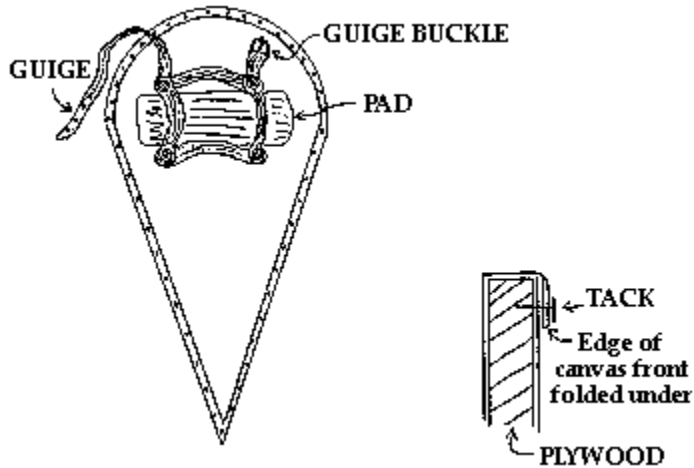


Norman Kite Shield

Kite shields are 20 to 24 inches wide by 40 to 48 inches tall, and may be flat or curved. The top is a semicircle and the edges may taper straight to a point or be slightly curved.

Start with 5/8" or 3/4" plywood, or as thin as 1/2" if you use hardwood plywood. Draw the shape and size you want on the wood and cut it out with a sabersaw or jigsaw. Knock off the splinters with a rasp or file. Trace the shield's shape onto a piece of canvas (linen, cotton, even denim, etc.), adding an extra inch or so all around, and trace another piece (same fabric or different) with an extra two to three inches all around. Glue the smaller piece onto the

back of the wood with Elmer's Carpenter's Glue--spread the glue evenly with a paintbrush, spackling knife, even a piece of cardboard. Trim off the excess fabric. Now glue the larger piece to the front of the wood, wrap the excess over the rim, fold the edge of the fabric under neatly to make a 1/2"-wide border around the back, and tack it down with black carpet tacks. (Make sure your tacks are not so long that they poke through the front!) Don't worry about pleats or puckers at the back.



Allow the glue to dry, and give the shield a good coat of paint (or two), front and back (NOT spray paint!).

Make a pad for your arm from a flat bag of linen or leather (c. 6"x12-18") filled with cotton batting, fabric scraps, etc. Tack it to the back of the shield where your arm will be.

You may have two straps, parallel and vertical, or four in a square for a choice of gripping styles (in which case you may want to make the pad a different shape). Measure the straps to allow for your armor and glove. Make them out of good leather, six to eight-ounce, well-oiled to prevent rot. (Old belts can be dry-rotted and fragile!) Do not use webbing.

Attach the straps with carriage bolts and square nuts, not hex nuts (you may have to ask a couple stores). File any letters off the heads of the bolts, put them through the shield from the front, and use washers between the leather and the nuts. Double-check the fit of the straps (did you make them a little extra-long just in case?), cut off any excess bolt shaft just above the nut, and rap on the stub of the shaft with a hammer for a while ("peening"), until it is mushroomed over the nut to hold it permanently in place, like a big rivet.

All that's left is to paint a nice authentic design on the front. Color schemes and decoration may be copied from the Bayeaux Tapestry or other 11th century source, or play it safe and leave it a plain color. Most shields on the Tapestry are plain.

Options:

- ❖ A guige or neck strap can be added for carrying the shield, its ends secured by the top two bolts. The guige and the forearm strap can be made adjustable with a buckle.
- ❖ Instead of wrapping the fabric facing around the edge, cut it off like the back and make a rim of leather strips c. 2" wide. Cut pieces to match the curve of the top, tack them to the front, then wrap them over the edge and tack them to down at the back as for the fabric.
- ❖ Cover the entire face of the shield with leather instead of fabric. Use a single large piece (not too thick) if possible, but if not, use two or three pieces and make them join neatly. A round shield can be covered in four quarters and the seams disguised with a cross or two-color scheme.
- ❖ Curved shield: Start with two rectangles of 1/4" to 3/8" plywood, each 2'x4'. Lay one flat with 4" to 6" high blocks under each long edge, coat with glue, lay the second sheet on, and weight HEAVILY down the middle. Let dry overnight, then cut to shape with a saber saw.