box at right. I find this unattractive, so I prefer to draw the lines instead.



Each corner is folded to the centre so that the point meets the cross hairs in the centre of the square.

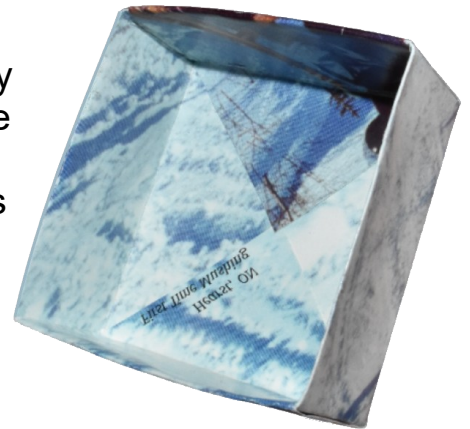
I like to push the point just ever so slightly across the line, as shown overleaf.



When I fold the corners to the centre line, I like to position the point just past the marked lines so there is just the tiniest bit of overlap.

This ensures that there won't be any gaps on the inside of the box, just in case the folding is imperfect.

Crease the fold.

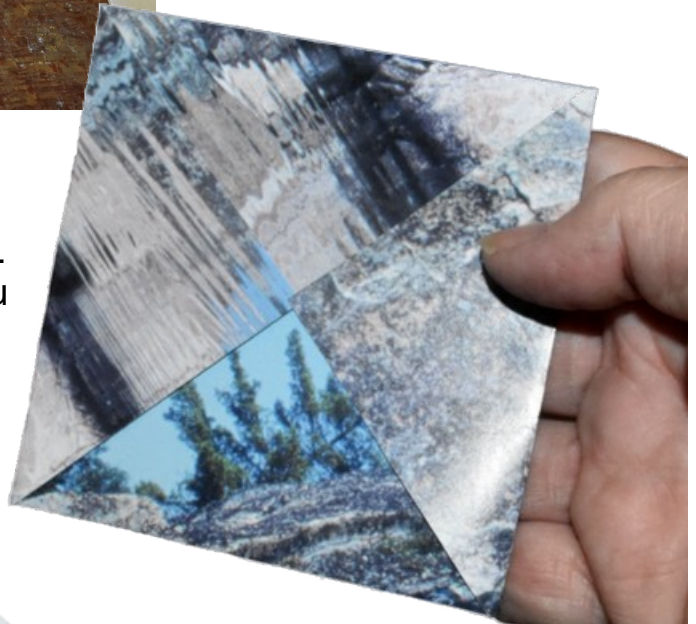


Rotate the square and fold the opposite corner to the centre, overlapping the point just slightly as you did for the first one.

Rotate again and fold the remaining two corners to the centre. Crease all folds using a bone folder or your fingernail.

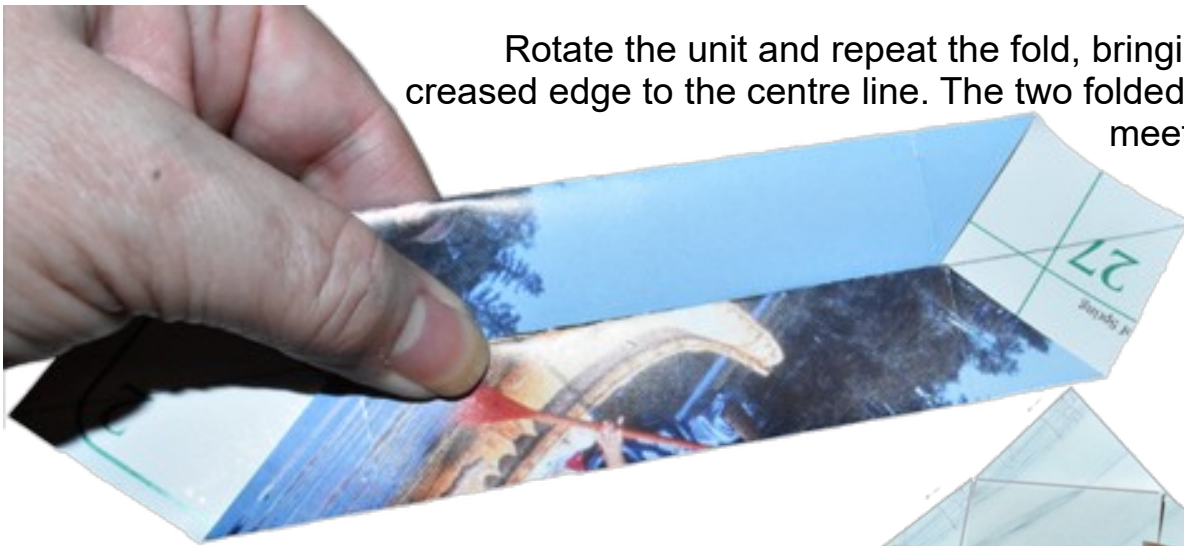


The next step is to form the sides of the box. Start by unfolding all but one of the flaps you have just folded. Make an additional fold so that the creased edge meets the centre line, as seen below.



Once again, crease the fold using a bone folder or your fingernail.





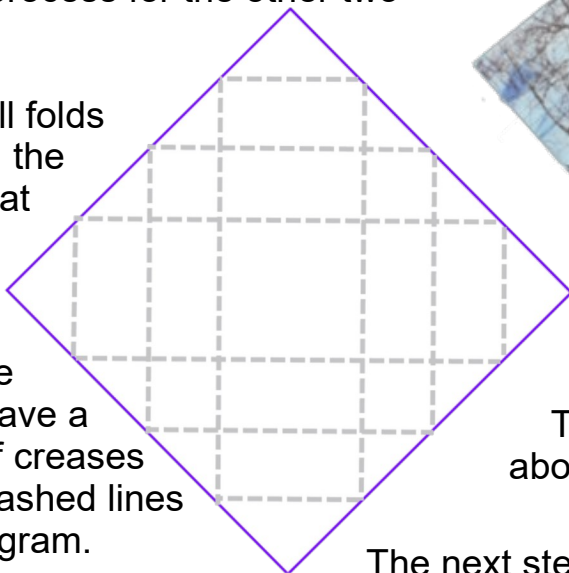
Rotate the unit and repeat the fold, bringing the second creased edge to the centre line. The two folded edges should meet in the centre.

Crease all edges, then open out the square once more.

Rotate the unit and repeat this fold process for the other two points.

Crease all folds and open the unit out flat once again.

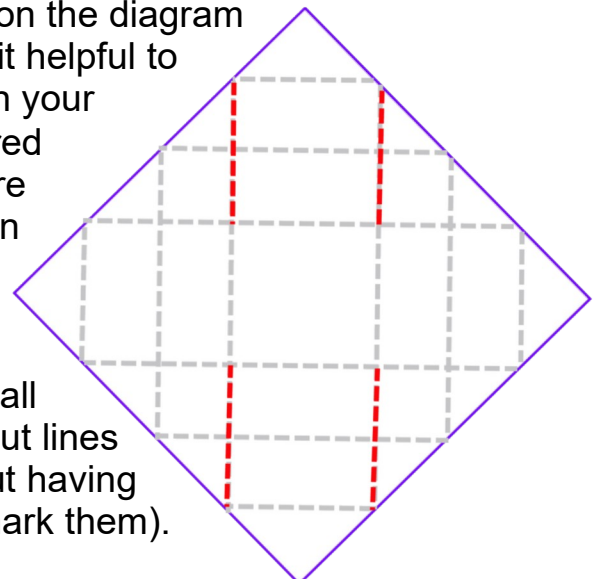
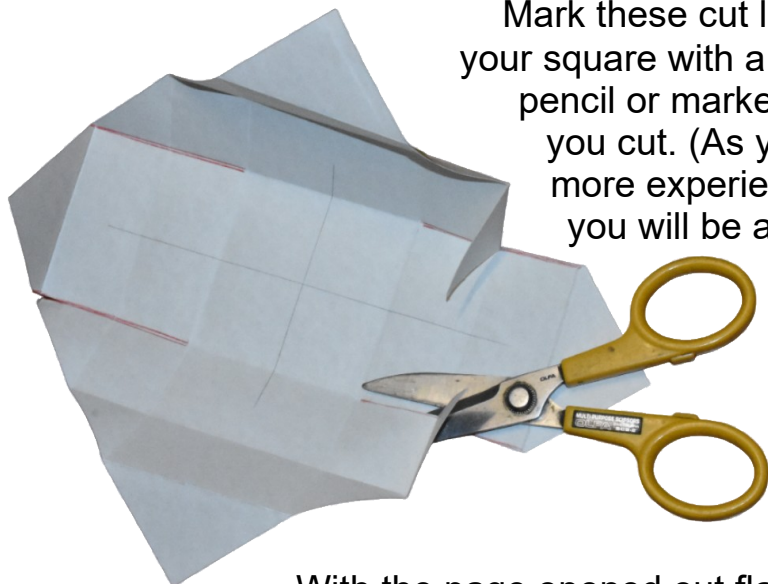
Your page should have a pattern of creases like the dashed lines in the diagram.



The opened page should look like the one above. (I'm showing the right side, which will become the outside of the box).

The next step is to make four cuts where shown by the red dashed lines on the diagram at right. You may find it helpful to Mark these cut lines on your your square with a coloured pencil or marker before you cut. (As you gain more experience, you will be able

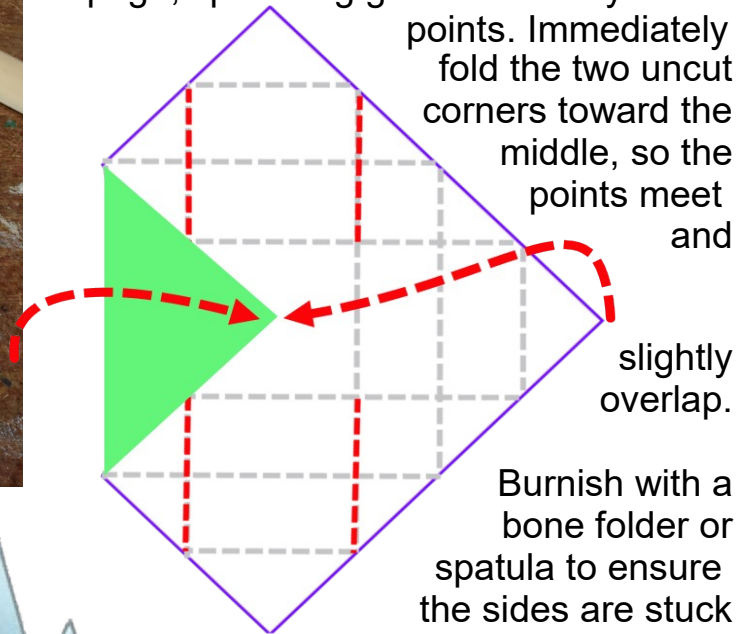
to just eyeball the cut lines without having to mark them).



With the page opened out flat, use scissors to make the cuts.

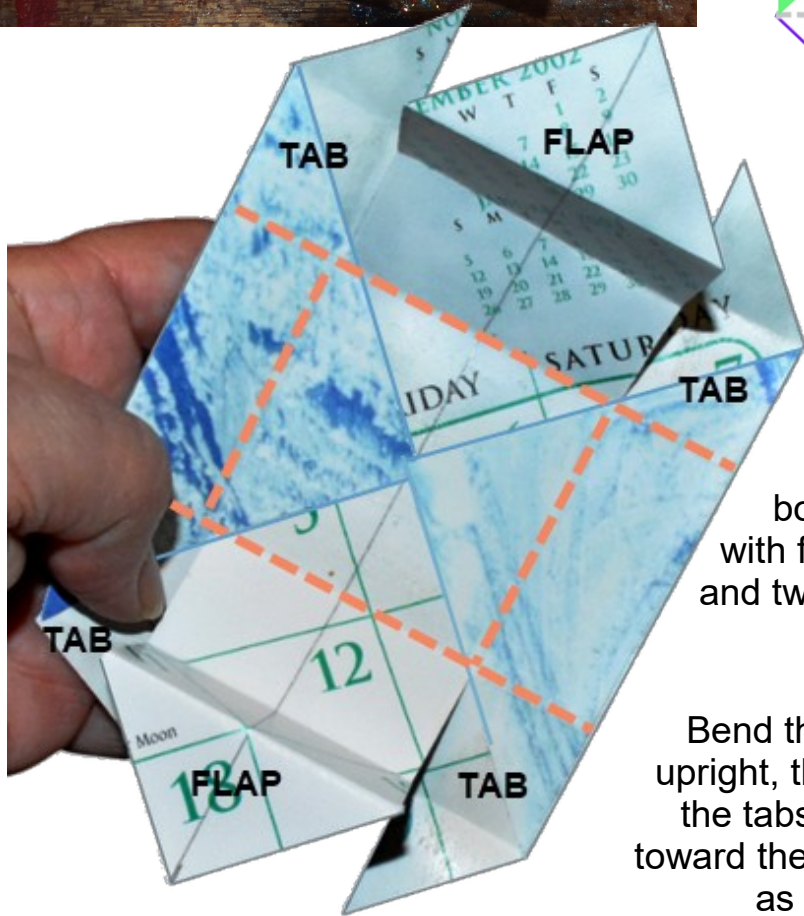


With the page still opened flat, use a glue stick to cover the back of the creased page, spreading glue all the way to the points. Immediately fold the two uncut corners toward the middle, so the points meet and



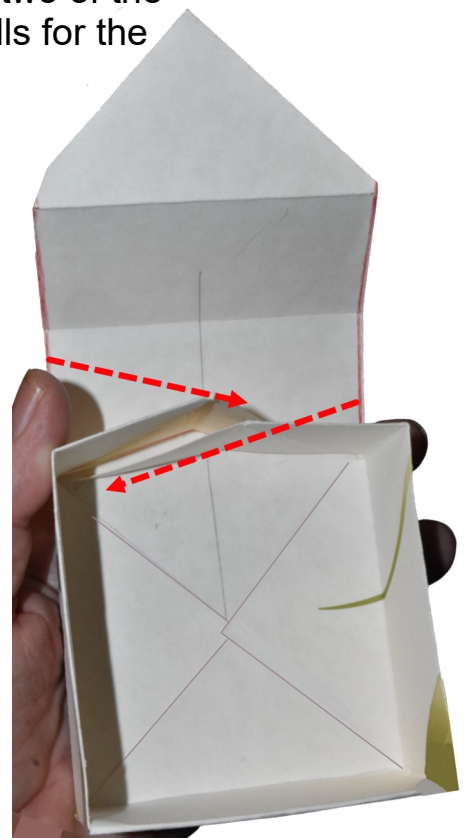
slightly overlap.

Burnish with a bone folder or spatula to ensure the sides are stuck down well, all the way to the points.



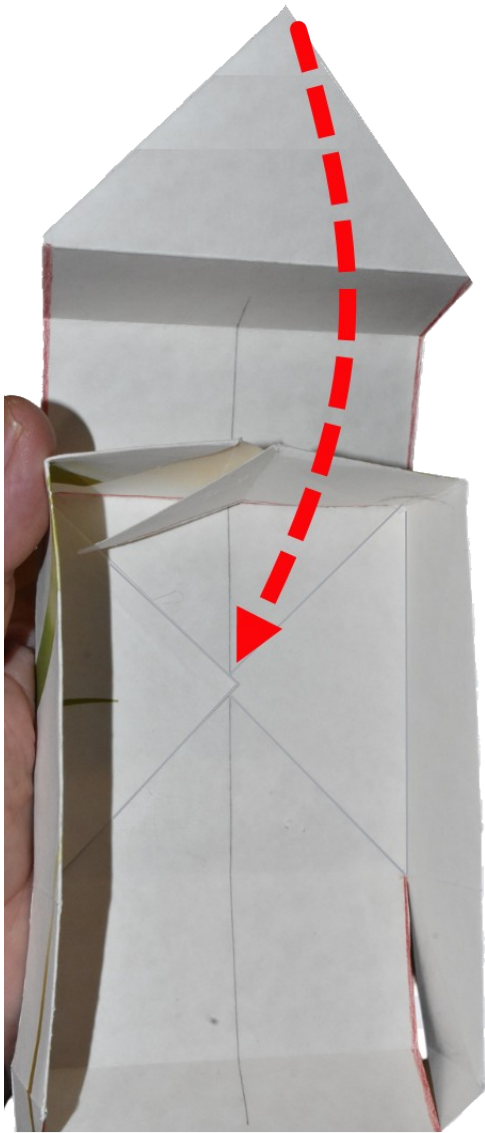
You have now created two of the side walls for the box, along with four tabs and two flaps.

Bend the sides upright, then fold the tabs inward toward the centre, as shown.

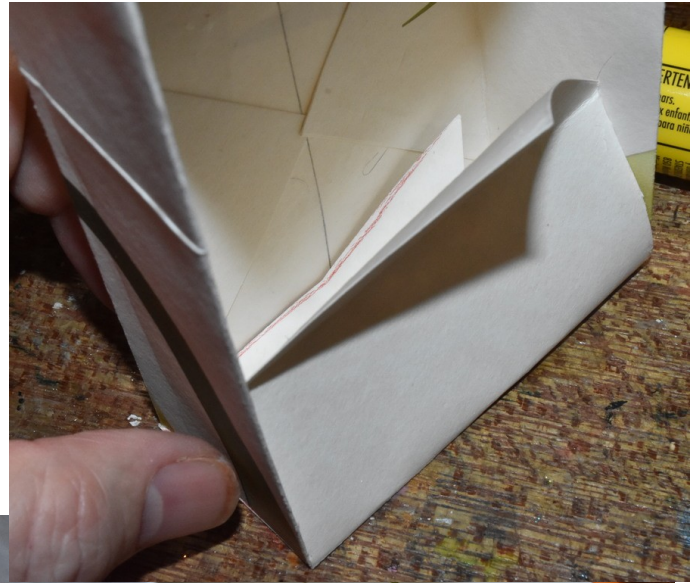


The flap will fold over the tabs so that the point meets the others in the middle of the inside of the box, forming the third side wall and serving to hold the box shape together (see overleaf).

When the tabs are folded inward, as shown, the flap can be folded over the tabs to the inside of the box, so that the point meets with the other points in the centre of the box bottom, forming the third wall.

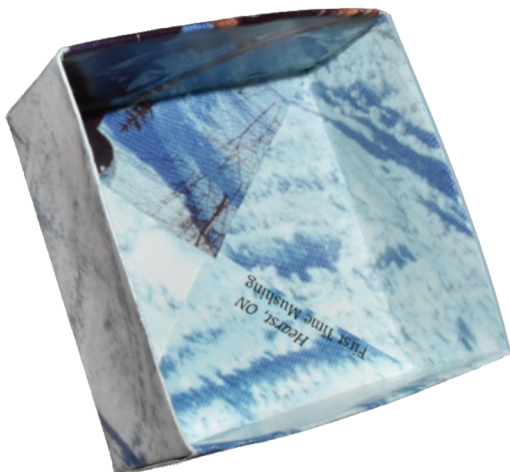
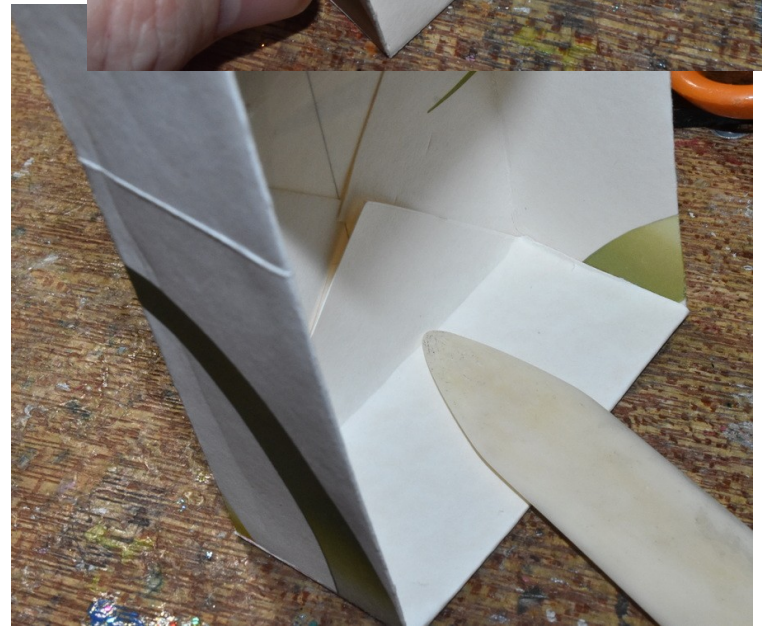


Before doing that, I'll spread fresh glue all over the flap, right to the point.



After folding the glued flap over the tabs, I'll

use my bone folder to burnish the flap to ensure it is stuck down well. Then I'll repeat this process for the second flap, to finish the box bottom.



The bottom of the box is complete. I'll set it aside to work on the box lid.

The steps in making the lid are identical, except for how you handle the second set of folds.

In making a traditional origami box with lid, you'd use a slightly larger square (about 1/2"- 3/8" larger) to make the lid. But this results in a lid with side walls that are deeper than the side walls of the box itself, so that the lid completely covers the sides of the box, making it a little more difficult to open.



Personally, I prefer the lid to be slightly shallower than the box bottom. I think it looks better, and it's easier to open. To achieve this result, begin with a square of card that is exactly the same size as the one you used to make the box itself. I'm using another 8" square just like the one I used for the box bottom.

Mark the cross hairs and fold the points to the centre, exactly as you did for the box bottom.

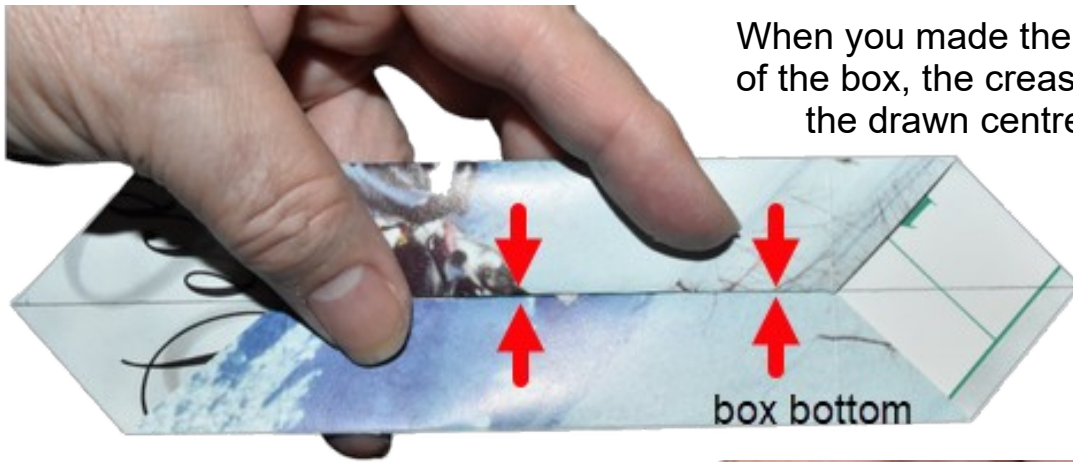


The second set of folds, the ones that define the sidewalls, is where folding the lid differs from making the box bottom.



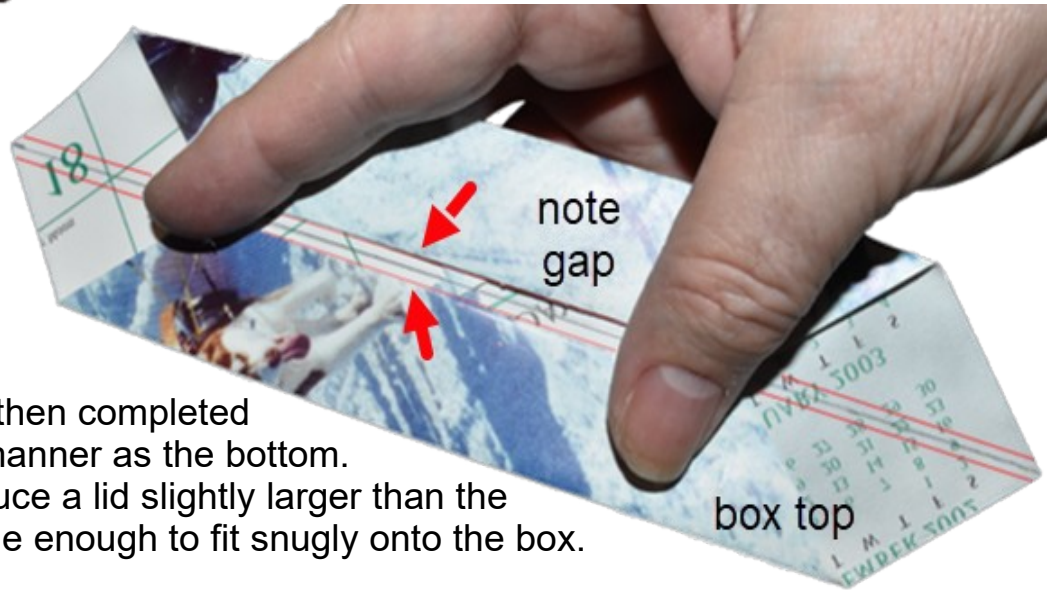
Unfold the square so it's flat. Using a pencil or pen a different colour from the one you used to make the first cross hairs, draw another set of guidelines, 1/8" - 3/16" to either side of the initial lines. (The distance depends on the thickness of your card stock).

You will use these guidelines to align the second set of folds.



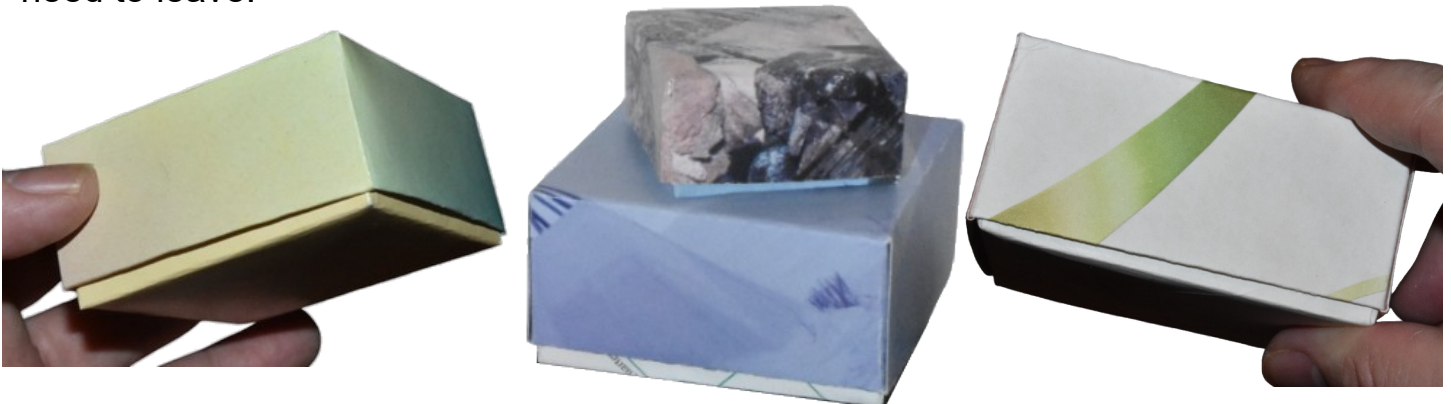
When you made the folds for the bottom of the box, the creased edges aligned to the drawn centre line, and butted up against each other in the middle, leaving no gap between. The top is different.

For the box top, the folded edges line up against the newly drawn guidelines, leaving a gap of  $1/4''$  -  $5/16''$  between.



The top of the box is then completed in exactly the same manner as the bottom. The method will produce a lid slightly larger than the box bottom – just large enough to fit snugly onto the box.

If the card stock is a bit thicker, you may need a gap of up to  $3/8''$ , but for most scrapbooking-weight card,  $1/4''$  should be sufficient. With practice, you will be able to dispense with drawing additional guidelines, and simply eyeball the size of gap you need to leave.



Once you get the hang of the technique, these little boxes are quick to make up. You can use scrapbooking card stock with a pretty design, or do as I do and recycle lightweight card stock from calendars, catalogue covers, or file folders. You can make different sizes from about 5" wide (start with a 14" square) to tiny ones about  $3/4''$  (start with a 2" square). For tiny boxes, a heavyweight paper rather than card stock would be best (35-50 lb weight).

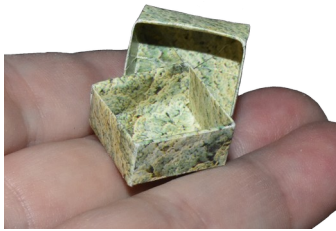


An 8" square makes a nice sized box of just over 2 3/4" wide, perfect for a gift of costume jewellery. I have made a variety of sizes, depending on the size of the salvaged card I have on hand.



Standard 6" scrapbooking card will make a box about 2" wide, while

the 12" size stock produces a box roughly 4" wide. I wouldn't go a whole lot larger – 5" wide (starting with a 14" square of card stock) is about the maximum size for a box of this style to maintain its structural strength.



However, you can go smaller. For instance, I love this adorable little 1" box; it's not of much practical use, but it sure is cute. Just remember to use lighter weight paper.

I don't make many this tiny except as a novelty, but I do make lots of boxes in the 3 - 4" range. They are useful for storing all kinds of small items: googly eyes, beads, or sequins; straight pins, safety pins, or paper clips; sewing machine presser feet or bobbins; rivets, snaps, or nuts and bolts . . . . And, of course, for protecting and gifting handmade costume jewellery.

If you wanted to get fancy, you could use matching card stock to make a whole set of little boxes for containing lots of little doodads around the craft room, and even print up some fancy labels on the computer. (Or use your vintage Dymo label maker!)

As you might imagine, I've got a stockpile of these little boxes always on hand, so I can usually grab one just the size I need. And if you were to cruise the craft loft, you'd see them everywhere, peeking out of nooks and crannies all over the place.

