

Woodworking Tips



Plastic Runner

Many of the jigs I use on my table saw and band saw have a runner that slides in the miter gauge slot. Typically, these runners are made of hardwood. But recently I started using another type of material I like even better — plastic.



The nice thing about a plastic runner (like the one shown in the upper photo) is it won't swell or shrink with changes in humidity, so it will always slide smoothly without binding or slop. Plus, plastic is readily available. As you can see in the bottom photo, I simply cut a narrow strip from a plastic cutting board.

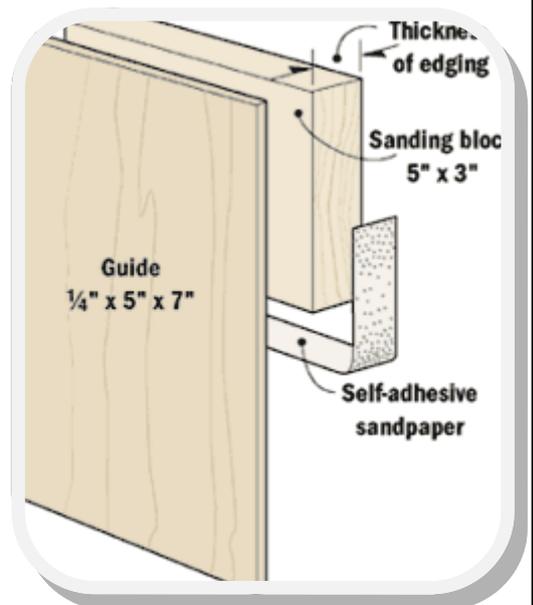


Sanding Block Solves Edging Problem

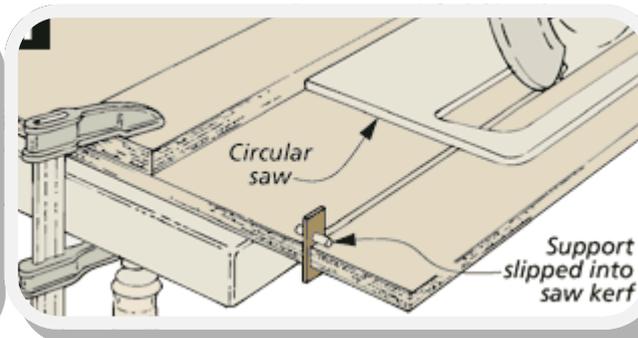
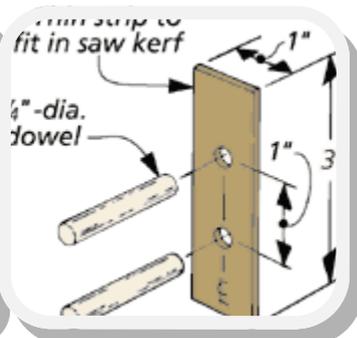
The biggest challenge in applying solid-wood edging to any project is sanding the edging flush with the surface of the plywood -- without sanding through the thin veneer.

To solve this problem, I make a simple sanding block that lets me sand precisely on the top of the edging -- not on the plywood (see Photo).

The sanding block must be the same thickness as the edging. Then to prevent the block from tipping and rounding over the edging, simply glue on a 1/4"-thick plywood guide (see Illustration). To turn this into a sanding block, attach a narrow strip of self-adhesive sandpaper to the bottom of the block.



To use the sanding block, hold the guide firmly against the edging. Then slide the block back and forth to sand the edging flush with the plywood.



Plywood Ripping Support

I like to use my circular saw to rip down sheets of plywood.



But if the cut-off piece is unsupported, it can sag -- sometimes even breaking off and tearing the veneer before I finish the cut.

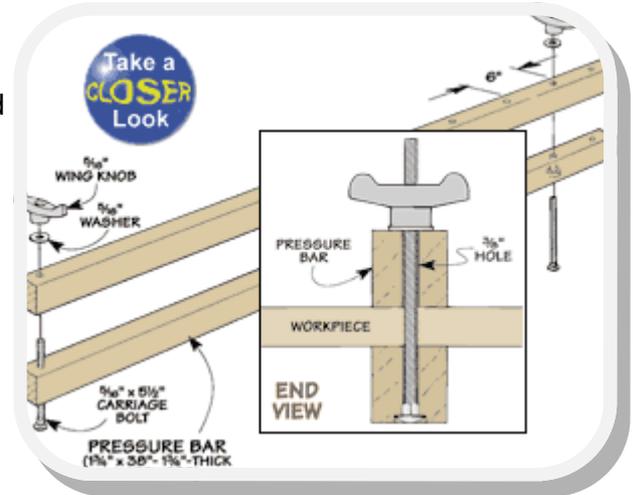
So to prevent this problem, I came up with the support shown in the photo. As you can see, it's pretty simple -- just a thin strip of 1/8" hardboard with a couple 1/4" dowels spaced 1" apart.



Edge-Gluing Guide

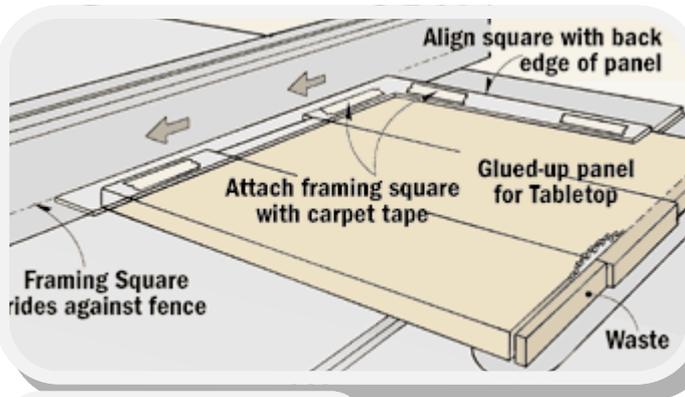
When gluing up a solid-wood panel, the boards always seem to shift up or down slightly. So I often end up with a small "step" at the joint line.

To create a flat panel, I clamp *pressure bars* across the boards, as you can see in the photo. The pressure bars are squeezed together by tightening wing knobs on carriage bolts that pass through the bars.



The bars need to be pretty stiff, so I used 1 3/4"-square hardwood, as shown in the drawing. Mine are long enough to glue up panels 36" wide.

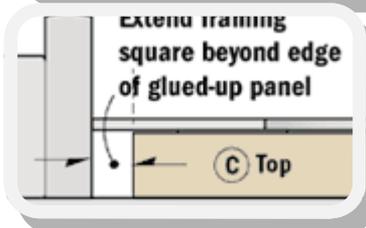
Drilling a few extra holes along one end of both bars allow me to move the bolts closer together when gluing narrow panels. And each hole is counterbored so the bars can sit flat on my workbench or the shop floor. Before using the pressure bars, you'll want to apply a generous coat of paste wax to their inside faces. This prevents them from getting permanently glued to the boards.



Crosscutting a Glued-Up Panel

Trimming a glued-up panel to width is pretty easy. Just set the rip fence on the table saw and run the straight edge against the fence. But crosscutting the panel to length presents a small problem -- the panel doesn't have a straight edge to ride against the rip fence.

So, in order to create a straight edge, I attach a framing square to the panel with double-sided tape so that the square extends over the edge (see illustration). This way, the square rides against the fence as you trim the end.



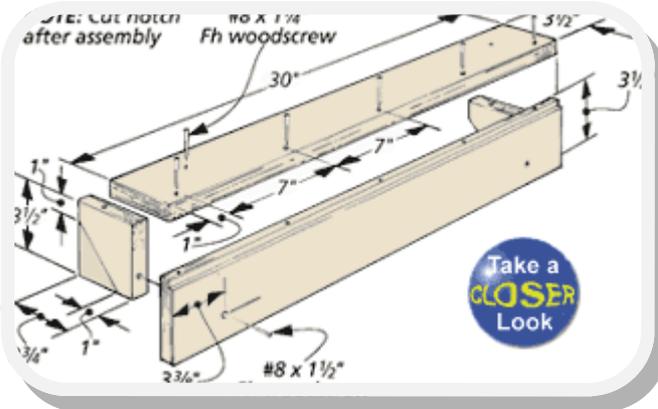
To cut the opposite end, just remove the square and run the cut edge against the fence.



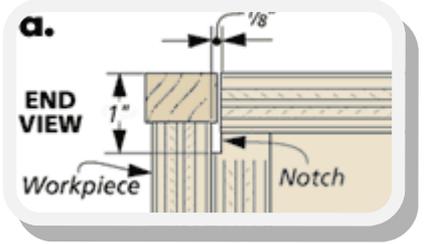


Flush Trim Jig

Recently I built a bookcase with several plywood shelves, and to conceal the front edge of the plywood, I glued a hardwood strip onto each shelf. But there was a problem when I tried to use a router with a flush trim bit to trim the edging. The front surface of the edging wasn't wide enough to support the router. So I built a simple jig to solve this problem.



As you can see in the picture, the jig is just an L-shaped "shelf" that clamps to the side of the workpiece to provide a surface for the router to ride on. It's made from a couple pieces of $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood that are glued and screwed together. A small brace block is added to each end (see drawing). And before the jig can be used, a shallow notch is cut along the face to create clearance for the edging (detail a).



To use the jig, just clamp it to the workpiece, flush with the front of the edging.



Prevent Scroll Saw Burn

Whenever I use a scroll saw, I find that some types of wood are just about impossible to cut without burning the edges. (Cherry seems to be the worst culprit.) And the problem gets progressively worse as the blade gets dull.

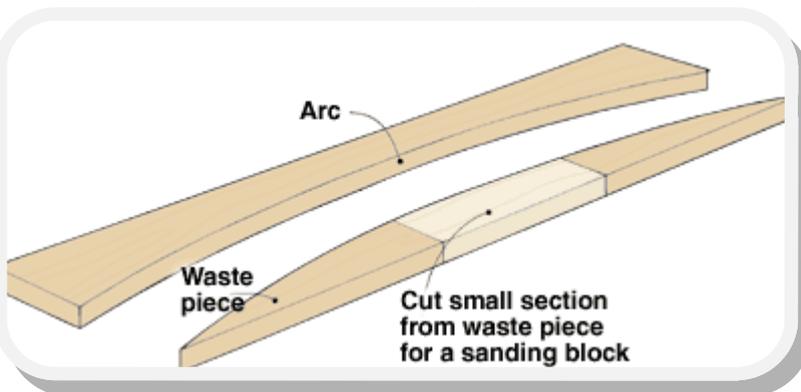
Fortunately, there's an easy solution. I



just cover the cutting line with a strip of cellophane tape, see left photo. (I use 2"-wide packing tape.)

With the tape in place, it practically eliminates the burn marks on the edges, see left photo.

What makes the tape work? I'm not sure, but my guess is it lubricates the blade just enough to keep it cool. Whatever the reason, I end up with a nice, clean edge that requires little, if any, sanding.



Sanding an Arc

Sanding a curved surface with a square sanding block is like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. So whenever I have to sand an arc smooth, I use the waste piece from the arc cutout to make a curved sanding block.

To do this, simply cut a

small section from the middle of the waste piece (as shown at right). Then apply a piece of self-adhesive sandpaper to the curved edge of the block (see Detail illustration). The curve will match the arc perfectly.

