

TIPS + TRICKS

Choosing Tools

SAWS

The most versatile and affordable saw is a circular saw with a combination blade. Beginners will appreciate using just one blade for both ripping and cross cutting.

Jig saws (aka saber saws) cut in an up-and-down motion and offer much more control. Use a jig saw for making complex cuts or more intricate designs.

HAMMERS

Small nails are easier to drive with a shorter, lighter hammer (8-16 oz.) with a small, flat head. A longer handle delivers more power, but it's harder to control. For more durability and comfort, we recommend a fiberglass or composite handle.

POWER DRILLS VS. SCREWDRIVERS

A cordless power drill and a screwdriver (manual, electric, or power) will all fasten a screw. But for predrilling holes *and* driving screws, pick a drill with either two speeds or a variable speed. High is for drilling, low is for screwing.



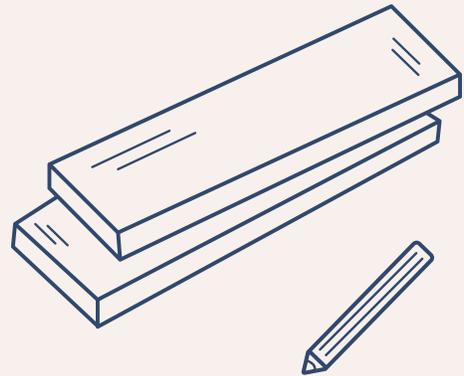
Woodworking Tips

SAWING

As they say, measure twice, cut once.

For the cleanest cut, consider these tips:

- Use a new, fine-tooth, 80-tooth or more, carbide, combination sawblade.
- Score your cutline first using a straight edge and a sharp blade, like a utility knife or razor blade. (The cutline is the line the sawblade will travel.) When measuring, add the width of the sawblade to your mark.
- Give extra support to the wood fibers along the cutline by running a piece of painters' tape over it.
- If an extra-clean cut is important, securely clamp a second, thin piece of scrap wood to the bottom of the piece you're cutting.
- Frayed edges can be easily cleaned up with some quick sanding. A badly chewed edge can be repaired with wood filler or woody putty as needed.



SANDING

- A smooth, ready-to-finish surface is accomplished using a series of increasingly finer grit sandpapers. Start with medium-fine grit like #120, progress to #150, and end with #180. Note that skipping a grit can leave scratches too deep for the next grit to remove.
- Sand evenly and in the direction of the grain.
- Don't oversand – you could potentially seal the wood so tightly it won't absorb finish.
- Be careful if using an electric sander (palm or orbital) on veneer faces. They're easy to accidentally sand through with too much power.
- Wipe wood with a damp cloth to remove dust after sanding.
- Don't sand wood fiber panels (MDF, particleboard, hardboard). These wood products already have smooth surfaces, but when sanded, they also create a tremendous amount of very fine sawdust that can irritate eyes and lungs.

Fastening Tips

DRILLING

Predrilling screw holes is always recommended. It helps prevent splitting, gaps, and fastening at an off angle.

- For the strongest, longest-lasting hold, predrill holes slightly smaller than the screws you're using.
- When you need to avoid drilling all the way through a piece of wood, wrap a piece of tape around the drill bit to mark the depth you want to stop and reverse out.

SCREWING

- To avoid slipping off, stripping the screw, etc., hold both the screw and the drill as vertically straight as possible and pull the trigger with slow, even pressure.
- Use flathead wood screws if you want the head flush with the surface of the wood.
- Avoid fastening into knots.

GLUING

- Use wood glue – also called polyurethane glue – not white school glue or a glue gun.
- Before applying glue, wipe wood with a damp cloth to remove any dust or particles that could prevent a tight bond.
- After applying glue, clamp pieces together and allow to dry for at least 30–60 minutes. Dry for 24 hours if there will be any stress on the joint.

NAILING

- To lessen the chance of accidentally splitting your wood, choose the thinnest nails possible that will still provide adequate holding power.
- Avoid nailing into the end grain, especially with oversized nails.
- Predrilling is usually unnecessary when nailing unless you're using hardwood, very thin material, or you need to nail close to the end grain.



Finishing Tips

PLYWOOD EDGES

- Wood filler or wood putty is perfect for the occasional void commonly found in any plywood. Be sure to follow manufacturer's instructions for use.
- If you want to hide the plies on the edges of your plywood, apply edge banding (available in a variety of widths and colors/species), or cover with a thin strip of natural, solid wood.

PAINT

- For the cleanest results, paint each piece of wood after cutting, drilling, sanding, and wiping down, but before assembling your project.
- A base coat/primer will allow for better paint coverage and less spots where the grain shows through.
- A clear topcoat of any water-based polycrylic adds a protective finish and/or your desired level of glossiness.

STAIN

- For more even coverage, use a pre-stain.
- Apply stain using old rags or towels, or choose a brush made specifically for stain.
- End-grains (areas where the wood has been cut against the grain) tend to soak up more stain than other areas. Give end-grains an extra sanding to tighten the pores and lessen the overabsorption.
- The finer the grit of the final sandpaper you use, the lighter the stain color will be. The coarser the sandpaper, the darker the color will be.
- Don't stain wood fiber panels (MDF, particle-board, hardboard). These panels are susceptible to moisture and expand when wet. Additionally, without a natural woodgrain, they fail to absorb stain evenly.

