



The mini-container is becoming a popular choice when a standard-size cache box won't fit, but you want something bigger than a micro-cache. Mini-caches are small, but they allow room for trade items. The downside is that most mini-containers are too small to hold a standard ink pen. The solution? Create your own mini-pens!

It's a simple process, and can be done in a few minutes. I'll take you step by step through the process.

## THE PENS

Your standard Bic stick pen, with the hard, 8-sided clear barrel, doesn't work well. The plastic is too brittle, and it takes a lot of work to cut it cleanly. I've had very good luck with the Bic Round Stic. The barrel is a softer plastic, and can be cut easily. You can buy a pack of 10 fairly cheaply. You'll also need a pair of pliers, cutting shears (or wire cutters, or even a sharp pair of scissors, or knife), and paper towels.

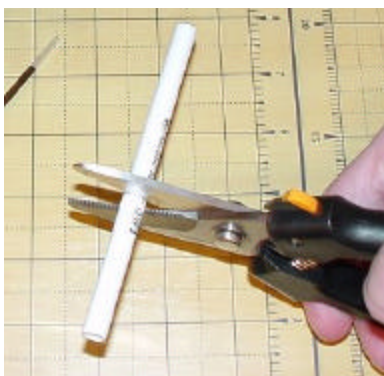


## THE PROCESS

For my mini-cache container, we're using a military decon-kit box. We want the pen to easily fit inside the box, but not be too short that it can't be easily used.

Start off by determining how long the pen needs to be. Remember that the pen's cap will add about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch to the total length when finished. Measure from the TOP of the pen. The portion we'll be removing is actually bottom portion, as viewed in the picture above. We don't want to cut off the plug in the top of the pen, or things could get messy in our cache. Make a small mark on the barrel of the pen where you want to make the cut. But don't cut yet.

First we need to remove the ink cartridge. Grasp the point just below the barrel with the pliers, and pull. With a little force, it should slide right out. Set the cartridge aside.



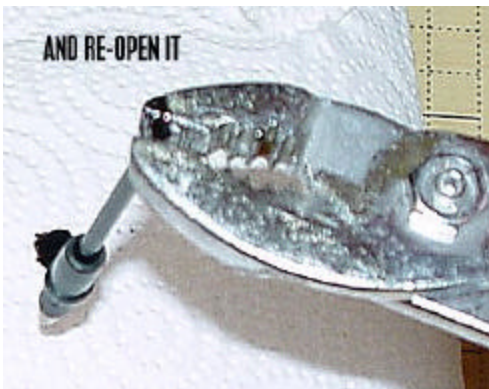
Cut the barrel at the previously determined position. Remember, it's the top part we'll be using. Try and make the cut as even as you can, but it doesn't have to be perfect.

Now we have to determine how much of the cartridge to cut off. Lay the tube beside the cartridge, with the bottom of the tube aligned to the stop ridge on the cartridge. You'll want to cut the cartridge about a ¼ inch below the top of the barrel.



Be sure to put down some paper before making the cut. The ink is very thick, and won't drip, but ink will transfer from the cut ends to anything they touch. Be sure to wipe off the ink from your cutting tool.

Unless we create some air space in the end of the cartridge tube, ink may expand during hot weather and leak into the barrel. We'll squeeze out some ink from the end of the tube with the pliers. Be sure you have some paper down during this process, because the ink will drip out.



Now we need to reopen the end of the tube. This is what actually creates the air space we need. Be sure to wipe off the pliers and cartridge when this step is completed.

We're almost done. Just slide the cartridge into the barrel and our mini-pen is complete.



As you can see, it will fit inside our cache container quite well.

And with the cap on the end, it's long enough to be easily handled.

