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Dave Campbell
Editorial Content Chief, *WOOD* magazine



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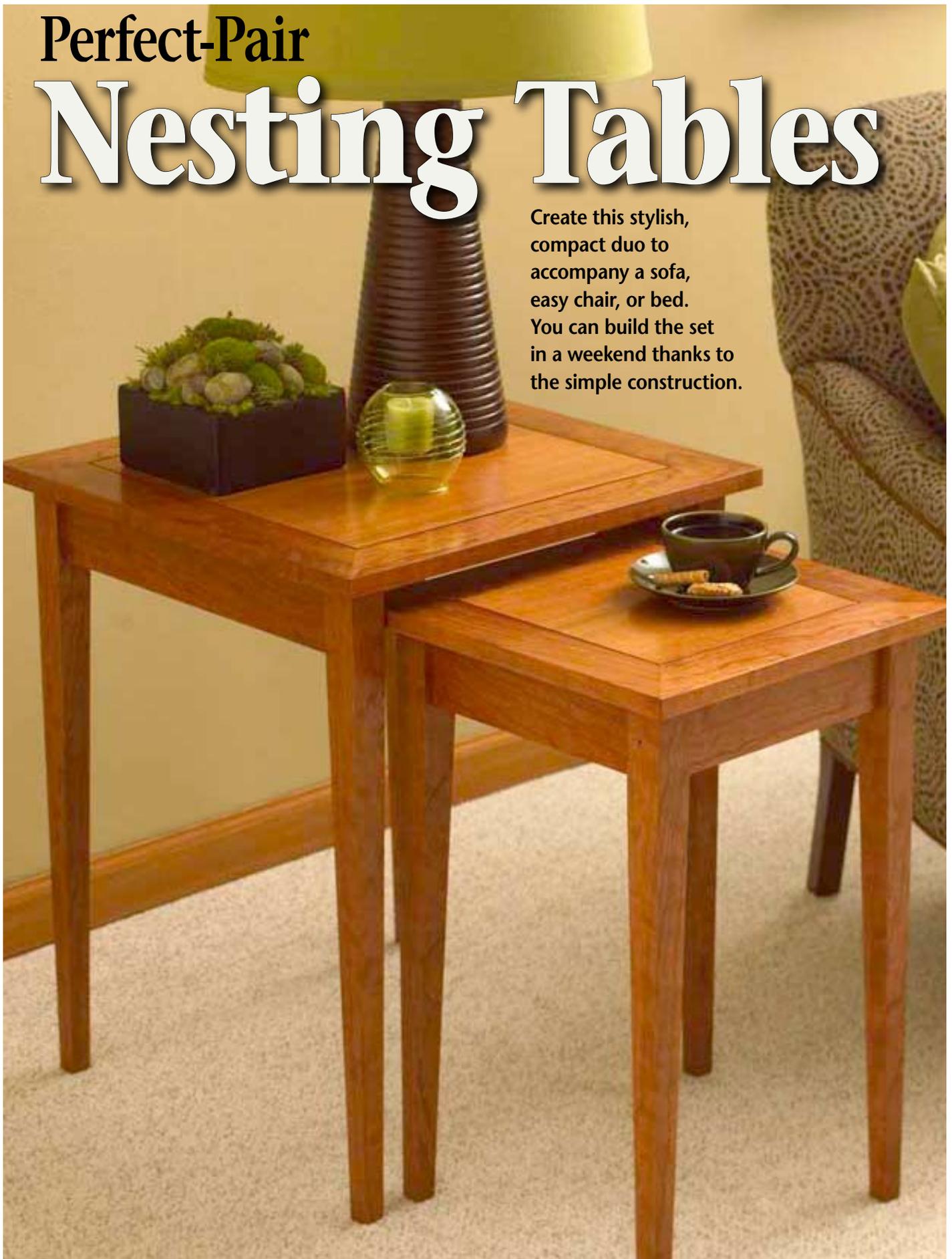
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Perfect-Pair

Nesting Tables

Create this stylish, compact duo to accompany a sofa, easy chair, or bed. You can build the set in a weekend thanks to the simple construction.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Overall dimensions:

Tall table—21" square × 25³/₄" high.
Short table—15³/₄" square × 23³/₄" high.
You'll appreciate the basic joinery: just biscuits and screws required.
As an alternative to hardwood plywood top panels, you can step up your creativity by making veneered panels to showcase an eye-catching burl, geometric pattern, or other figure, as explained on page 42.

Skill Builder

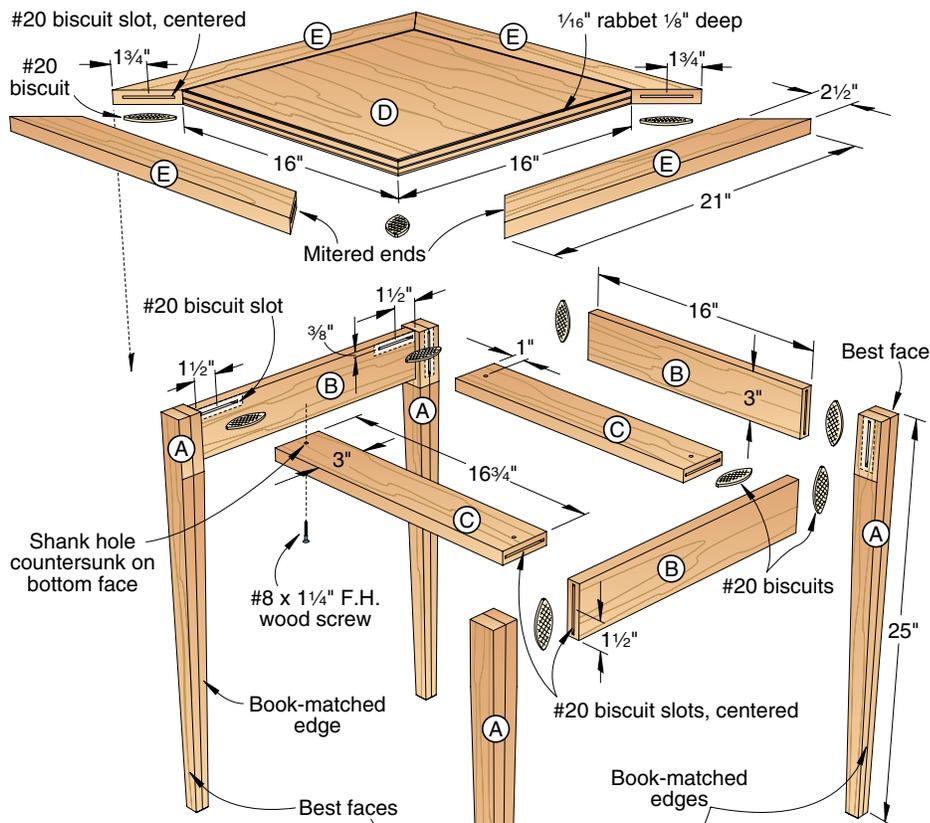
Learn how to easily form laminated legs with book-matched edges that rival the look—but not price—of solid stock.

Start with the legs

1 From laminated ³/₄" cherry, cut the tall- and short-table legs (A, F) to the sizes listed [Materials List, page 41]. For the best appearance, form the legs with a book-matched edge for the outside, as explained in the Shop Tip, below. (It's also fine to make the legs from solid stock.)

2 To ensure correct machining of the legs, mark the location on each ("RF" for right front, for example), and identify the best face for the outside.

3 Holding each leg in the appropriate orientation with the book-matched edge and best face outside [Drawings 1, 2, and 3a], draw centerlines for the #20 biscuit slots, and lay out the tapers where dimensioned [Drawing 3]. Note that because the tall table does not have a front rail (which allows the short table to slide under it), each front leg (A) has only one biscuit slot in the inside face for joining the side rails (B).



1 TALL-TABLE EXPLODED VIEW

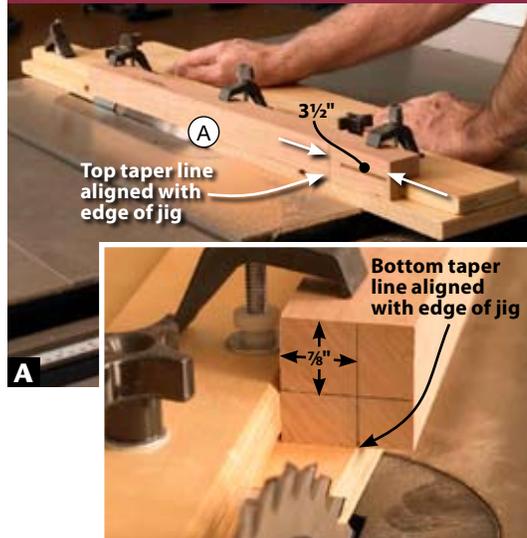
4 Using your biscuit joiner, plunge the slots into the legs (A, F) at the marked centerlines.

5 To taper the legs, place a tall-table back leg (A) on a taper jig with one biscuit slot facedown and the other facing the blade. (For a free taper-jig plan, go to woodmagazine.com/taperjig.) Align the marked taper lines with the edge of the jig [Photo A], and secure

the leg to the jig. Then rip the leg, rotate it 90° clockwise, and rip it again. Repeat for the other back leg (A) and for all four of the short-table legs (F).

For the tall-table left front leg (A), position the leg for the first rip with the biscuit slot down, and rotate the leg 90° clockwise for the second rip. For the right front leg,

TAPER THE LEGS



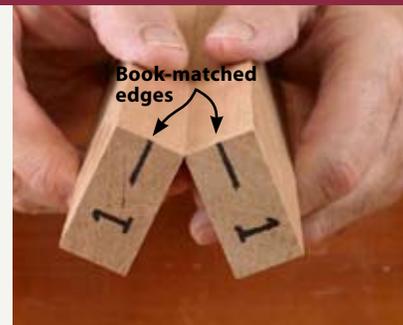
Align the marked taper lines on a back leg (A) with the edge of the taper jig. Rip the leg. Rotate the leg 90° clockwise (operator's view, top photo), and rip it again.

SHOP TIP

Disguise a lamination with a book-matched edge

When you can't find solid stock to make large parts, such as the table legs (A, F), or the cost of the thick lumber exceeds your budget, glue two pieces together to make one. You can make the glue-up virtually unnoticeable by creating a book-matched edge to face outside. Here's how.

Start with a piece of stock that's twice as wide as the finished part plus ¹/₂" (3¹/₂" wide for a 1¹/₂"-wide leg, for example). To make it easy to identify the book-matched edges after ripping the piece, draw a centered line about 1" long on one end. Rip the piece down the



center. Then laminate the pieces together, folding them as shown to create the book-matched edge. After the glue dries, rip and plane the lamination to the finished size. When laminating multiple parts, number or letter the mating pieces identically to prevent mix-ups.

start with the biscuit slot toward the blade for the first cut, and rotate the leg 90° clockwise for the final rip.

6 Hand-sand $\frac{1}{8}$ " chamfers on the bottom of each leg (A, F) [Drawing 3] using a 150-grit sanding block. Then sand the legs to 220 grit.

Next up: the rails

1 Cut the tall- and short-table rails (B, G) and cross-rails (C, H) to the sizes listed. Mark centerlines for #20 biscuit slots at both ends of each rail and cross-rail [Drawings 1 and 2]. Then mark centerlines at both ends of the two side rails (B, G) for each table on the inside faces, where dimensioned. Plunge the slots. Sand all of the parts smooth.

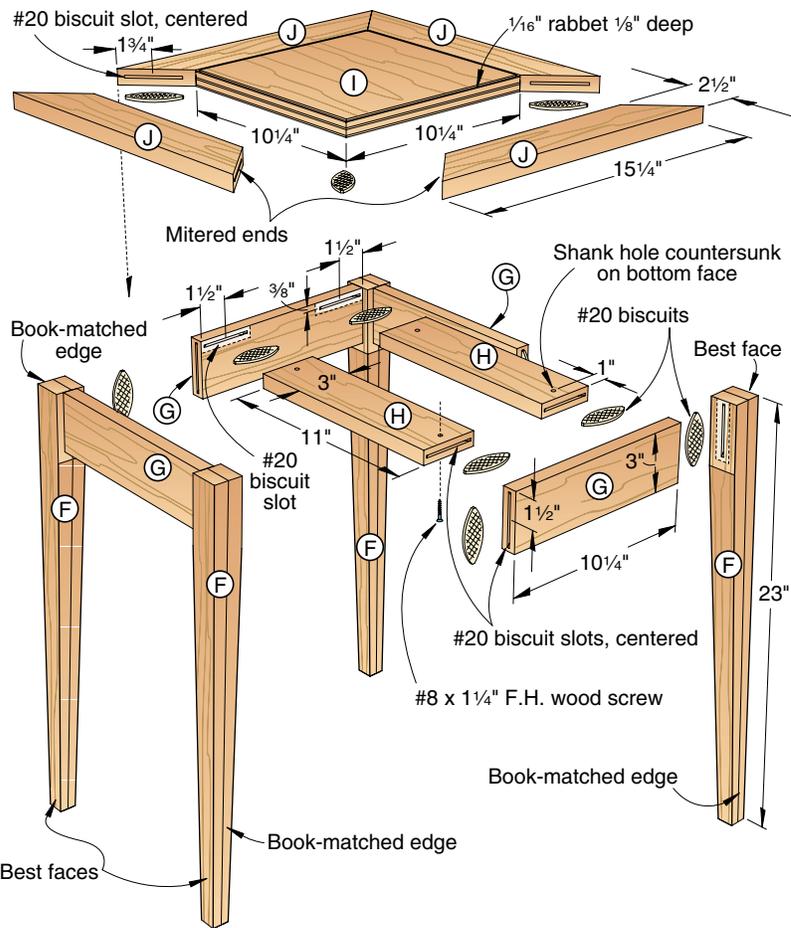
2 Mark a centerpoint for the mounting hole at each end of the cross-rails (C, H), where dimensioned, for attaching the tops later. Drill countersunk shank holes at the centerpoints. (For the #8 screws used in this project, drill $\frac{5}{32}$ " shank holes and $\frac{7}{64}$ " pilot holes.)

3 For the tall table, glue, biscuit, and clamp together the two side rails (B) and cross-rails (C) [Drawing 1, Photo B]. Repeat for the short-table side rails (G) and cross-rails (H) [Drawing 2].

4 Noting the leg markings to ensure correct location and orientation, glue, biscuit, and clamp together the two back legs (A) for the tall table to the ends of the back rail (B). Make sure you keep the top ends of the legs flush with the top edge of the rail. In the same way, assemble the short-table front and back legs (F) to the front and back rails (G).

5 For the tall table, glue, biscuit, and clamp the back leg/rail assembly (A/B) to the side rail/cross-rail assembly (B/C) [Photo C]. After the glue dries, glue, biscuit, and clamp the front legs (A)

2 SHORT-TABLE EXPLODED VIEW



in place. For the short table, mount the front and back leg/rail assemblies (F/G) to the side rail/cross-rail assembly (G/H).

Head for the tops

1 From $\frac{3}{4}$ " cherry plywood, cut the top panels (D, I) to the sizes listed. If you'd like to create eye-catching veneered panels, as explained on page 42, make the parts from $\frac{1}{2}$ " medium-

density fiberboard (MDF) and cut them 1" larger than the listed widths and lengths. Do not use $\frac{3}{4}$ " MDF because the veneer will stand proud of the top trim (E, J). Trim the panels to the finished sizes after veneering.

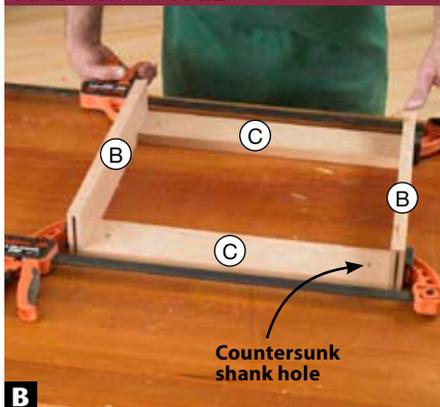
2 To create a reveal between the plywood or veneered top panels (D, I) and the top trim (E, J), rout a $\frac{1}{16}$ " rabbet $\frac{1}{8}$ " deep around each panel on the top face [Drawings 1, 2, and 4].

3 From $\frac{3}{4}$ " cherry, cut a $2\frac{1}{2} \times 92$ " blank to form the top trim (E) for the tall-table top panel (D) [Drawing 1], and a $2\frac{1}{2} \times 70$ " blank to form the top trim (J) for the short-table top panel (I) [Drawing 2]. Then, miter-cut the trim pieces to the needed lengths to fit the panels.

4 Draw centerlines at the mitered ends of the top trim (E, J) for biscuit slots, where dimensioned. Plunge the slots.

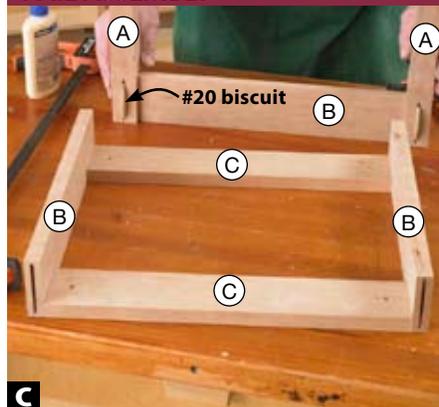
5 Apply glue to the edges of the tall-table top panel (D). Then glue, biscuit, and clamp the top trim (E) to the panel [Photo D], aligning the trim flush with the top face of the plywood or veneered panel and verifying tight mitered corners. (Our cherry plywood panels measured exactly $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick, so

ASSEMBLE THE SIDE RAILS AND CROSS-RAILS



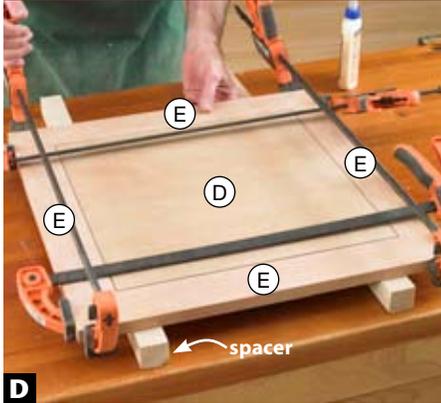
B With the parts upside down for easy alignment, glue, biscuit, and clamp together the tall-table side rails (B) and cross-rails (C).

MOUNT THE BACK LEG/RAIL ASSEMBLY



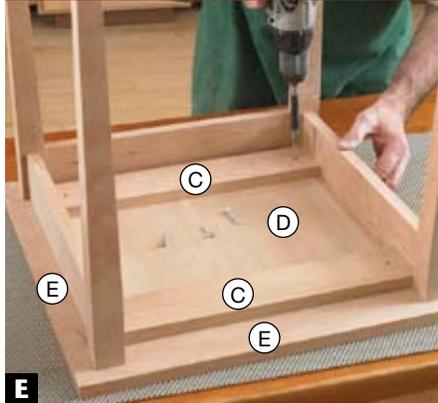
C Glue, biscuit, and clamp the tall-table back leg/rail assembly (A/B) to the side rail/cross-rail assembly (B/C), ensuring tight joints.

GLUE THE TRIM TO THE TOP PANEL



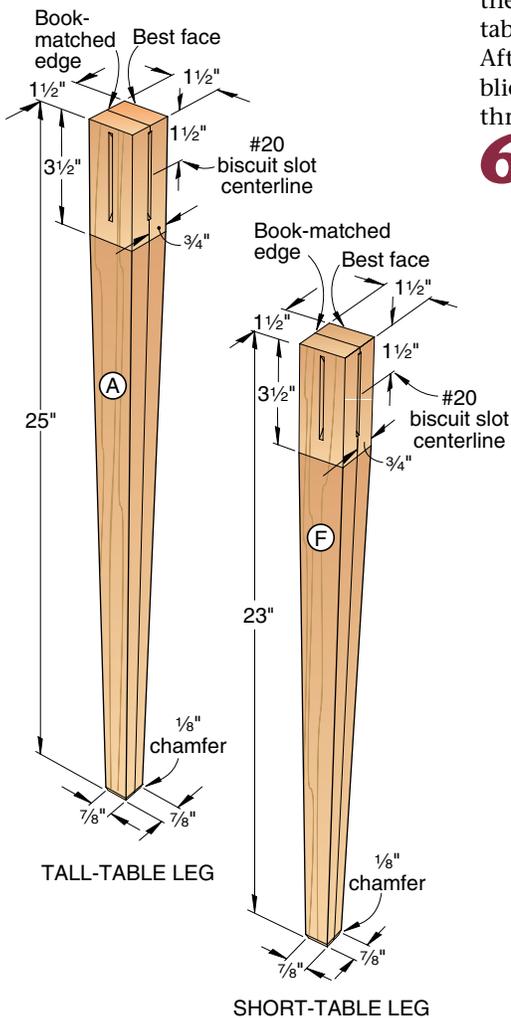
D Using spacers for clamp clearance, glue, biscuit, and clamp the tall-table top trim (E) to the top panel (D) with the top faces flush.

FASTEN THE BASE TO THE TOP



E Drill pilot holes into the tall-table top (D/E) using the shank holes in the cross-rails (C) of the base as guides. Drive the screws.

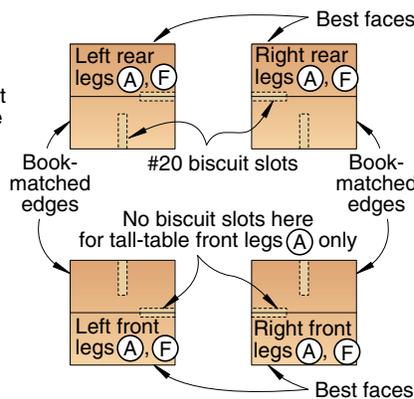
3 LEGS (Left rear legs shown)



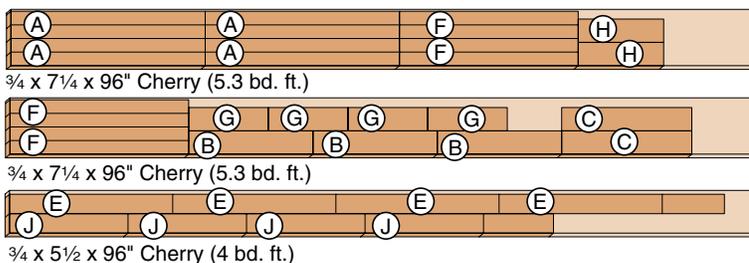
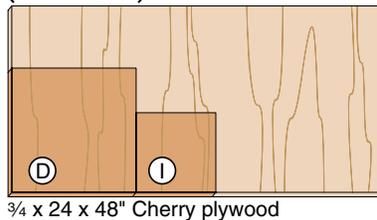
the top *and* bottom faces aligned with the trim.) Repeat to assemble the short-table top trim (J) to the top panel (I). After the glue dries, sand the top assemblies smooth, being careful not to go through the thin veneer.

6 Place the tall-table top (D/E) on a clean, protective surface (such as a

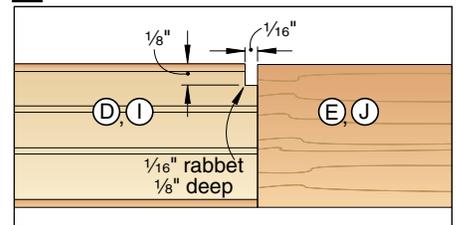
3a LEG BISCUIT-SLOT LOCATION DETAIL (Viewed from top)



Cutting Diagram (Both tables)



4 TOP-PANEL RABBET DETAIL



router mat) with the *bottom* face up. Center and screw-mount the base (A/B/C) to the top [Photo E]. Repeat to mount the short-table top (I/J) to the base (F/G/H). Now remove the tops for finishing.

Finish up

1 Finish-sand any areas of the tops and bases that need it to 220 grit, and remove the dust. Apply a stain, if you wish, and a clear finish. We applied Varathane Premium Gel Stain, no. 445 Traditional Cherry, followed by three coats of Minwax Polycrylic Water-Based Clear Satin Protective Finish, sanding to 320 grit between coats. As an option, apply a French polish instead of a clear finish to the tops (D/E, I/J) to give them a super-smooth, high-gloss look. To do this, see page 18.

2 Reattach the tops to the bases. Now move the tables to the desired location, slide the short table under the tall one, and take a moment to admire your classy craftsmanship. 🌳

Written by **Owen Duvall** with **Chuck Hedlund**
Project design: **Jeff Mertz**
Illustrations: **Roxanne LeMoine; Lorna Johnson**

Materials List

Tall table	FINISHED SIZE			Matl.	Qty.
	T	W	L		
A* legs	1 1/2"	1 1/2"	25"	LC	4
B rails	3/4"	3"	16"	C	3
C cross-rails	3/4"	3"	16 3/4"	C	2
D† top panel	3/4"	16"	16"	CP	1
E* top trim	3/4"	2 1/2"	21"	C	4
Short table					
F* legs	1 1/2"	1 1/2"	23"	LC	4
G rails	3/4"	3"	10 1/4"	C	4
H cross-rails	3/4"	3"	11"	C	2
I† top panel	3/4"	10 1/4"	10 1/4"	CP	1
J* top trim	3/4"	2 1/2"	15 1/4"	C	4

*Parts initially cut oversize. See the instructions.

†When making veneered top panels (D, I), use 1/2" medium-density fiberboard and cut the pieces 1" oversize in width and length. Trim the pieces to the finished sizes after veneering.

Materials key: LC—laminated cherry, C—cherry, CP—cherry plywood.

Supplies: #20 biscuits (30), #8x1 1/4" flathead wood screws (8).

Bit: Rabbeting router bit.

Easy, No-Fuss Veneering



Joining several veneer pieces lets you create attractive designs covering large areas at little cost compared with using solid wood.

Simple equipment and techniques give your projects the beauty of premium woods without premium prices.



For more on veneering, watch a series of free videos at woodmagazine.com/videos.

Today's adhesives and vacuum presses make veneering easier than ever. You can buy a vacuum veneer press capable of handling small projects. Or even build your own clamping press for small panels. (Download plans for one at woodmagazine.com/veneerpress.)

You probably have most of the other tools you need to start veneering: a metal straightedge or ruler 2' to 3' long; a utility knife with fresh blades; painter's tape; a mini paint roller; ½" and ¾" medium-density fiberboard (MDF) for platens; and 180-grit adhesive-backed sandpaper. You also need a roll of paper veneer tape. (See **Sources**.)

Most consistently flat sheet goods can serve as substrates, including MDF,

particleboard, or plywood. Solid wood also can be used if the veneer grain runs parallel to the substrate grain.

Beauty by the bundle

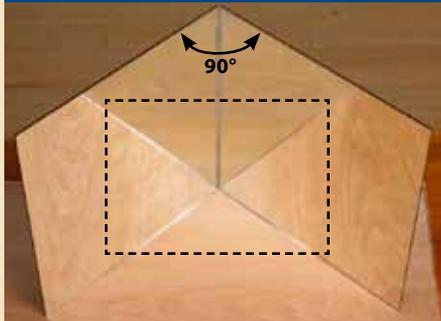
Most veneer comes in bundles of sheets stacked in the order they were sliced from a single log. Many suppliers post Web photos of veneer samples to help you choose. Each veneer bundle varies in size and quality, so tell your supplier what type of project you're making, its size, and the quantity of veneer you need. Most suppliers help you choose a bundle suited to your project. The nesting tables DP-00556a used a bundle of 8 veneer sheets about 2' long. For larger projects, buy veneer bundles 6' long or more by the square foot. (See **Sources**.)

SHOP TIP

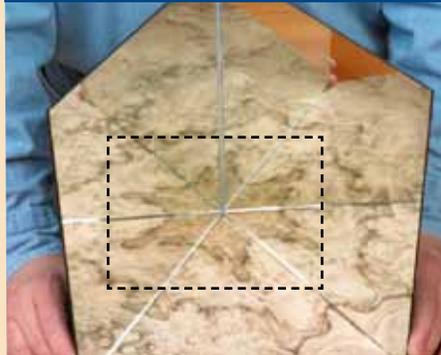
Mirrors provide a pattern peek

By taping together a pair of 12"-square mirrors and placing them atop your veneer, you gain a sneak preview of how your finished veneer pattern will look. By moving the mirror around or increasing or reducing the angle, you can gauge how the pattern changes with 4, 8, 12, or more pieces. For a 4-piece pattern shown *below*, hold the mirrors at 90°. Holding the mirrors one way shows a box match, where the grain runs parallel to the outside edges of the design, indicated by the dashed-line box. On the reverse box match, the grain runs perpendicular to the edges. For the 6-piece design shown at *bottom*, hold the mirrors at a 60° angle. Holding the mirrors at a 45° angle produces an 8-piece pattern.

PREVIEW A BOX MATCH PATTERN



6-PIECE MATCH



For matched patterns, as shown *above* and at *right*, order at least as many sheets as the number of pieces in the pattern, plus a couple of extras, just in case. Because you veneer both sides of a panel for wood-movement stability, order extra veneer of the same species or one with a similar density for the back side.

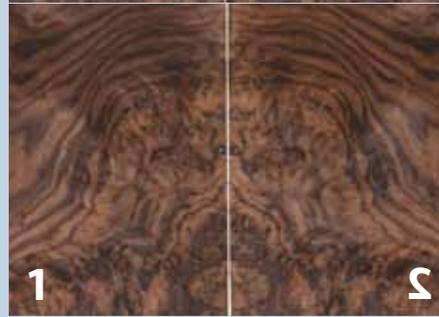
When your veneer arrives, use chalk to number the pieces in the order they're stacked upon arrival. On pieces you don't use immediately, apply strips of painter's tape to the ends to prevent splitting. Burl veneers require a treatment to make them flat and less brittle. (See "Take the Curl Out of Burl," *page 47*.) Store all remaining veneer between two pieces of ¾" MDF to avoid ripples.

PICK A PATTERN

You could just glue a single sheet of veneer to a substrate, but arranging veneer pieces into patterns offers many more creative options. (Reversed or rotated numbers indicate sheets that have been turned over or rotated from their original orientations.) Common patterns include:



Slip match. Simply slide one veneer sheet from a stack to the left or right of the sheet below and you've got a slip match. Use this where you don't need to match patterns at the edges, as with a straight-grain wood, or if you want to repeat a grain pattern. For a "flip and slip," turn every other piece end-for-end for a color match at the edges.



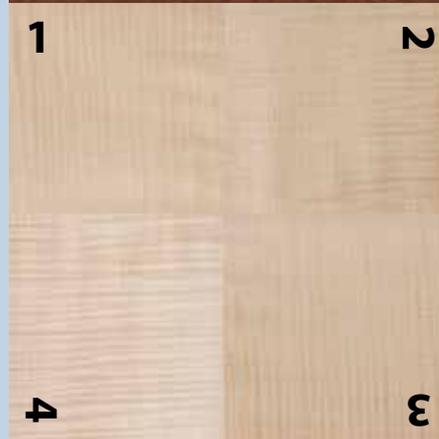
Book match. As you'd turn the pages in a book, turn one sheet over and butt it against the edge of the sheet below to create a mirror image of the grain pattern. Uses for this pattern include panels for side-by-side doors in a cabinet.



Diamond match. The grain of each piece runs diagonally to form a diamond shape. The color difference comes from how light reflects differently from one side of the veneer than the other.



Reverse diamond match. Here, the grain seems to form an "X" at the center of the panel.



Parquet (alternating-square) match. The grain orientation of each sheet runs 90° to the grain of the adjoining pieces. Experiment with this pattern using woods with straight grain or a uniform grain pattern, such as this quilted maple used for the clock project DP-00557a.

How to Build a Basic Book Match

Whether you're making this simple two-piece book match or a 16-piece pattern, the basic steps for cutting, assembling, and gluing veneer remain the same. To press veneer with a vacuum bag, as we demonstrate here, you sandwich your veneer and substrate between two platens made from $\frac{1}{2}$ " MDF $\frac{1}{2}$ " longer and wider than your finished panel. You also need a $\frac{3}{4}$ " MDF or particleboard base about 6" smaller than the length and width of your vacuum bag. Score the base with a grid of $\frac{1}{8}$ "-deep kerfs at 1" intervals. The kerfs prevent air from being trapped between the base and the lower platen. Round-over the base and top platen's upper edges to avoid damaging the bag.

STEP 1: For a simple book match, you need two consecutive-sliced sheets of veneer. Start by chalking numbers onto each sheet in your stack. Then stack your sheets so distinctive elements of the grain rest directly on top of each other. This may mean that each sheet slightly offsets from the adjacent one. Tape the pieces together as stacked.

STEP 2: Apply a strip of 180-grit adhesive-backed sandpaper to the underside of a straightedge or ruler to prevent it from slipping. Then position it along one edge of your veneer stack. Using your utility knife, slice through the stack to leave a clean, straight edge. Make light, repetitive cuts to keep the blade from following the veneer grain.

STEP 3: Make a sanding block by attaching 180-grit adhesive-backed sandpaper to an MDF scrap about 8" long. With the freshly cut veneer edge slightly overhanging your worksurface,

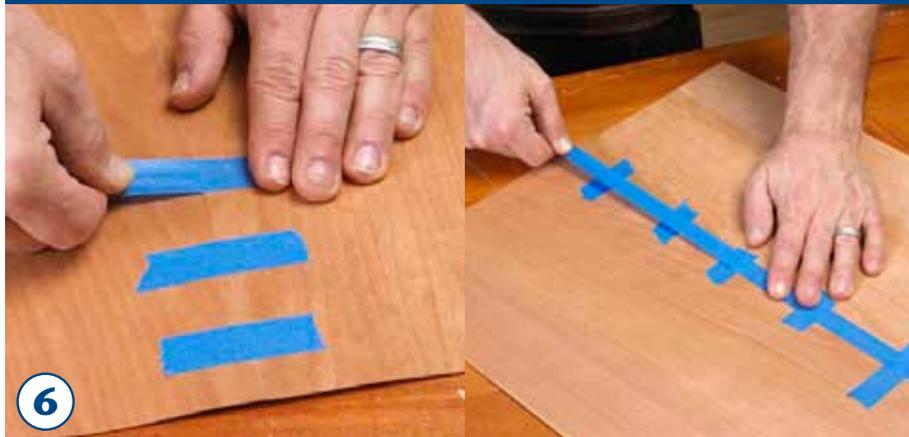
ORGANIZE YOUR SHEETS



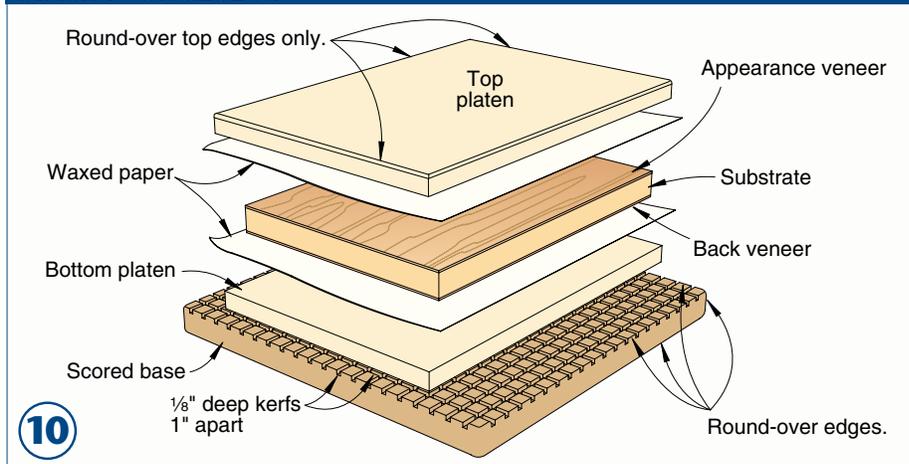
CUT THE FIRST EDGE



TAPE THE CUT AND SANDED EDGES



STACK YOUR GLUE-UP



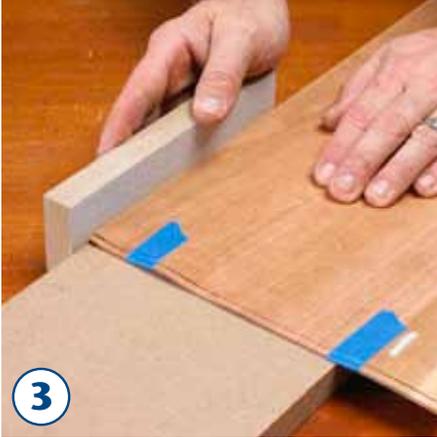
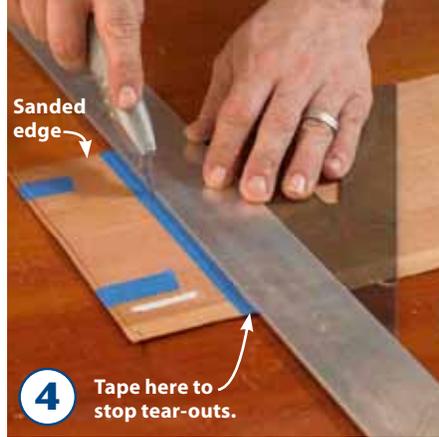
use long strokes to lightly sand the edges straight and square.

STEP 4: To avoid tearing the veneer, tape it from edge to edge over your cut-line perpendicular to the sanded edge. Using a right triangle, position your straightedge, and make a series of light cuts to remove the waste. Repeat on the

opposite end to trim both pieces to length; then, remove the tape.

STEP 5: Turn the top sheet over, as you would turn the pages of a book.

STEP 6: Turn the sheets facedown, and use taut pieces of painter's tape to pull the cut edges tightly together, as shown *above left*. Then, reinforce the

SAND EDGES TO BE JOINED**3****CUT THE END AT 90°****4** Tape here to stop tear-outs.**FLIP THE PIECES****5****APPLY VENEER TAPE****7****GLUE THE SUBSTRATE****8****ATTACH THE VENEER****9****APPLY VACUUM PRESSURE****11****REMOVE THE VENEER TAPE****12**

length of the joint with one long strip of tape, as shown.

STEP 7: Flip the taped sheets over, and apply a strip of veneer tape over the seam. Allow the tape to dry, and remove the painter's tape from the back. Repeat steps 1 through 7 to create a backer veneer for your glue-up. Then trim both to the size of your substrate.

STEP 8: Using a small paint roller, apply an even coat of white glue to the substrate. Avoid roller marks or glue drops that may prevent the veneer from being pressed flat.

STEP 9: Center and lay the veneer on the glued substrate. Repeat the previous step and this step for the backer veneer on the underside.

STEP 10: Platens above and beneath your glue-up—protected by wax paper—help the vacuum bag press the veneer firmly and evenly against the substrate. Place the scored base inside the vacuum bag, then assemble the glue-up stack, and tape it together with clear packing tape to keep it from shifting. Place the stack inside the bag on the center of the base, and cover it with the plastic mesh that comes with the vacuum bag.

STEP 11: Seal the vacuum bag according to the manufacturer's instructions, and pump out the air. Allow the glue to dry within the bag for at least four hours. After removing the glue-up from the bag, lean the glue-up against a wall or your workbench to allow both sides to stabilize overnight.

STEP 12: Moisten the veneer tape with a wet sponge to reactivate the adhesive. Use a putty knife to gently scrape off the tape and wipe away adhesive residue. After the surface dries, trim the panel to its finished size, and carefully hand-sand to the same grit as the rest of your project.

Let's Try a Diamond Match

Once you've mastered the basics, you're ready for a more sophisticated pattern. Here, we lay out four pieces of sapele pommelle with a rippling grain.

STEP 1: Stack and number four consecutive sheets of veneer, and tape them together to prevent shifting. Use mirrors held at a 90° angle to visualize the ideal four-way grain match, as shown on page 43. This also lets you work around any veneer defects. Then, mark the mirror location, and lay out your cuts along those lines using a straightedge and triangle. Cut one edge, remove the waste, renumber the pieces, and retape them.

STEP 2: Use a triangle to set your straightedge perpendicular to your first cut; then remove the remaining waste to form a 90° angle. (Don't worry if the remaining sides form odd angles.) Remove the tape.

STEP 3: Turn over the top two veneer pieces, using the first edge you cut as the "book" spine. Pieces 1 and 2 should be upside down.

STEP 4: Turn over pieces 2 and 3 as shown for the four-piece match. Sand the mating edges, as shown earlier, and use painter's tape to join pieces 1 and 2. Repeat for pieces 3 and 4; then check the seam between the two halves.

STEP 5: Unless your two cuts were dead-on accurate, you'll end up with a gap between the two halves that looks something like that shown at right.

STEP 6: Place one of the halves between your straightedge and a scrap of MDF with about 1/8" overhanging. Then, use a rigid sanding block to sand this edge flush with the straight edge of the MDF. Repeat this for the other half.

STEP 7: With all four pieces assembled, apply veneer tape along the seams on the top face. Next, remove the painter's tape, center your substrate on the face-down veneer using the technique in our **Shop Tip** next page, and trim away the excess. Finish by gluing the substrate, and press this pattern, as in the basic book match.



Stretch Veneers to Fit Your Project

Some project parts call for wider veneers than you have on hand. No problem; just use this simple technique to double the width of your veneer pieces.

STEP 1: To cover a substrate wider than the width of your veneer, first pick the grain angle you want, and mark it on the veneer. Although this technique works for any number of veneer sheets, we only need a single sheet to cover this substrate with a diagonal grain pattern.

STEP 2: On the edge where your knife blade exits, place painter's tape to

avoid tearing off the fine point of the corner. Then, place a straightedge on your pencil line, and cut the veneer in a series of light passes. Carefully remove the tape to avoid pulling off the point.

STEP 3: With both pieces flat on your worksurface, swing the cutoff piece around until the sanded edges butt together. Because the color and grain pattern are the same along the edge, it's easy to match them for the look of one wide piece. Then, use painter's tape on the back side to join the halves. 🌿

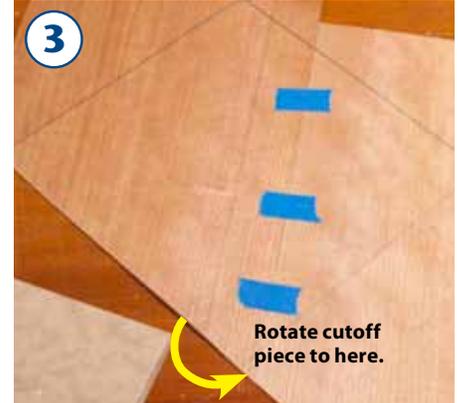
MARK THE FIRST ANGLE TO BE CUT



CUT VENEER WITH NO TEAR-OUT



MATCH THE VENEER EDGES

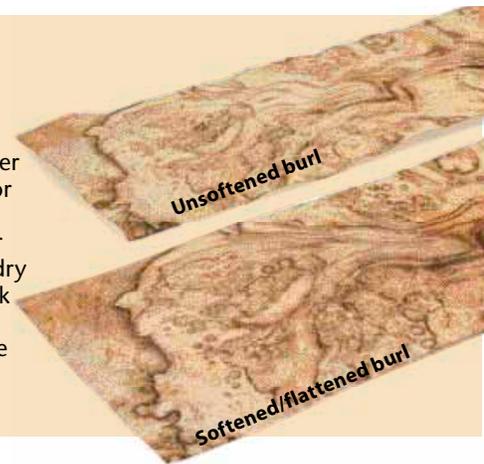


TAKE THE CURL OUT OF BURL

Try to press rippled, unsoftened burl, and you end up with a bumpy pile of shattered wood. But by softening burl just before veneering it, you have flat sheets of flexible material that retain burl's swirling patterns.

Today's commercial wood softeners (see **Sources**) make flattening burl quick and easy. Start by mixing softener with water (where required) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Then, brush or spray softener onto both sides of each piece, and allow the sheets to absorb the softener for 10 minutes.

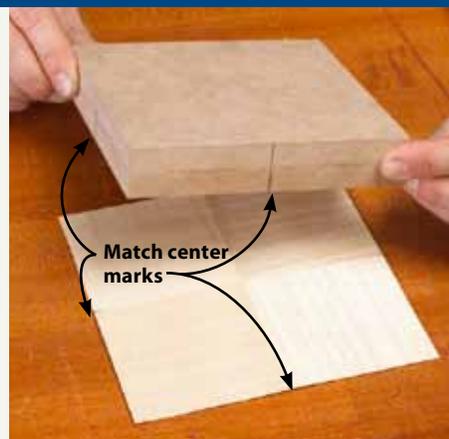
To flatten the treated sheets, place three paper towels on the top, and three beneath each sheet. Stack the veneer sheets and paper towels, and place them between two MDF or particleboard platens. Compress the platens using clamps or your vacuum veneer bag for three hours. Replace the paper towels with dry ones, and reclamp or vacuum-press the stack for another three hours. Repeat this process until the towels and veneer are dry. Store the flattened veneer between two platens until you're ready to use it.



SHOP TIP

Center veneer patterns on your substrate

To position a four-piece veneer pattern precisely in the center of a substrate, begin by marking the center of all four edges of the substrate. If necessary, to make the seams more visible, mark where the veneer pieces meet. After applying glue to the substrate, match all of the center marks with the veneer seams, and hand-press the substrate against the veneer. Then, press the glue-up using clamps or a vacuum veneer press, taking care not to shift the veneer.



Sources

Veneer tape. No. 49858, a 650' roll, call Rockler Woodworking and Hardware at 800-279-4441; rockler.com.

Veneer bundles. Sapele pommelle, figured maple, cherry, and walnut burl available from Certainly Wood, 716-655-0206 or certainlywood.com; VeneerSupplies.com, 888-598-3633; and B&B Rare Woods, call 303-986-2585 or wood-veneers.com.

Veneer softener: Super-Soft 2, VeneerSupplies.com. Veneer softener, (mix 1:1 with water), call Veneer Systems, Inc., at 800-825-0840; veneersystems.com.



Polish Your Shellac Skills

French polishing builds layers of shellac into a high-gloss finish without streaks or dust nibs.



Watch a FREE video on French polishing at woodmagazine.com/videos.

Think of French polishing—the centuries-old process of applying finish using a shellac-soaked cloth pad—as the hand-cut dovetail joint of the finishing world: It takes only a few minutes to yield beautiful results using just simple tools.

A French-polished finish's grain-popping gloss proves easier to repair than modern finishes, and it produces fewer strong fumes than oil-based coatings. Even if you never French-polish an entire project, you could use the straight-forward techniques demonstrated here to touch up minor scratches or scuffs on any glossy finish, including varnish or lacquer.

Prepare to polish

Mix a 2-pound cut of shellac by dissolving 2 ounces of ground-up flakes (see **Sources**) in 8 fluid ounces of denatured alcohol from a newly opened container that hasn't absorbed water vapor. For a warm-color finish, use garnet or amber shellac flakes; to preserve the color of light woods, use blonde or super-blonde shellac flakes.

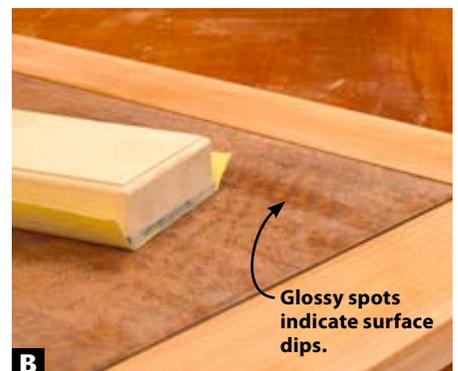
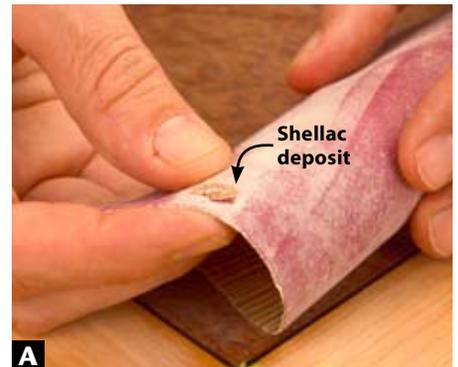
You also need a lint-free cotton or linen cloth, such as a frequently

washed, white cotton T-shirt or linen handkerchief, cotton or wool wadding (a T-shirt works for this, too), mineral or paraffin oil, and naphtha. You can pour shellac directly onto the pad, but an applicator bottle makes less mess.

Next, prepare your surface for finishing. Start by filling the pores of open-grain woods with a commercial pore filler or by brushing multiple coats of shellac onto the surface and then sanding them down to bare wood using 180-grit coated abrasive. Shellac quickly gums up sandpaper, so check it frequently for shellac deposits that can scratch the surface **[Photo A]**. Repeat until the shellac-filled pores become level with the surrounding wood. By hand-sanding with a flat pad, you can use shellac's gloss to discover low spots on the surface that you need to continue filling **[Photo B]**.

Now it's time to make your applicator pad. Lay a piece of lint-free fabric about 8" square atop a flat surface. Add loose wadding or pieces of fabric at the center of the square, and gather the corners together **[Photo C]**. Experiment with different amounts of wadding until you create the largest pad you can hold comfortably. Once you find the right size, apply shellac to the inside wadding before twisting together the corners of the outside piece, forming the wadding into a ball with a wrinkle-free bottom. Apply additional shellac to the bottom of the pad, and allow it to soak in. Now you're ready to wipe on the finish.

continued on page 20



continued from page 18

Keep the pad moving

Start your polishing stroke with the pad slightly above the surface, and begin moving it sideways in the direction of the grain and down until it touches the wood. Move it quickly across the surface with moderate pressure at first, and lift it away after you reach the edge [Photo D]. You apply such thin layers of shellac that they dry almost instantly, so keep the applicator pad constantly moving to avoid leaving marks.

For a steady flow of shellac, hold the pad firmly but without squeezing it tightly at first. Increase your grip pressure on the pad and press it down increasingly harder to force out more shellac. When the alcohol in the shellac evaporates, it leaves a momentary trail behind the pad. When the trails stop, refill the pad until shellac comes to the surface when you press your finger firmly against it.

As the finish builds, you may notice the pad begin to drag against the existing shellac layers. To lubricate it, dip your fingertip into mineral oil or paraffin oil and run it across the pad [Photo E]. Use only enough oil to keep the pad from catching.

Avoid working the same area until the surface becomes tacky and dull from having the shellac continually resoftened. If you need to take a break or wait for the surface to dry, seal your polishing pad in an airtight jar [Photo F]. Should the shellac harden on the stored pad, soften it by adding alcohol.

Keep polishing until you achieve the desired gloss, but beware of a shine resulting more from oil than shellac. To check how the real finish looks after it's dried completely, remove the excess oil using a cloth saturated with naphtha [Photo G], which won't dissolve shellac. Remove any streaks or rag marks by lightly sanding them with 1,000-grit abrasive lubricated with mineral oil; then resume polishing.

After about a half hour of polishing, you should see an even, high-gloss finish [Photo H]. For still more shine, top off the finish with a wax or polish. 🌳

Source

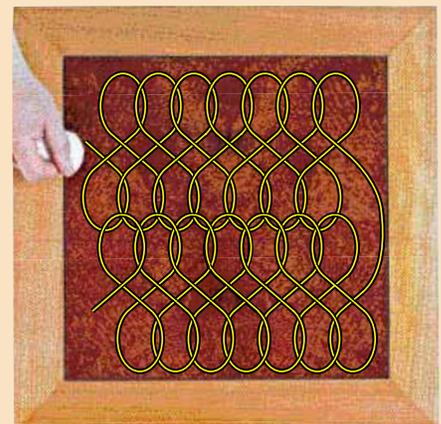
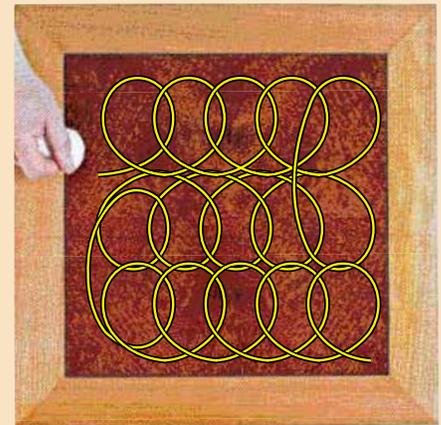
Garnet shellac flakes. Hock dewaxed garnet flakes, call Tools for Working Wood at 800-426-4613; toolsforworkingwood.com.



Vary your French-polishing strokes

You can French-polish a surface using simple back-and-forth strokes, but the job goes faster and is easier on your arms if you vary your polishing pattern. The strokes illustrated *below* allow you to move the pad constantly without frequently lifting it from the surface. As with the basic back-and-forth stroke, your pad needs to be moving when it touches down on the wood surface and as you lift it away. Avoid letting the pad come to a stop as you change directions or you'll dull the surface and leave pad marks.

Whichever pattern you choose, remember this French-polishing adage: Take care of the edges, and the middle will take care of itself. You can French-polish the frame of a tabletop separate from the center panel, but strokes should extend over all four edges of the surface you're polishing. For framed surfaces like the ones shown, we French-polished the center panel separately from the frame.



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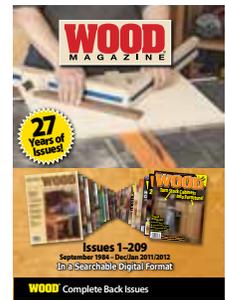
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