MyCraftBasketStudio
How to Make File Folders in Any Size (With Perfect Tabs) - Tutorial #18

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Print these instructions and follow along with my video:
https://youtu.be/gjF6uEoq_o8

With three easy measurements, you can make file folders in any size with perfectly aligned tabs. If you want to custom-size your folder for a specific book or project, continue to the section at the end.

1. The Drop

This is how much lower the front panel is compared to the back.

Real folders: **¾" or 1"**
Handmade folders: **½"** looks better because the tab height is shorter

The drop is what makes the tab look taller and more professional.

Two Prep Methods - Choose the One You Prefer

Method 1: Cut, Fold, Trim

This is the easiest and most intuitive method.

- Cut your paper to **any length** for the folder base
- Fold or score in half
- Trim ½" **off the front panel** to create the drop

Perfect for beginners - no math, no extra scoring.

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Method 2: Score for a Perfect Drop
Ideal for crafters who prefer precision.

- Cut your paper to **any length**
- Score the front panel **¼" left of center** (right side up). When folded, the front ends up **½" lower**
- Fold on the score line

This keeps the front edge perfectly straight and avoids trimming.

2. The Tab Width
This is the width of the tab you want.

Rule:
Tab width + 1" = back-side punch measurement

Examples:
• 1½" tab punch at **2½"**
• 2" tab punch at **3"**
• 1" tab punch at **2"**

The extra inch accounts for the punch's curve and the natural slope of the tab.

Punch the edge of the folder using *half* of the punch.
Measure your tab plus 1" and punch.
Then **trim away the section that is *not* the tab.**
Finish other side using *half* of the punch.

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3. Matching the Drop on the Front Panel

Rule:
Front punch = back punch – ½"

Example:
If your tab is **1½"**, your back punch is **2½"**, so:

- **Front punch = 2"**

This creates the perfect drop and makes the tab line up exactly like a real file folder.
Trim away the punched section that creates the drop.
Punch the opposite edge of the folder using *half* of the punch, just like the left side of back panel.

Folder Size Formula (For ANY Finished Size)

Before you begin, decide two things:
1. How wide you want your finished folder
2. How tall you want your finished folder (excluding the tab)

Then use these formulas:

Back Panel Height
Finished height + 3/8” tab height

Front Panel Height
Back panel height – 1/2” drop

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Starting Length (before folding) will then be:
Back panel height + front panel height

Starting Width
Same as finished width - this measurement is easy.

My example:
Finished folder: 5" wide × 3" tall
Tab height: 3/8”
Drop: ½"

- Back panel = 3" + 3/8" = 3 3/8"
- Front panel = 3 3/8" – ½" = 2 7/8"

If your folder height comes out too tall, double-check that you subtracted the full 1/2" drop - counting back on the ruler helps if your math stops mathing.

- Starting length = 3 3/8" + 2 7/8" = **6¼"**
- Starting width = **5"**

Score Using the Formula (Exact Size Mode)
If you are making a folder in a specific measured size, score at the front panel height you calculated.

For the example above, the score line is:
2 7/8" (right side up)
Fold on the score line.