



Woodworking Project Planning

How to Plan your
Project for Success

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Why use project planning in woodworking?

1. Save money and time
2. Improve output
3. Work efficiently & safely
4. Improve repeatability
5. Get better over time!

When you *don't* plan, you risk:

- Wasting effort, materials, and money!
- Extending your timeline
- Ending up with a work product that doesn't fulfill its function
- Possibly produce a piece that doesn't match your original vision and that isn't repeatable in the future

2 days ago on Reddit: Why planning is important

What they want:

How it's going



r/woodworking • 2 days ago
grasperakiendlyfhost

I don't have a steam box... is this going to work?



The Six Steps in Planning a Project



1

Envision & sketch

Sketch out your project from start to finish with a regular eye toward function



2

Create cutlist and assembly plan

Explore how you will break down and assemble stock into your final product



3

Gather tools, materials and hardware

Tools, lumber, hardware, glue, sandpaper, & finishes to complete your project

The Six Steps in Planning



4

Prepare workspace(s)

Create a clear, safe work area for each of your project's stages



5

Set and track project milestones

Give your project milestones, and celebrate reaching each one!



6

Test and adjust as you go

Rarely does everything go perfectly to plan. Adjust as needed and keep going!

1 | Envision and Sketch

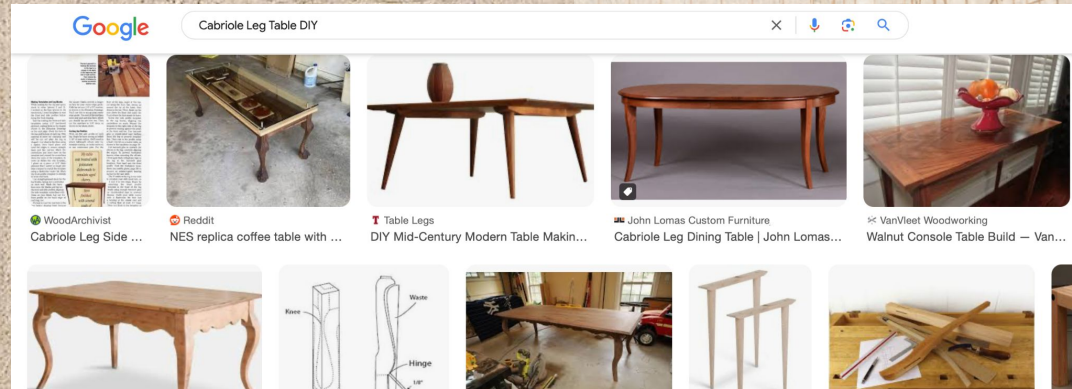
Inspiration:

- Google Image Search
- Youtube videos
- Etsy
- Other woodworkers & artists
- High-end retailers

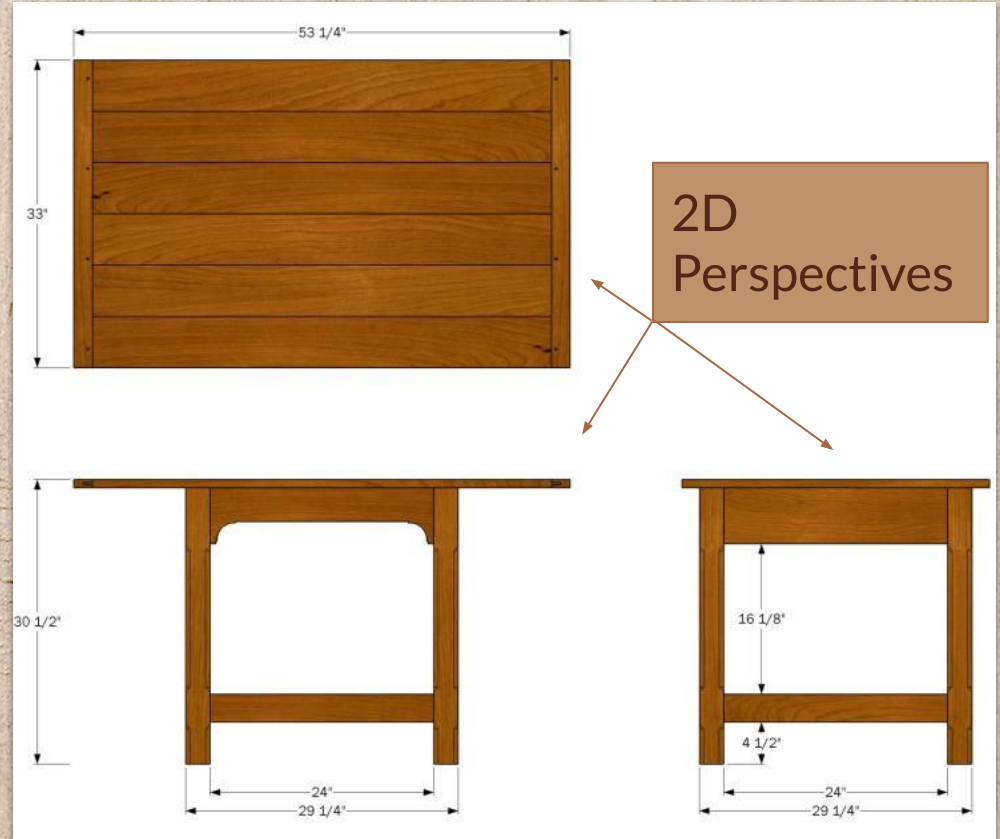
Sketching your idea

- Pencil, graph paper and ruler is plenty
- Software like Sketchup (or Powerpoint)
- Excel spreadsheets for part-lists
- Drawings make it easier to plan and also share your ideas with others for advice

Protip: Adding “DIY” or “Woodworking Project” to your Google Image Search prompt will return other people’s projects



Orthographic Drawing in Woodworking



Recommended Cutlist tools

- PC: MaxCut Community Edition
- Web: cutlist optimizer.com, optiCutter.com
- iOS/Android: <https://cutlistoptimizer.app> (SmartCut) (Free)
- PC/Mac: Cut List 4.1 and OpenCutList (Sketchup add-on)

1. Use Cutlist software to determine stock needs and account for cutoffs/wastage
2. Define setup & order of cuts using spreadsheet
3. Group special cuts like dados and bevels to minimize setup time
4. Dry fit and measure regularly to spot errors.
5. Plan steps like partial glue-ups, veneer so you can work on other parts while they dry.
6. ***Remember to take into account environmental factors for dry time***

2 | Create Cutlist & Assembly plan

The screenshot displays a software interface for creating a cutlist. The top menu bar includes: Parts, Other Items, Labor, Layouts, B.O.M., Reports, Pricing, Raw Materials. The 'Layouts' tab is active, showing a 'Selected Material/Thickness' table and a 'Selected Diagram'.

Part #	Sub-Assembly	Description	Copies in Layout	Thick	Rough Y	Rough X	Banding
20	Base (Pantry)	Deep Shelf	4	3/4"	20"	34 1/2"	MV-0-0-0
20[R]	Base (Pantry)	Deep Shelf	1	3/4"	34 1/2"	20"	MV-0-0-0
22	Base (Pantry)	Toe Kick - Short 2	4	3/4"	4"	30"	None
22[R]	Base (Pantry)	Toe Kick - Short 1	1	3/4"	30"	4"	None
25	Base (Pantry)	Pail - Bottom	3	3/4"	4"		

Below the table is a visual layout of the cutlist, showing dimensions and part numbers (20, 22, 25) arranged in a grid. The layout includes dimensions like 34 1/2", 20", 4", 30", 25", 18", and 4".

At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Show Grain', 'Hide Dupes', and 'Styl'. The status bar at the very bottom shows: 'Train: None', 'Vendor: ABC Lumber', 'Bin: 9E', 'Part: 1/8"', 'Part Padding: 0"', 'Waste: 15.3%'.



2 | Create Cutlist and Assembly Plan

How will you mill/cut your stock to size?

How will you assemble your piece?

What loads and stresses will it need to withstand?

Learn about wood movement (!)

Strategize your order of sanding, assembly & finishing. What should come first and last?

How to protect sanded pieces during glue up and assembly.

In what order should you assemble parts?



3 | Gather material, hardware and tools



3 | Gather material, hardware and tools

- Source lumber/materials first, then hardware, then any necessary tools
- Check ACW lumber stock first for best prices
- Other ways to reduce costs:
 - Recycled/reclaimed wood
 - Facebook marketplace
 - Private sawmills
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - Cull lumber at big box



4 | Prepare Workspaces

Set up a clean, organized workspace with good lighting and adequate ventilation

A great time to clean out the home shop!

If working at ACW, great time to learn the shop schedule!

Make sure you have plenty of safety equipment, eye & hearing, push sticks, featherboards

If working with large, heavy pieces, ensure you have enough mobility (or helpers) in your shop and that they can be stored and moved safely

There is **nothing** wrong with spending an hour or more setting up for an important cut. The accuracy and safety are worth it!



When You Can't Find
Anything In The Shop..

**Planing
Jointing
Sawing
Joinery
Sanding
Assembly
Sanding
Finishing
Sanding**

5 | Set and track milestones while during your project

- Set and use gates and milestones to track your progress.
- Rule 2: Sanding always takes longer than you thought it would.
- If working for a client (even a family member), schedule spot checks and acceptance criteria for along the way. This will ensure you're both on the same page at completion.
- Circle back to your original functional goals to make sure they're still going to be reached.
- You still have more sanding to do.



6 | Test and Adjust Regularly



Test, dry fit and measure often to enjoy fewer surprises.

Accidents and mistakes will happen. They're how you learn.

Test fit parts before glue-up

Don't rush things.

Questions?

Presentation and Meeting
Recording will be made
available

