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JULY/AUG 2010

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- >**Quick Furniture Makeovers**
- >**Creative Outdoor Solutions**

This issue
is dedicated
to the memory
of Joel Hess:
1955-2010

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Volume 1, No. 4

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{A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR}

Most of the time, the relationship between a magazine and its readers is pretty one-sided.

We write it. You read it. That's about it. At *My Home My Style*, we want the relationship to be different. We want to hear from you.

Drop Us a Note. Whether you prefer traditional mail or email, you can send us a note at the editorial addresses provided at left. We promise to read every note we receive.

Share Your Tips. If you have a great way of doing something, we'd love to hear about it, and so will other readers. Send us your tips, and we'll pay for every one we publish. See page 6.

Send Your Questions. Stumped by something you're working on? Got a question about techniques, decor, products, or tools? We can help. Read the details on page 8.

Find Us On Facebook. Another great way to interact with us and with other readers of the magazine is to check out our new *My Home My Style* page on Facebook. You can see what we're up to, share what you're doing, and connect with other readers.

DAVE

Favorite Things

Check out these fabulous finds that got us excited while putting together this issue!

Super Work Surfaces

Sawhorses are DIY essentials. We found these bold yellow versions while working on "Gear Guide" on page 54. They're adjustable, super sturdy, and easy to fold flat for storage. Best of all, these horses accept sacrificial tops cut from 2x4s that make cutting chores easier and safer. (See page 62 for sources.)

Megan Steenson, Graphic Designer





{STAFF INSIGHT}

Outdoor dining tables and place settings are featured in all sorts of home furnishing store catalogs this time of year. They're well composed, but who really wants to buy every single thing in an ad to replicate a scene? The "Style Step by Step" article on page 38 teaches you how to realistically refresh your own outdoor dining space and bring personality into the picture!

We used a variety of things in unexpected ways to set a charming tabletop and extend the style to the surrounding area, as well. There are no rules that say you can't serve snacks in small buckets, use serving trays as plates, or plant trees in vintage potato chip canisters!

Catherine Seiser, Assistant Editor

dress up your outdoor dining area inexpensively and easily with colorful new cushions

Buy and Embellish

Modifying store-bought decor is one of the easiest ways to personalize a decorating style. For example, we created a unique hanging system to display a candle lantern in our "Casual Coastal" room (page 12).

Kim Downing, Art Director

we added pulleys and rope to this lantern for extra coastal style



Divine Divider

This will be the most versatile room divider you'll ever own: Just swap out the panels (made from table runners) when you want to change a room's mood (page 42).

Kurt Schultz, Assistant Art Director



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bring the beach to your room with coastal colors!



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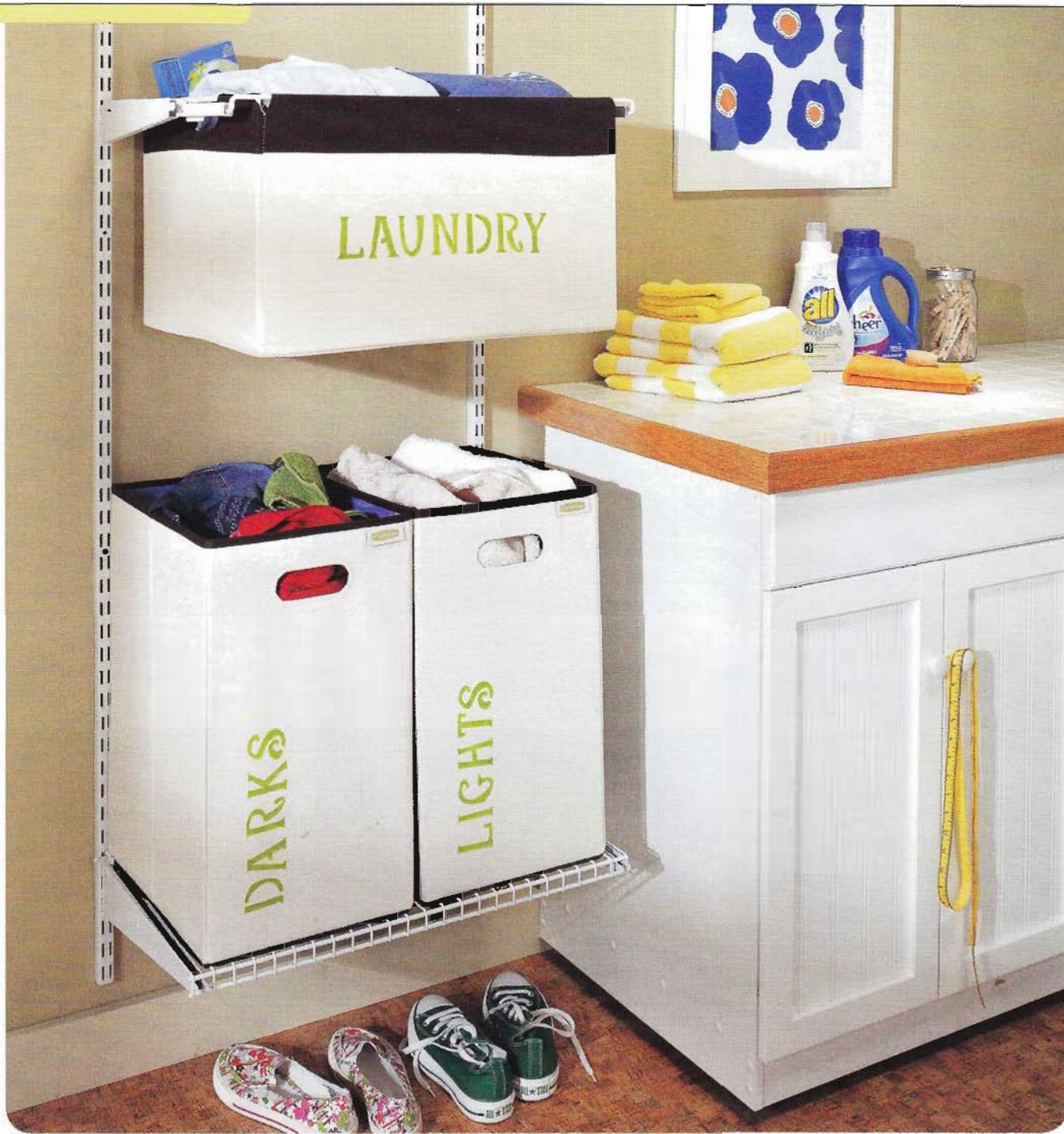
Arrange an Outdoor Dining Oasis

Make your outdoor eating area stand out by personalizing it with fun accessories and serving pieces.

42] build it better:

Create a Fantastic Folding Screen

A folding screen lets you divide a room in style. This one has a twist: The panels are made from table runners!



Label Your Laundry Room

You can find lots of clever ideas for organizing a laundry room. This cloth hamper system from Rubbermaid offers one way to add a custom touch.

Stencils and Ink. Arthur Lee of Santa Cruz, California, added even more style and function by labeling the hampers with stencil letters and ink

pads from a craft store. To label your own cloth hampers, use painter's tape to align the stencil letters. Then dab an artist's brush onto the ink pad, and fill in the stencil letters with ink (*Photo, right*).

You can use this idea to help you sort laundry like we did, or give each family member a personalized hamper.



You'll find stencil letters in several styles, and ink in many colors, to customize the look.



Crafty Use for Cutting Boards

Plastic cutting boards are invaluable in the kitchen, but their uses can extend into other rooms, too. Serge Duclos of Delson, Quebec, keeps a couple in his craft room for gluing, painting, and other messy home projects.

Better Boards. The thin, light-weight cutting boards available at many home stores are a great option

because they offer plenty of surface to work on. Plus, they take up virtually no space to store and can even be rolled up if need be.

Easy Cleanup. But the best part is, any glue that you get on the surface is easy to remove. After it dries, just use a putty knife to pop the small beads of glue loose (*Inset Photo*).

3 painting quick tips

1] Need to take a short break from painting? Preserve your brush in a plastic bag secured with a rubber band, advises Arthur Lee of Santa Cruz, California.

2] With a larger trash bag, you can do the same thing with paint pans and rollers. Just carefully remove air from the bag, and don't wait too long before starting again!

3] Finally, Wade Mears of Columbia, Missouri, suggests putting a plastic grocery bag over the top of the paint can as you secure the lid to prevent splatters.

Bleach Pen Erases Dirty Grout

Bleach pens have quickly gained popularity as a simple way to treat stains before they set in. But Tom Browning of Pella, Iowa, discovered another type of stain these pens can handle — dirty grout in a bathroom.

Treat, Then Wash. To clean stained grout, just rub the brush end of the pen over the grout line. Wait a few minutes, and wash the surface clean with water.



Got a great tip?

My Home My Style will pay you for it. Just send your ideas to: Email: editor@myhomestyle.com
Mail: Readers' Tips, *My Home My Style* Magazine, 2200 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50312

Solar Lights That Are Bright All Night

Q: I've heard mixed reviews about solar landscape lights. How well do they really work?

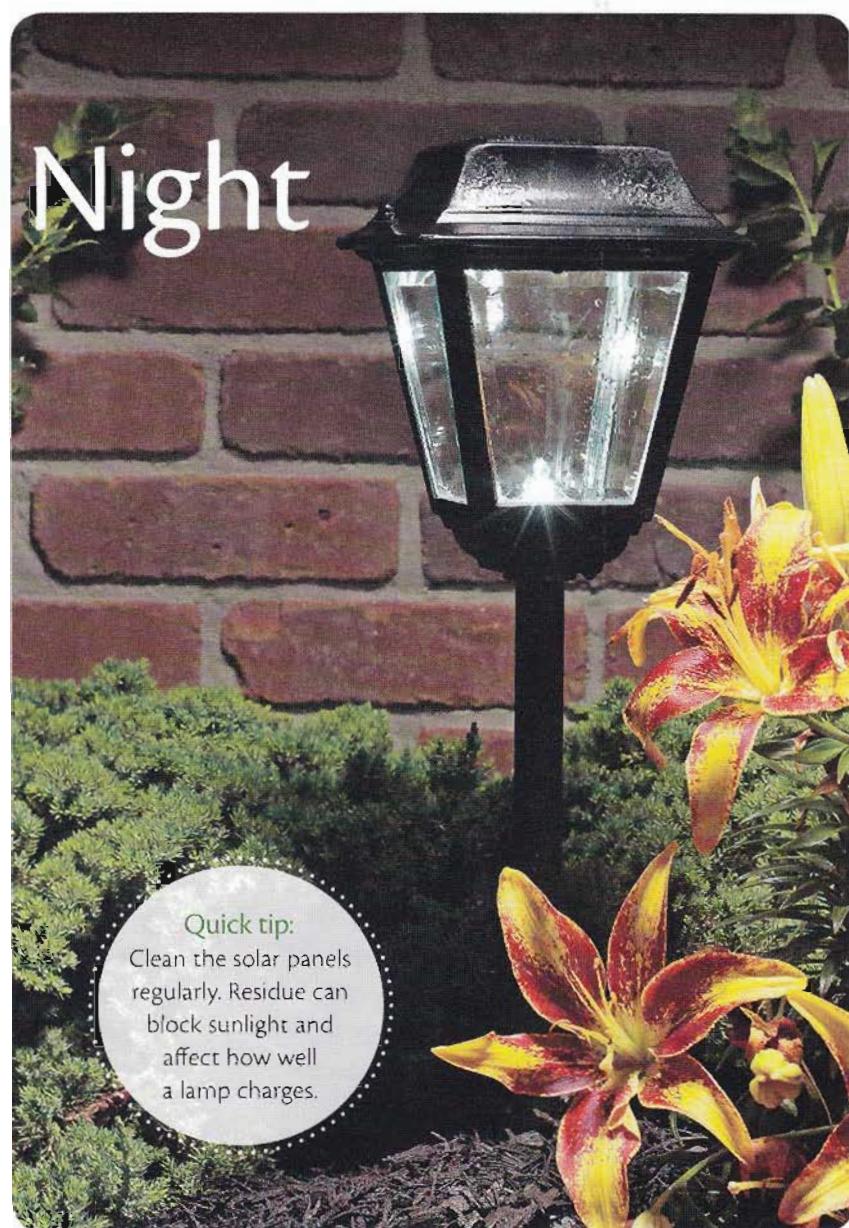
Paige Krier, San Diego, CA

A: Solar landscape lights definitely have potential. You just stick them into the ground, so installation couldn't be easier. During the day, solar panels convert sunlight into electricity, which gets stored in a rechargeable battery. When the lamp senses darkness, the electricity illuminates LED bulbs under the lid, and mirrors reflect the light.

As for how well they work, the truth is that you get what you pay for.

Dim Deal. Even after a sunny day, a low-end lamp casts minimal light and fades in a few hours. The list for *Lamp a* below indicates why. Still, this is a fine choice if your main goal is to add a point of interest to your yard.

A Light You'll Love. A higher-end lamp will illuminate an area effectively. Quality solar panels and wiring, upgraded batteries, multiple LED bulbs, and strategically shaped mirrors make *Lamp b* bright and long-lasting. Plus, it's built with durable materials that will hold up outside.



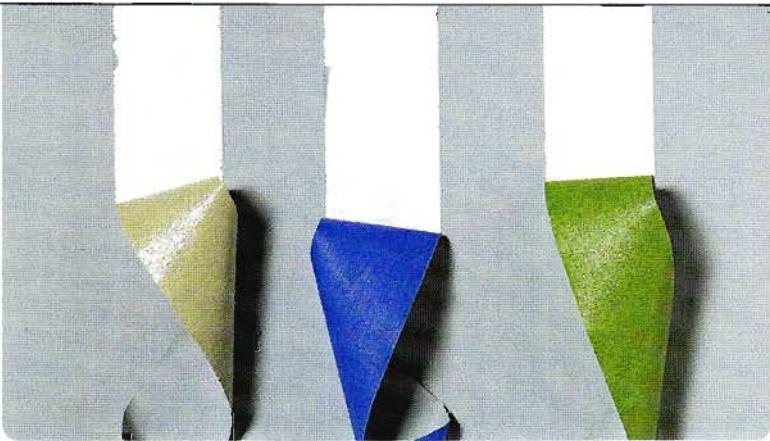
Low-End vs. High-End Solar Lights

a \$34 for a set of six

- Small, low-quality solar panels
- One 600 mAh battery
- One LED bulb
- One plastic "mirror" on base of lamp
- Plastic construction (including windows)

b \$60 each

- Sophisticated solar panel and wiring
- Three 850 mAh batteries
- Four LED bulbs
- Two mirrors that maximize reflected light
- Metal construction and beveled glass windows



The Power of Painter's Tapes

Q: I noticed some specialty tapes in the paint department. Are they worth the extra money, or will regular masking tape do the trick?

Scott Forby, Evanston, IL

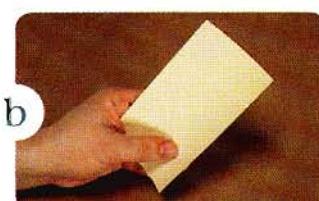
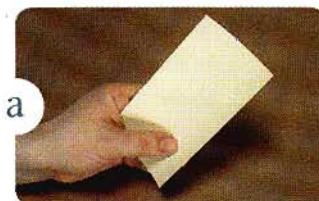
A: Whether you're referring to blue painter's tape or a green tape like FrogTape, either is better than ordinary masking tape. Blue tape is designed so that the adhesive won't ruin the surface you're masking, and it does a decent job of giving you clean lines. FrogTape costs more, but with a paint-activated treatment that seals the edges, it provides perfectly crisp lines and earns our top recommendation.

Color Shift

Q: Paint colors always seem to look different in my home than they do at the store. What's going on?

Mike Gartner, Fremont, NE

A: It's a good idea to take a paint sample home before making a final decision. That's because paint departments are usually lit with natural light like you'd experience outside (Fig. a). At home, you'll find that incandescent bulbs bring out the yellow in a color for a warm look (Fig. b), and fluorescent lights generally bring out cool, blue tones (Fig. c). Consider these effects when choosing a color that works for your room.



Understanding Sandpaper Grits

Q: Can you offer some guidelines for choosing the right sandpaper grit?

Julia Conte, Dresden, TN

A: To sand efficiently, you'll want to use a range of grits. Start with a reasonably rough paper. Then switch to progressively smoother papers until the surface is as smooth as you'd like.

Coarse
40-60 grit
Quickly remove material,
strip paint, or shape a
workpiece.

Medium 80-120 grit
Remove a small amount
of material, or smooth
a rough surface.

Fine 150-180 grit
Prep for paint by smoothing
an irregular surface or
roughing up a slick one.

Very Fine 220-240 grit
Eliminate imperfections
between multiple coats
of paint or finish.

Extra Fine 280-320 grit
Reduce the shine of a finish
before or after applying
a top coat.

Super Fine 360+ grit
Go over a final finish or
top coat to remove minor
imperfections.



Need answers?

My Home My Style has them! Send your questions to: Email: editor@myhomemystyle.com
Mail: Readers' Q&A, *My Home My Style Magazine*, 2200 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50312

Make Over a Door with a "Magic" Mirror

Mirror, mirror, on the door, whose bathroom is fairer than before? Yours can be, thanks to the addition of mirrors and some basic wood strips that create the look of a French door with a paned window.

It may be convenient and common, but hanging one of those foot-wide full-length mirrors on a slab door is a little boring by itself. Here's a way to work your magic and create a stylish alternative: Use muntins (the thin strips of wood that often divide windows) to make mirrors on the door resemble a paned window.

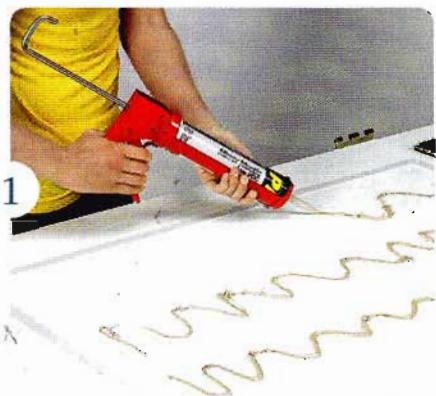
Large Mirrored Area. Ideally, you'll want an equal amount of the door to be exposed on all sides of the mirrored area. For our 32" x 80" door, we opted to attach two 24" x 36" mirrors from the home center rather than custom-ordering a larger mirror. See how to attach the mirrors in Fig. 1.

Frame and Panes. The cool thing about this project is the way the muntins and mirrors become part of the door. When you use $\frac{1}{2}$ "-thick material to frame the mirrors and $\frac{1}{4}$ "-thick material on the surface, the pieces of wood butt up against each other at the same level for a seamless look.

Start by cutting $\frac{1}{2}$ "-thick pieces to create a frame with mitered corners (Fig. 2). Depending on the widths of your door and mirrors, you may have to cut a notch in one of the vertical pieces to accommodate the doorknob. This is easy to do with a coping saw (Inset in Fig. 2). Then paint the wood, and attach the frame pieces to the door with construction adhesive.

Now plan the arrangement of the $\frac{1}{4}$ "-thick surface pieces. If you're using multiple mirrors, it's important to conceal the seams. Also, try not to interrupt too much of the reflection. We kept our pattern on the outside (4" from the edges) to leave the mirror open in the middle.

Cut the long vertical strips first, followed by the three middle horizontal pieces. Lay them in place, and size the shorter outer horizontal pieces to fit. After painting the wood, attach the muntins to the surface of the mirrors (Fig. 3).



First, lay out the position of the mirrors. Then apply mirror mounting tape and mastic, and carefully set each mirror in place.



Make 45° cuts on the frame pieces and 90° cuts on the surface pieces. Create a notch for the doorknob if needed.



Construction adhesive sets up quickly and makes attaching the muntins easy. Use spacers to evenly position the surface pieces.





catch the calm, casual look of Coastal Style!

Escape to your own beach retreat by recreating the style of a seaside cottage in your home. You can get this relaxed coastal look with a few inexpensive upgrades and ocean-inspired accessories.

There's nothing quite as relaxing as spending a lazy afternoon in a charming beach house. Just the mention of a coastal cottage brings to mind calming colors, comfortable furniture, and natural decor accents that make it a welcoming retreat.

Luckily, you don't have to live by the ocean to experience this soothing environment every day. It's surprisingly simple to recreate the look in any space by bringing in coastal-inspired elements.

The key to decorating a room with coastal style is creating a place where you and your guests can put your

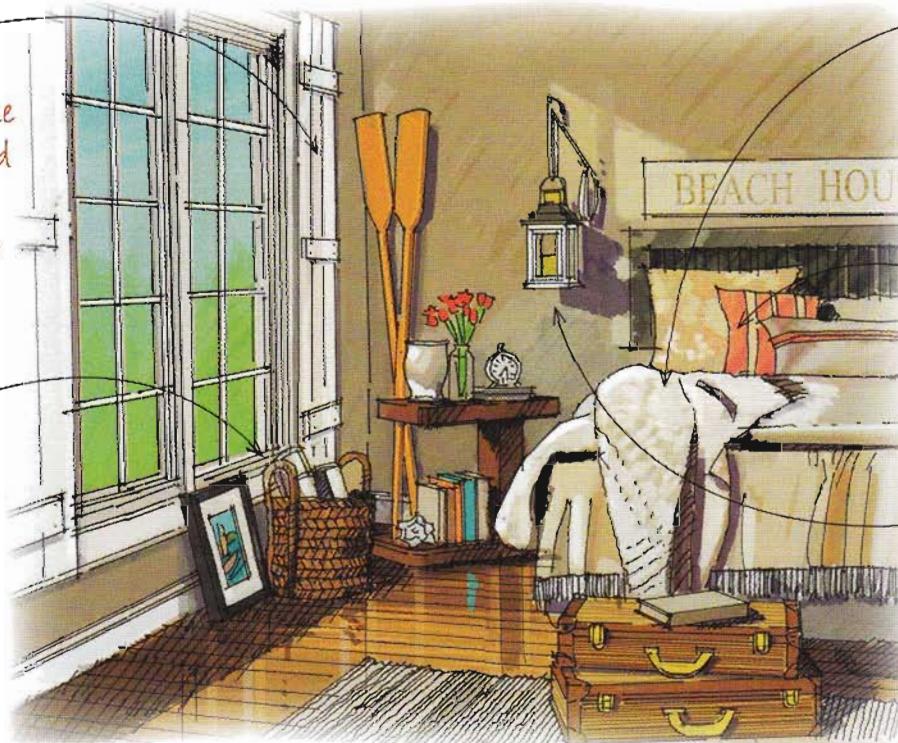
feet up and relax. That atmosphere starts with a casual, nature-inspired color palette made up of neutrals and coastal accent colors. Then you'll layer on furniture and accessories made of natural fibers, bring in subtle seaside decor, and add architectural elements that you might find on a real beach cottage.

We'll explain how we brought coastal decor into this room and added some custom touches to personalize the space. Plus, we'll show you how to take the look even further by making your own set of decorative board-and-batten shutters.



Beach cottage architecture helps you tie the coastal-inspired furniture and accessories into the room.

Organic textures add interest to the space when you bring in items made of natural fibers.



Natural neutrals provide soothing base tones that let the accent colors stand out.

Coastal colors are inspired by sea life, seashells, and the ocean itself.

Seaside decor like boat oars or candle lanterns brings the beach to your home.



The bedding's neutral base tones let the pops of color on the pillows shine. We used the colors found on the sea life pillow as inspiration for the room's accent colors.

2. Coastal Colors

Although coastal spaces start with a base of neutral tones, you'll need to bring in accent colors to keep the rooms from looking bland and monochromatic. Fortunately, the sea and the beach provide color options that will suit almost anyone's taste.

Your color palette inspiration could come from turquoise water, soft blue skies, and bright green palm fronds. You could also turn to the colors of sea life, like the coral color shown in the paint swatches at right. The swatches represent the colors we used to decorate this coastal bedroom.

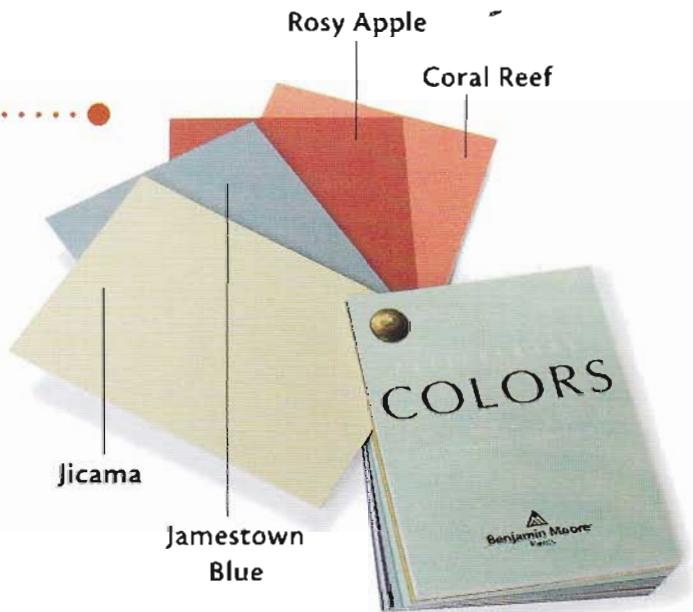
5 simple steps to add coastal style

It's easy to get the look of a beach getaway in your own home. Best of all, the casual style lets you personalize your space by mixing and matching the colors, furniture, and decor that you really love.

1. Natural Neutrals

The starting point for casual coastal rooms is a neutral base. If you'd like a bright and breezy look, go for crisp white painted finishes. If you'd like a cozy cottage look, add shades of cream or ivory, or pick pieces with distressed neutral finishes.

You can mix the white or ivory tones with shades of tan and beige. The largest elements in the room, such as couches, bedding, and window treatments, should feature this neutral color scheme in solid colors or very subtle patterns.





3. Organic Textures

You can add to the casual and calming look of your coastal room by incorporating furniture, rugs, or other decor that bring different textures into the space. Choose decor and furniture pieces that are made from natural fibers for a subtle, layered effect.

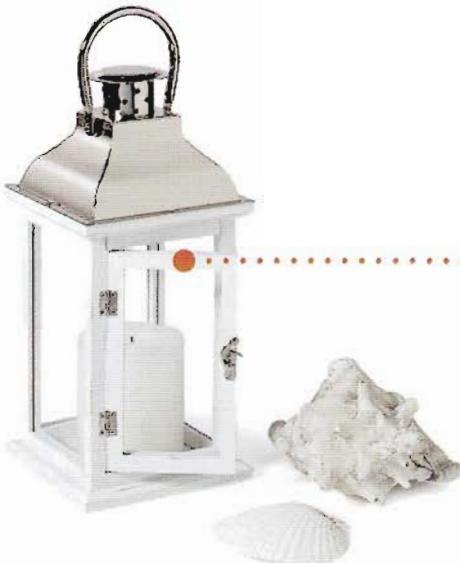
Rugs made of jute and sisal are especially popular in coastal rooms, and they have the added benefit of being very durable. Rattan furniture will also help you create a laid-back yet sophisticated look in your room.

If you don't want to commit to a large piece like a rattan couch or a jute area rug, though, you can start small by adding some baskets to your space. We incorporated a couple of baskets that could double as storage for linens, books, and slippers—a much-needed benefit in this small bedroom.

One of the best things about casual coastal style is that it leaves you free to experiment with the look. Try mixing and matching decor and furniture pieces that have different textures until you're happy with the results.

Baskets are perfect for bringing a natural touch to your coastal-inspired space. You could group a few baskets in different styles, colors, and sizes, or just fill one or two of them with coordinating linens.





There's no shortage of ocean-inspired accessories that you can use to personalize your space. You could display a candle lantern for a festive touch or pay homage to the coast by incorporating a weathered beach sign. See page 62 for Resources.



4. Seaside Decor

Accent your room with accessories that reflect a subtle ocean theme. Just be sure to keep it simple—an over-the-top beach motif may be fun at a vacation destination, but you'll want something more subdued for your home. Limit these accessories to a few pieces that you love.

Don't be afraid to put your own twist on coastal decor. For example, we customized a candle lantern by making a nautical-inspired hanging system with pulleys and a length of nylon rope. To add even more personalized touches, we brought in a custom-created "Beach House" sign and a pair of weathered wood boat oars.



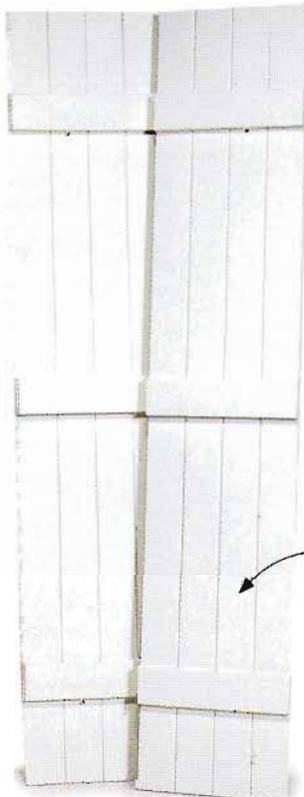
5. Beach Cottage Architecture

To get an even more authentic look, try bringing in some architectural elements that you can find on real beach cottages. For this room, that meant adding a set of board-and-batten shutters.

You're used to seeing decorative shutters on the exteriors of houses, but we brought a pair of them indoors to help the seaside decor blend into the room.

The shutters have a classic look that would work well with other decor styles, too. See the instructions below to learn how you can make your own set.

Of course, you can use shutters as more than just window accents. We hung a distressed, salvaged shutter above the bed to serve as a unique headboard (*Photo, below left*).



make your own decorative shutters!

These show-stopping board-and-batten shutters are an important element in this room's coastal style. A number of retailers sell similar shutters, but they're cheaper (and easy to customize) when you make your own. You'll just need some poplar 1x4s, screws, sandpaper, primer, and paint.

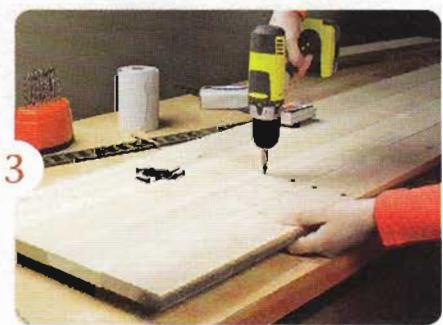
DONE
IN A DAY
FOR UNDER
\$100!



1



2



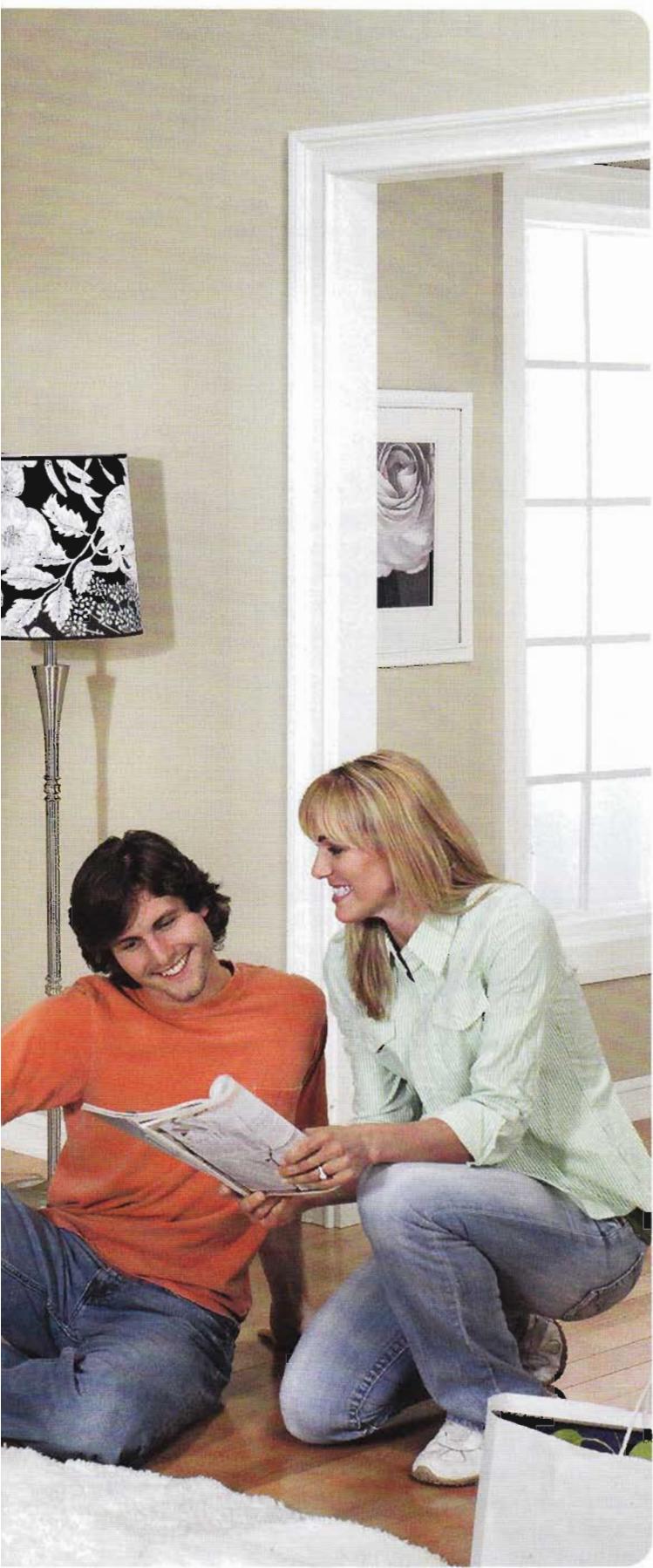
3

To create a set of shutters, first measure your window and cut eight 1x4 poplar boards (four for each shutter) to length.

Next, cut your battens from poplar 1x4s. Then use a sanding block to bevel the edges of the boards and battens.

Attach the battens by driving screws through the backs of the boards. Finally, prime and paint the shutters.





from basic bookshelves to built-in beauty

You don't have to be an expert woodworker to make great-looking built-in bookcases. Just start with bookcases from the store, add some trim, and tie it all together with the tips shown here!

There's something special about what built-in bookcases do to a room. Making the cases part of the wall lends a sense of style that the average bookcase just doesn't have.

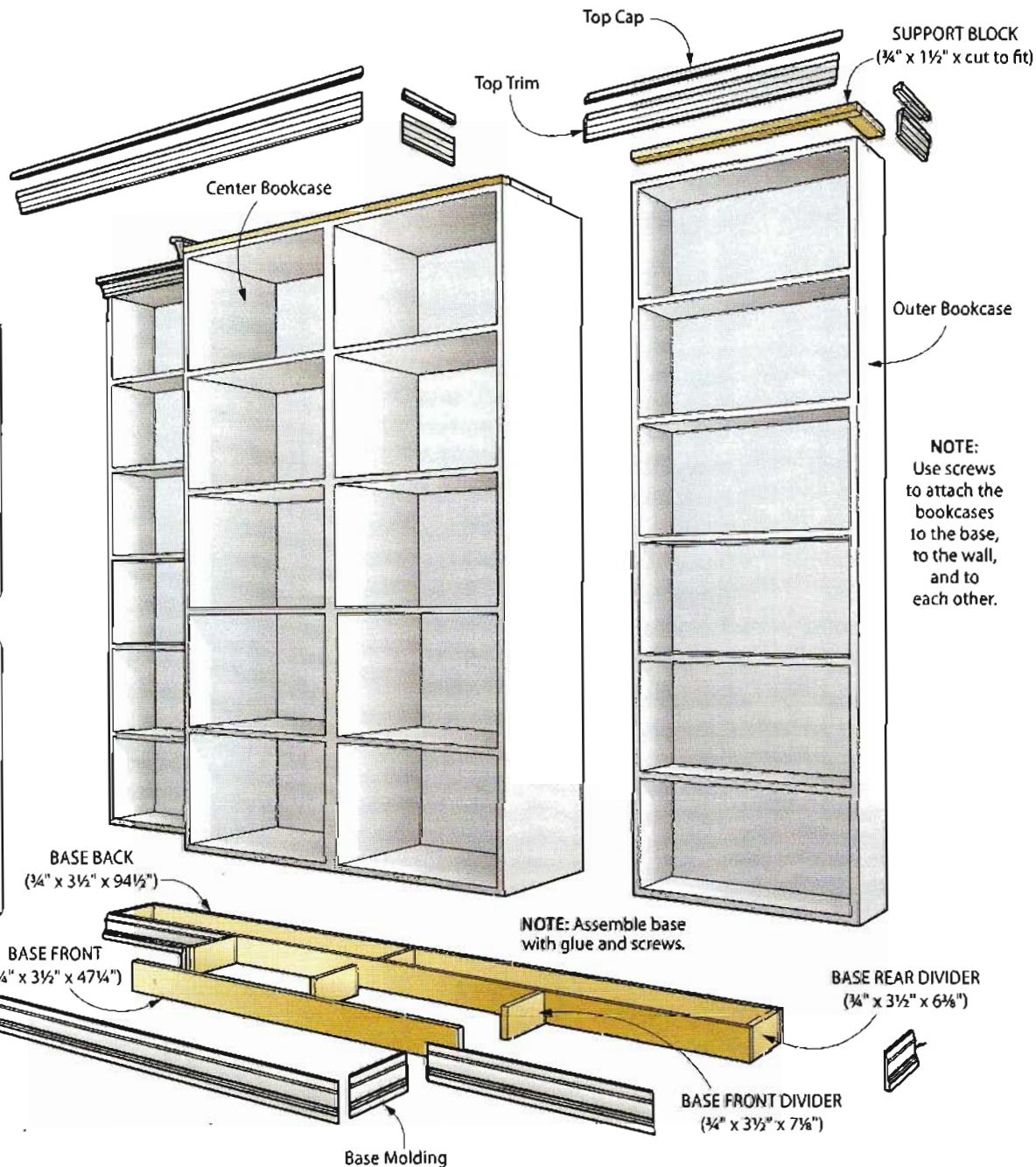
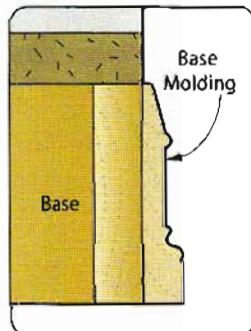
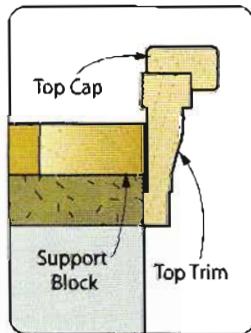
However, "built-in bookcase" usually means "custom bookcase." Unless you have a decade's worth of DIY experience, a custom bookcase is not a project to be taken lightly.

An Easier Built-in. This led us to an interesting question: Is it possible to turn stand-alone bookcases into a great-looking built-in? As you can see, the answer is a resounding "yes."

Built-ins for Everybody. This built-in looks every bit as good as one that a carpenter would charge thousands for, yet the total cost was around \$400. And if you can assemble a department store bookcase and cut a few trim boards to size, it can be yours this weekend. Read on to see how it's done.

NOTE:
To cut top trim and
base molding to size,
see the Sidebar
on page 23.

trim details



basic built-ins at a glance

The heart of this project is three "Besta" bookcases from Ikea (*Resources*, page 62), though any store-bought bookcases could fill the bill. To add depth and drama to the look, we used a wider, deeper case in the center flanked by narrower, shallower cases on the sides.

Bring in Bases. Bases, which are really just rectangles made from 1x4s boards, glue, and screws, serve two purposes here.

First, they elevate the cases to allow base molding to be added to them for a finished look. Second, they allow you to level and "plumb" the project easily, so that the bookcases will sit straight and even (*see page 21*).

Wrap with Molding. At the home center, we found a simple base molding that "wraps" elegantly around the bottom of the bookcases. Fitting the molding

to the corners of the cases was easy with just a few cuts on a miter saw. We have some tips to guide you through the process on page 23.

Top with Trim. To create the crown at the top of the cases, the top trim is actually built up from two separate pieces (also available from the home center). It's relatively easy to cut and install the pieces using a miter saw, nails, and construction adhesives.

start by building the cases & bases

create the cases

1

The bases may be the first part of this bookcase project to get installed, but before that, you need to know precisely what size to make them. And that means you'll want to assemble the bookcases first. This part is easy — just follow the instructions that came with your bookcases.



build the bases

2

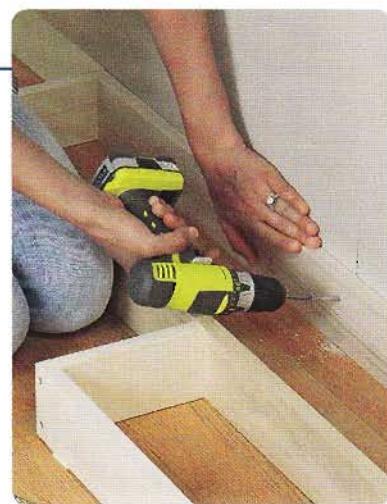
Find the straightest, flattest 1x4s you can, and then cut the boards to size to make up your base. As you can see, you'll need nine boards in all to create the irregularly shaped base. After you make the cuts, the base can be assembled easily using glue and screws.



install on the wall

3

Determine exactly where on the wall you'd like your bookcases to be, and remove the baseboard in that area. (You can either cut it out right where the base will go, or use this opportunity to replace the base molding in the entire room.) Then position the base, make sure it's level (*near right*), and secure it to the wall by driving screws through the back and into the wall studs behind it (*far right*).



add the cases and trim

With the base in place, it's now just a simple matter of installing the bookcases. You can start by sliding the bookcases into place on top of the bases (*Photo, right*). Then you'll want to secure them as shown in *Fig. 1*.

After that, adding base molding and top trim complete the built-in look of the project.

install the bookcases

1

Pre-drill pilot holes, and drive screws down through the bottoms of the bookcases into the bases below (*below left*). Next, use shorter screws to connect the bookcases to each other. Finally, drive screws through the backs of the cases and into the wall studs behind them (*below right*). You can always fill any screw holes with putty and touch them up with paint later on.



2

bring on the base molding

Next up is the base molding, which is best installed with a hammer and nails (or an air nailer if you have one, *Photo, right*). Of course, you'll have to cut a miter on each corner of the molding where it meets a mating piece, but that process is simple with a miter saw. We show you a few tips and tricks for cutting miters in the *Sidebar* at right.



top it with trim

3

The two-part top that you'll be adding to the project extends above the bookcases, so it's a good idea to add some blocks to the top of the cases to support these pieces. The blocks can be cut to size from scrap 1x2s and stuck to the top of the bookcases with construction adhesive.

Now install the top trim pieces with the same technique you used for the base molding (*Sidebar, below*). The only difference here is that the top is made up of two parts. You'll want to install all of the wider trim pieces first (*Photo, right*). Then go back and add the smaller top cap pieces (*Inset Photo*).

Even though all the base and top pieces come pre-painted, you'll probably want to use some putty and caulk to fill the nail holes and any gaps around the miters or molding. Once that dries, give it one more coat of white paint to match the bookcases.



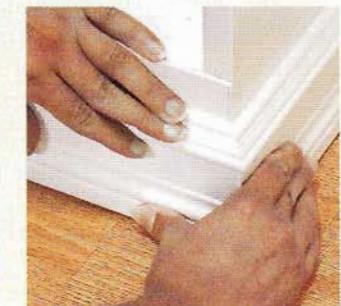
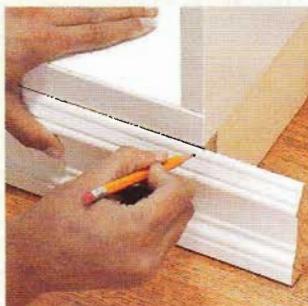
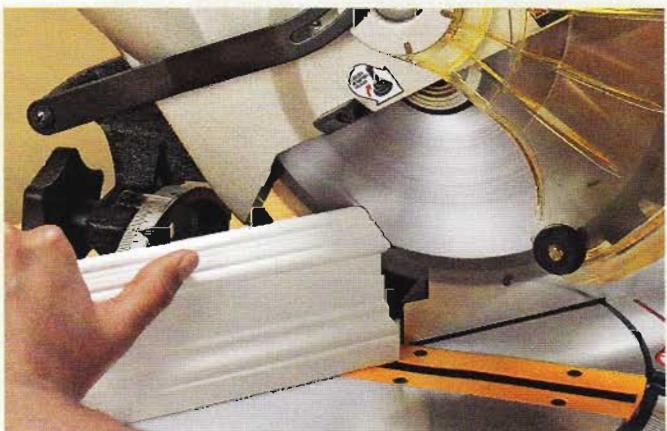
Making Tighter Miters

A power miter saw is really the best tool to use for cutting these base molding and top trim pieces to fit around the bookcases (*Photo, right*). And even if you're new to the tool, you can get great-fitting miters in no time by following just a few simple steps.

One Piece at a Time. The trick to making these pieces fit well is to "cut as you go." That means you just add one piece at a time, carefully measuring, cutting, and installing each one before moving on to the next one.

Sneak Up on It. As you can see in the *Photo, near right*, this involves moving each molding piece into place and marking where it hits the corner with a pencil. Then set the piece on the miter saw, rotate the saw to 45 degrees, and make the cut by "sneaking up" on the pencil line. Check the fit, and trim off a little more if needed.

Once the molding piece fits just right (*Photo, far right*), you can attach it and move on to the next one. That's all there is to it!



go a different direction with these daring design options



Short & Small

There's no hard and fast rule that says you have to fill a whole wall with built-ins. This shorter unit takes up less space in a room and is just as striking.

Enticing Options. A shorter, smaller bookcase unit can be used for a lot more than housing books. For example, the top makes a great surface for displaying a flat-

Illustrations: John Hartman

screen television. Or use it as a sideboard for storing dishes in a dining room.

Door Details. For a little variety, you could add a pair of doors to the middle bookcases on this unit. The doors are part of the IKEA Besta system, so there is no complicated assembly involved in adding this detail to the design.



By choosing shallower, narrower

bookcases from the Besta system, we were able to create a unique built-in with a less traditional, more modern appearance.

Shallow & Narrow

Though the look of this bookcase is different, you can do the base, molding, and trim in the exact same fashion as the main bookcase shown on page 18. In fact, adding the molding and trim is easier since you have fewer corners to wrap around.

Go-Anywhere Bookcase. Because this option is so shallow, it can go a lot more places than our main project design can. (We thought it would look great in a hallway.) Plus, it's adaptable — just use as many or as few bookcases as you need to fill the space.



mismatched
furniture
before





reinvent *old furniture* with cheerful colors

Learn how to transform less-than-perfect pieces into fresh-looking furnishings for your home. All it takes is paint and a bit of "distressing" to create fun and functional furniture that you'll be proud to display.

Sooner or later, most of us end up with some odd pieces of old furniture. They might be hand-me-downs that you couldn't refuse or yard-sale bargains that you couldn't resist. However you acquire old furniture, the dilemma is usually the same: How can I make these tired-looking pieces with totally different finishes work in my decor?

The answer, it turns out, is surprisingly simple: Just add paint.

Paint Problem Solver. Painting vintage furniture is budget friendly and design savvy. It allows you to reinvent what you already have, or customize inexpensive pieces from auctions and thrift stores with colorful new looks that suit your personal decorating style.

Find Your Furniture. Painting furniture also makes it possible to resurrect pieces that may be far less than perfect. Believe it or not, the

great-looking rocker and chest that fit this casual porch so nicely started out as the mismatched misfits in the *Before Photo*. We bought both on Craigslist for a mere \$90.

Sure, the small chest had been "antiqued" sometime in the '70s, and the rocker showed signs of multiple repairs. But like a lot of old furniture you'll find, both were still sturdy and had great style.

Don't Stress—Distress. Old furniture like this isn't suited for restoration, but it's ripe for reinventing with a timeworn look. This style is incredibly popular thanks to its casual, lived-in look that's at once cozy and inviting.

To create the look, you simply need to "distress" the furniture to mimic natural wear. That's done by adding nicks and dents, applying color, and then "wearing away" some of the paint. The next few pages show you exactly how.

to create the look, add cool colors & accessories

Choosing the perfect color can be the most challenging part of any painting project. To make it easier, do what designers recommend and base your color choice on items that you'll use to accessorize. It's a lot easier to get paint tinted to match an item than it is to buy something that perfectly matches the paint you've already picked.

Match and Mix. Part of the fun of this project is that it allows you to get creative with color. That's exactly what we did when we matched our furniture to a colorful pillow and throw (see page 62).

You don't have to stick with one color to create a cohesive look, either. We used the fabric's blue color on both of our pieces and then added interest by painting the drawers of our chest green.

Before those colors went on, we applied a black base coat. The pieces we painted were mismatched, and we wanted a consistent hue to show through when we sanded to distress the paint.

Hardware Heads-up.

If you plan to swap out any hardware, purchase it before you start painting. That's because you may have to drill new mounting holes. If so, just fill the old holes with wood filler, let it dry, and then sand it smooth. After that, mark and drill your new holes.

With that done, you're ready to prep the pieces, distress them, and then paint.



we swapped
the old wood
knobs for
stunning new
glass pulls

The Right Paint

Selecting the right type of paint is just as important as choosing the correct colors. Use paint with a high acrylic content (we chose Behr Premium Plus Ultra). Acrylic latex is easy to apply, stands up to the rigors of the distressing process, and lasts a long time.

this striped fabric
provided our
color inspiration



start with good prep for great results

Any piece of old furniture you choose is bound to be dirty, so the first step in reinventing your piece should be a good cleaning. You need to get rid of grime and grease that could prevent the paint from sticking. Then you'll sand to give the new paint something to grip.

Clear the Dirt. TSP Substitute is made specifically for this type of cleaning. Use it to scrub all of the surfaces thoroughly (Fig. 1). Then let the piece dry completely.

Prepare the Surface. After the piece dries, sand it to roughen the surface (Fig. 2). Sweep off any large pieces of residue, and then use a tack cloth to get the surfaces completely clean (Fig. 3).

Shopping List

- Acrylic latex base-coat paint
- Acrylic latex top-coat in the colors of your choice
- Clear polyurethane, satin finish
- High-quality paintbrushes
- Assorted grits of sandpaper
- Sanding block
- Tack cloth
- TSP Substitute cleaner
- Bucket and rags
- Scrap piece of wood
- Screws in assorted sizes
- Disposable gloves

get clean

1

Wipe the piece using a rag soaked in TSP Substitute. Don't be afraid to get the wood wet or to scrub hard. Rinse the rag often as you work.

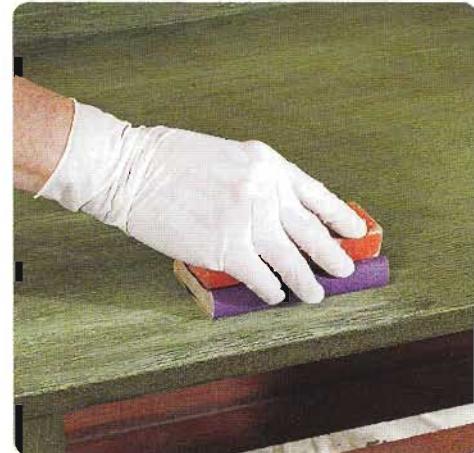


protect your
hands with
latex gloves

sand the surface

2

Lightly sand all surfaces that have previously been painted or varnished with 150-grit sandpaper to improve the paint's adhesion.



prepare for paint

3

Wipe off all sanding residue with a tack cloth. These sticky cloths remove specks of dust that regular rags leave behind.





add style with distressed surfaces

Distressing is a great way to add timeworn charm to a piece of vintage furniture. The goal is to create the look of natural wear.

Dents and Dings. To accomplish this, begin by adding random dents with a homemade distressing tool (*Fig. 1*). Start with a few dings, and then add more to create the amount of "damage" you desire.

Sand to Soften. Now you can sand to soften sharp edges and corners that wear down over time.

Paint, Sand, Protect. Finally, you're ready to paint. You'll actually add two colors: a base coat and then a top coat (*Fig. 2*).

To add the final distressed look, sand through the paint in areas that would normally show wear (*Fig. 3*).

When you're happy with the look, protect it with a coat or two of polyurethane finish.

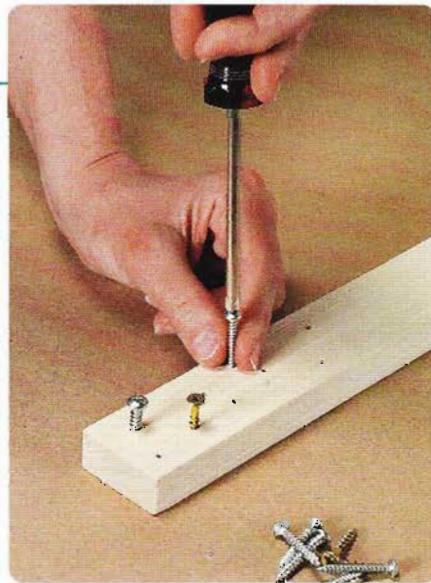
create dents

1

Give your piece an interesting aged personality by using a homemade distressing tool to add dents and dings. To make one, insert screws with various head sizes and shapes into a board.

Next, hit the piece in areas where dents would be likely. Stop to gauge the effect to avoid overdoing it. For deeper dents, just hit harder.

After that, use sandpaper to round over edges, create scratches, and mimic wear.



brush on paint

2

Now apply a base coat of acrylic latex paint over the entire piece. There's no need to worry about getting a perfect paint job. Most of this coat will get covered by the top coat, so imperfections are just fine.

The goal of the base coat is to cover up any old paint or finish on the piece and create a uniform "background" for the top coat. Usually, a dark color works best. We chose black.

After the base coat dries, you can add the top coat. If you're using light colors over a dark base, you may need to apply two coats. On our chest we used one color for the body and another complementary tone on the drawers. Allow this paint to dry thoroughly before moving on to the next steps.

we made our drawers pop with an accent color



sand and finish

3

To distress the paint, use a sanding block with 400-grit sandpaper to remove the top coat in some places until the black layer shows through. Hit the areas that would naturally receive wear, like edges, and don't worry if a little bare wood shows through. When you're happy with the appearance, wipe the piece with a tack cloth, and then apply clear polyurethane for protection.



Quick tip:
Two coats of
clear finish will
keep the paint
looking great.

Storage Solutions





create a clever kitchen storage solution

Maximize storage and display space in your kitchen with this compact shelf unit. It offers space for small appliances, cookbooks, and more. Plus, it's fast and easy to build!

No room in your home poses as many storage challenges as the kitchen. It arguably has to hold the most stuff, but usually offers the fewest options for expanding the existing storage space.

This one-of-a-kind wall shelf unit solves those problems by offering extra storage and unique display space in a very compact package. The wall-mounted boxes are perfect for holding cookbooks or even small appliances. And they keep those items not just organized, but displayed in an attractive way. For even more versatility, each box is equipped with long rods that let you hang items off the sides (*see page 62 for sources*).

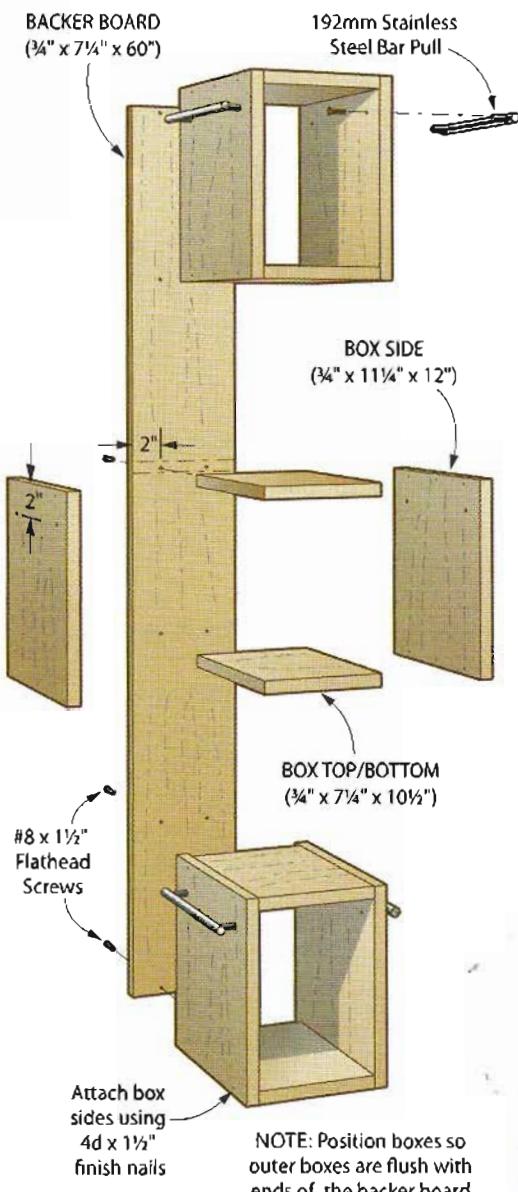
Design Options. Many storage- and space-challenged kitchens can benefit from the

vertical storage this unit offers. But we know everyone's home presents different opportunities for carving out extra space. That's why we've also designed a horizontal version of the shelf unit that you'll find on page 37.

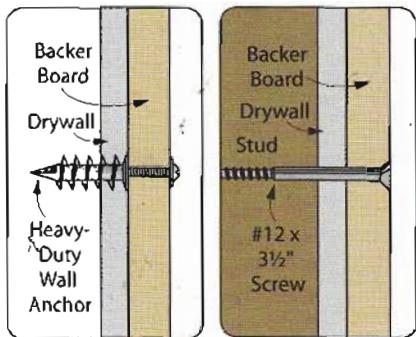
Simple Construction. Whichever version you choose, you'll be surprised by just how easy it is to build one of these kitchen storage units for yourself. The boxes are made up of 1x12 poplar boards from the home center that get nailed and glued together and then painted. A backer board—cut from a poplar 1x8—gets mounted to the wall, and then the boxes get screwed in place. It's downright simple, even for beginning builders. If you have a circular saw, a hammer, a drill, and some sandpaper, you're all set.



Home projects don't get much simpler than this one. Just cut a few parts to size with a circular saw, glue and nail the parts together, and add a bit of paint and hardware. That's all it takes to create stylish storage for your kitchen.



wall mounting options



build it all with a batch of *basic boards*

Building this shelf unit is easy. The *Assembly View* at left shows that it's made up of just a few parts: six sides, six tops and bottoms, and a backer board. Nails, glue, screws, paint, and a few drawer pulls (which hold hanging items) wrap it up.

Buy the Right Boards.

All the parts are made from a couple of poplar 1x12s and a poplar 1x8. When you're buying boards, just keep a couple of things in mind.

First, "dimensional" boards like these are actually smaller than the stated size. A 1x8 measures 3/4" x 7 1/4". A 1x12 is

also 3/4" thick. It's usually 11 1/4" wide but can be narrower. The sizes here assume that your boards are 11 1/4" wide.

Second, be picky when buying boards. Select boards that are straight, flat, and smooth to prevent headaches later.

Know How Wood Works.

To get great results, you also need to understand that seasonal humidity changes affect wood's stability. The *Box* below explains why this is important in the construction of the boxes.

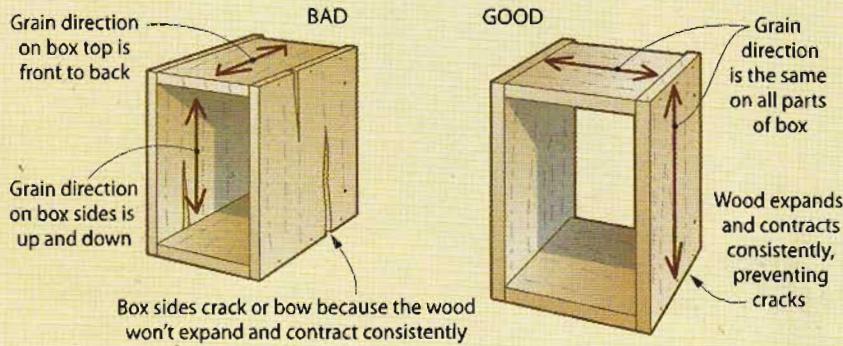
Follow the Steps. With your new materials and knowledge, just follow the steps at right.

Woodworking 101

understand how wood works

The tops and bottoms of the shelf-unit boxes match the width of the 1x8 backer board. So you'd think that cutting these parts from a 1x8 would be the way to go. That would be easy, but it would lead to problems later.

To understand why, consider that wood contains moisture, so it swells when humidity is high and shrinks in low humidity. This swelling happens mainly across the width of a board, not along its length. By making the wood grain "wrap" around the boxes in the same direction, as shown below, this wood movement is equal on all the box parts, so they won't crack apart over time. Luckily, making the boxes this way is easy. See Fig. 2 at right.



CROSSCUT THE SIDES

1

Begin by cutting a pair of sides to length for each box. The easiest way to cut them is with a handheld circular saw. Use a 12" speed square to guide the saw. The speed square guides the saw to ensure that you'll get a perfectly square cut. Just clamp the square in place, so your saw blade aligns with your cut line. Then make each cut.



CREATE THE TOPS & BOTTOMS

2

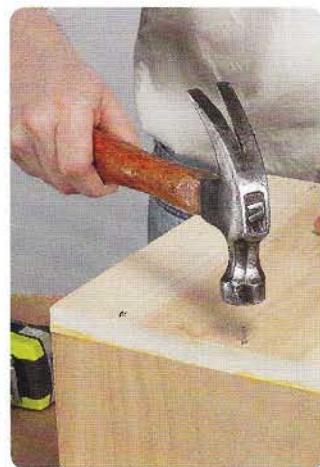
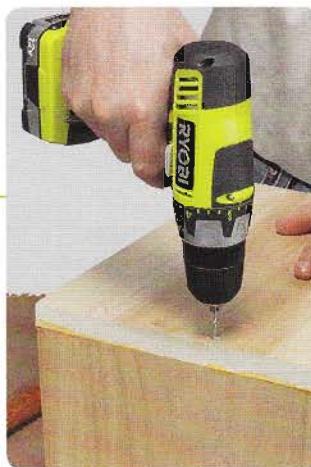
To make the tops and bottoms, rip one edge off a 4-foot long piece of 1x12. You want to create a board that's the width of the box side minus $\frac{1}{4}$ " (That's $10\frac{1}{2}$ " if your 1x12s are $11\frac{1}{4}$ " wide.) Use a straightedge to guide the saw for this rip cut. Next, crosscut this piece to create three tops and three bottoms that are $7\frac{1}{4}$ " wide.



GET IT ALL TOGETHER

3

Now you can assemble the boxes. To do that, match up sides, tops, and bottoms for the best fit. Then glue each box together, and clamp it until the glue dries. After that, you can drill pilot holes for finish nails and then tap the nails in. Once the nails are set, use a small amount of wood filler to conceal them.





cut a backer board, *paint it all,* then install

With the boxes complete, cut the backer board to size. Before you install it, paint it and the boxes. It's much easier to reach inside the boxes now.

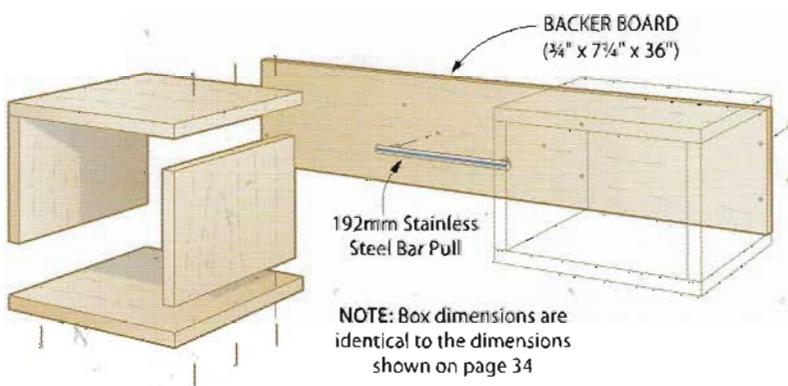
Mount the Boxes. Once the paint dries, you can mount the boxes to the backer. The *Photo* below shows how.

With that done, you're ready to install the shelf unit on your wall. We perched the unit on a couple of paint cans to establish the right height (*Photo, left*). Use a level to make sure it's plumb (straight up and down).

Install It. Drill holes (hiding them inside the boxes) through the backer and into the wall. If you don't hit a wall stud, install wall anchors. Then screw the shelf unit to the wall, as shown in *Mounting Options* on page 34.



Mount the Backer Board. Lay the boxes face down. Then position the backer board, so one box is at each end and the third is centered. Drill mounting holes in the back of the board, and attach it to the boxes.



Change size and orientation for a new use.

The design of this kitchen shelf makes it easy to modify. That means you can easily change it to suit your needs and your space. You can add or remove boxes, or even make the boxes taller or shorter with ease.

The horizontal version shown above provides one idea of how a new configuration might work. You can see its dimensions in the illustration at left. To make this one, we simply used two boxes and a shortened backer board. Then we mounted a drawer pull between the boxes.

create a five-star open-air dining area

Let "going out to eat" take on a whole new meaning! Whether you're starting with a fresh slate or dressing up a table and chairs that have been there for years, it's fun and rewarding to transform your deck or patio into a trendy place to gather and dine. We break it down into four easy-to-follow steps that are explained in detail on the following pages.

What a Difference Decorations Make!

This dining table sat here for ages as merely a place to eat and enjoy the scenery. All we did was incorporate some color and creativity into the space. Now enjoying meals outside is an exciting option any day of the week.



before the makeover





4 steps to pull off charming summer style

With these simple strategies, you'll have no trouble livening up your outdoor dining area. It's all about finding inspiration in things you love and including some clever touches.

Backyard barbecues have a charming appeal that brings family and friends together during the dog days of summer. A casual environment is ideal for such a gathering, but sometimes "casual" is taken to the extreme—leaving style to fall short (*Before Photo, page 38*).

Deck out Your Deck. Fortunately, there are plenty of ways to spice up a dull outdoor dining area. Establishing a summery style is a good way to start. This is best done by choosing one or two key elements with textures and a color palette you can work with.

Then have fun coordinating dishware and accessories, and use them to assemble appealing place settings that suit your serving needs.

Also remember that an outdoor dining area is about more than just the table. Lights, plants, and other accents play a major role in enhancing the overall atmosphere of the space.

Creativity Is Encouraged. As you put it all together, be sure to think beyond an item's intended use. Coming up with unexpected uses for things you find—anything from trays to buckets to vintage potato chip canisters—provides interest and style in the most nonchalant way!

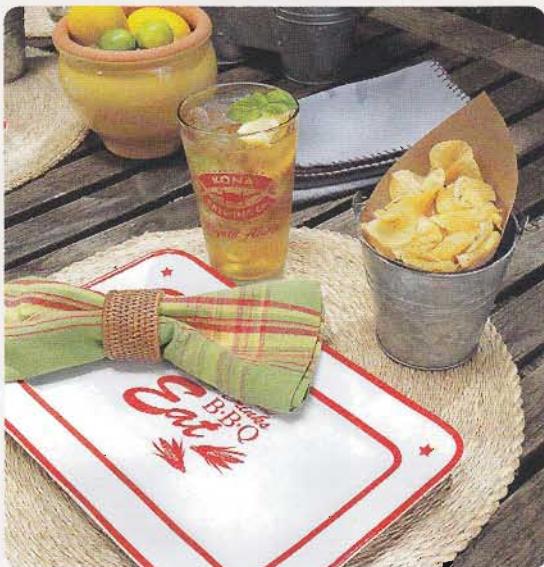
Resources for the items we used in this scene are provided on page 62.

set the style with a few items you adore

1 **Spark a Style Scheme.** Your dining space will benefit from having a few prominent items that tie everything together. The goal isn't to make it all match perfectly, but rather to find inspiration for a set of textures and colors you can repeat. A texture-rich rug and striped chair cushions were the perfect first additions here.



2 Set a Casual Tabletop. Embrace things that are unusual but cool when setting the table. We favored barbecue-themed trays over regular plates, for example, and opted for placemats and napkins that weren't designed to go with the rug and cushions. In the same spirit, silverware and snacks are placed in galvanized metal buckets.



3 Wheel Out a Serving Cart. Hauling supplies out from the kitchen and keeping beverages cold aren't hassles thanks to this galvanized metal "party bucket wagon." Not only is it handy, but it also has tons of character and makes a big style statement beside the dining table.



4 Stylize the Surroundings. Assorted accents complete the relaxed, charming atmosphere. The painted wicker chair carries on the laid-back approach to decorating, and the lime tree planted in a vintage potato chip canister just brings a smile to the face.

brighten the space with festive string lights!

turn table runners into a customized **Folding Screen**

Nothing beats a classic folding screen at turning undefined areas into separate, more intimate spaces. This beautiful, easy-to-build maple screen features panels made from table runners, so you can perfectly complement your decor.

Folding screens have long been appreciated for functional reasons, and their generous dimensions also help them ramp up a room's style. Unfortunately, when you shop for a pre-made screen, your design options are limited. It's easy to end up with a boring piece made from wood or rice paper that serves the purpose but doesn't fit your personal taste.

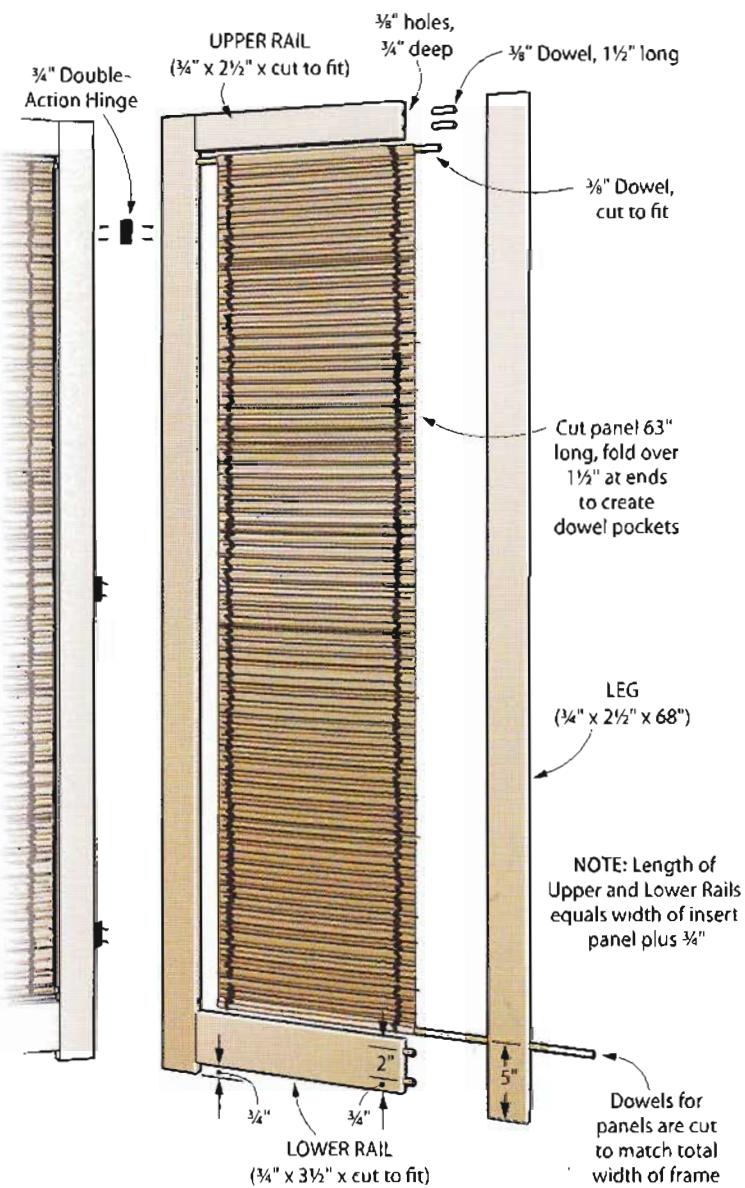
Stunning Style. That's why we built design flexibility into this striking three-frame screen. The frames are built from clear-finished maple, which looks great in any setting. And the panels inside the frames are simply ready-made table runners. You'll find a huge selection of runners in stores and online, so you can create a divider with the colors, pattern, and texture that perfectly enhance your decor (*page 46*).

Simple Construction. The frames for this innovative screen only require basic materials from the home center, and they couldn't be easier to build. Even if you've never built anything out of wood, you'll have no problem putting these frames together.

for perfect panels, use
off-the-shelf table runners



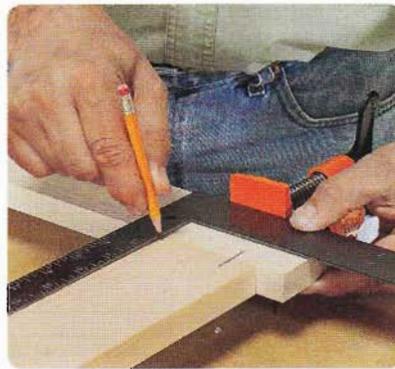




mark and drill mating holes

1

Start by cutting all of the boards to length. Then position the rails, and mark center lines where the dowel holes will be drilled. Use these lines as guides to drill $\frac{3}{8}$ "-deep mating holes for the short dowels using a doweling jig. Also drill holes for the long dowels in each frame leg. These holes go all the way through the boards.



it's easy to build frames for the screen panels

Before you start building the frames, you'll want to have your table runners on hand. That's because the width of your runners determines the length of the frame rails (Illustration, left). Just measure the runner, and then add $\frac{3}{4}$ " to size the rails. Then you can cut the rails and legs to length.

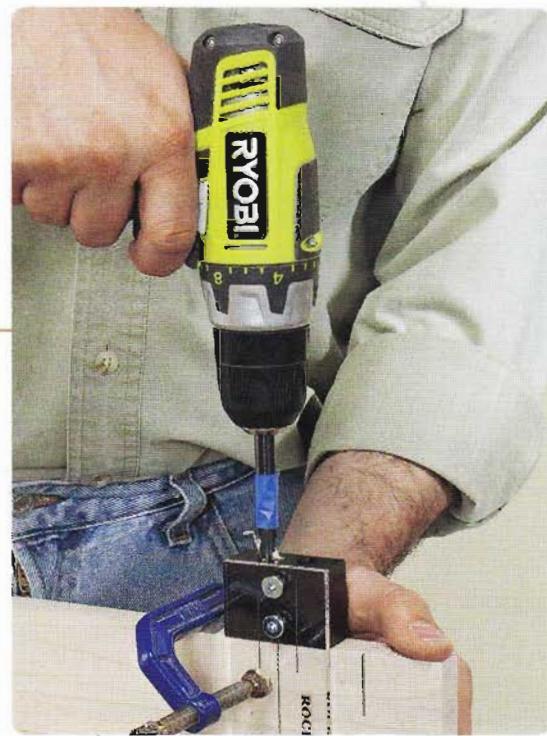
Build the Frames. The frames are held together with wooden dowels and glue. You need to drill accurate holes for the dowels, and that's

done with a tool called a doweling jig (see page 62).

Using the jig is easy. Just draw lines across each joint, and then align the jig and drill.

You'll need to drill $\frac{3}{8}$ "-deep holes in the ends of each rail and in the inside edge of each leg.

You'll also drill holes all the way through the legs for long dowels that hold the panels. This allows you to remove the panels for cleaning or if you want to swap out the panels to change your decor.



assemble the frames

2

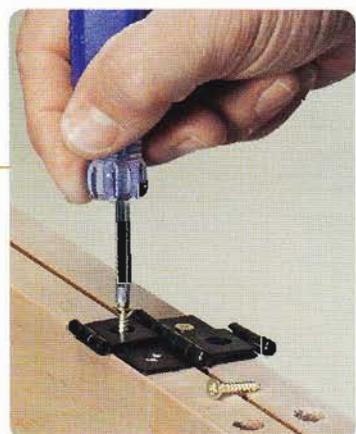
Working on a flat surface, position the frame pieces the way they will be joined. Then squeeze a small amount of glue into the holes for the short dowels. Also apply glue to the ends of the rails. Then quickly assemble the frames, and wipe off any excess glue with a damp cloth. Use clamps to hold the frames together until the glue is dry.



apply finish and add hinges

3

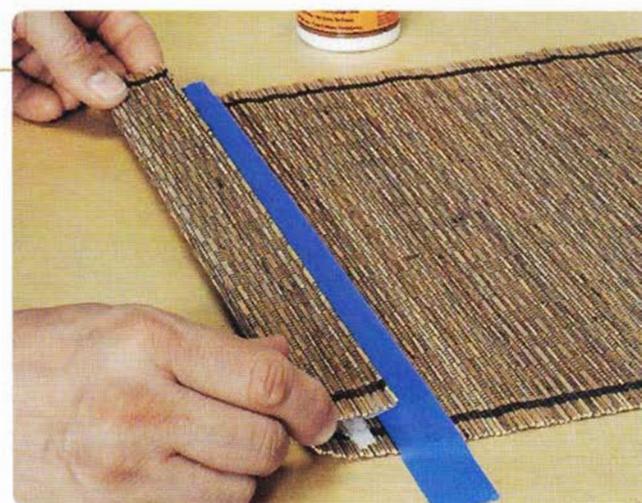
Next, sand the frames smooth, and wipe off all residue with a tack cloth. Brush on two coats of satin polyurethane varnish, and allow it to dry. Finally, mark and pre-drill pilot holes for the double-action hinges (see page 62) as shown in the hinge instructions. Now drive in the screws to connect the three finished frames. Double-action hinges make it easier to position folding screens because they allow the frames to swing both ways.



make pockets for the runners

4

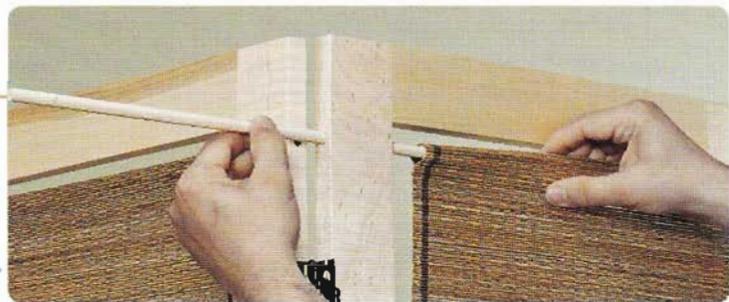
Now cut the runners to an overall length of 63" (60" to span between the mounting dowels, plus 1½" on each end to create a pocket). If your material is stretchy, pull it taut before you measure. Fold each end over, and glue it to create a pocket. If you're using fabric runners, use thick craft glue that won't soak through the fabric.



slip in the dowels

5

Sand a blunt point on one end of each long dowel, so they will be easier to place in the frames. Then, slide a dowel through one leg, through the pocket in the runner, and into the hole in the other leg. Repeat at the top and bottom of each panel.



go from mild to wild with dramatic runner design options



Metal Mesh & Fabric

Table runners are widely available, so you'll be able to find ones that will enhance almost any type of decor.

Modern Metallic. This mesh screen offers a sophisticated look that's a perfect match for a contemporary home (above). Be sure to use clear glue when creating the pockets, or simply stitch the pockets using clear fishing line.

Flowers Add Flourish. A flowered print looks fresh in the same maple frames (right). This screen would look great in a traditionally furnished home or in any space that could benefit from a softer touch. You'll find sources for both of these runners on page 62.

With most folding screens, you're stuck with just one style. But this version lets you swap out the panels, which customizes it to suit almost any style you choose. Plus, you can change panels each season to keep your screen looking fresh year-round.

Options Abound. On these pages, we'll show you just a few options that we came up with using table runners we picked up at local stores. Just keep in mind when selecting runners that they should match in width—or be easy to trim down—so that they'll fit correctly inside the frames.

Of course, if you have sewing skills, you could also make the panels from fabric to open up an unlimited number of design options.



Create a
coordinated
dining area

by pairing matching
placemats with the
runners in your
folding screens!

Done in a Day





heat up your outdoor style with a Cool Copper Patio Torch

Create a batch of these beautiful copper torches in just one afternoon, and you'll be able to light up your yard in style that night!

Patio torches are a popular way to provide outdoor lighting and help keep bugs at bay. You can buy torches almost anywhere, but they usually fall into one of two categories: cheaply built pieces that fall apart in one season, or high-end versions that make it impossible to afford a batch for your outdoor space.

Affordable Style. That's why we designed this clever copper patio torch. It offers the look and style of the torches that can cost \$50 or more apiece, but at a price that won't empty your pocketbook.

The secret is that our torch is made from simple copper plumbing fixtures. You can pick up all of the supplies you need to build one at your local home center or hardware store (*Photo, below*). All of the copper parts for one fixture will set you back about \$25.

Simple Construction. Of course, you're bound to want more than one of these great-looking torches, so we also kept the construction simple. We'll walk you through the process step by step on the next two pages.

plumbing fixtures are all you need to create a set of cool patio torches.





*cut the copper parts,
assemble your torch,
& Let It Shine*

Building a patio torch — or a whole batch of them — couldn't be much easier. All you have to do is follow the simple steps shown here. A pipe cutter takes care of cutting the air chamber and mounting post to length (just be sure you get a cutter that will handle pipe over 1" in diameter). Add some epoxy to connect the parts and a spray-on clear-coat to protect the copper, and you have everything you need.

Mounting Options. You can mount your torch in the yard easily by pushing the copper post into the ground. Or see the *Sidebar* at far right for more mounting options.



create a reservoir

1

Cut the open end off the air chamber to create a 12"-long fuel reservoir. An inexpensive pipe cutter produces a quick, clean cut. Just cinch it down, rotate the tool, and repeat until the end pops off.



shine for sheen

2

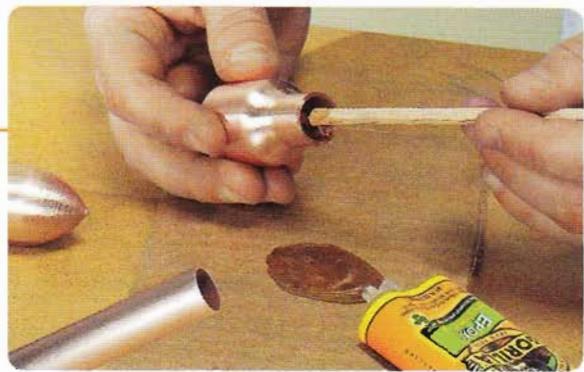
Add a brushed finish to the chamber (and other parts) using a medium-grit abrasive pad. Then wipe away any residue with a clean cloth.



make up a mounting post

3

The mounting post is made from a 5-foot length of $\frac{1}{2}$ " copper pipe (though you can make yours any length you desire). To accept the fuel reservoir, attach a reducer fitting using epoxy. Spread a small amount of epoxy inside the fitting, and then slip it onto the pipe.



add a top & wick holder

4

Top off the reservoir with another reducer. This one just slips on without any epoxy. That way, you can remove the top to add fuel (page 49). The wick fits into a bushing that slides inside the open end of the top.



protect the brushed metal finish

5

To preserve the copper's sheen, spray on a few light coats of a protective clear finish. Just be sure that it's rated for outdoor use. If you prefer to let the copper age and develop a patina over time, just leave it bare.

Mounting Options

The easiest way to mount a torch is to simply push the post into the ground. But if you need a different method, check out these options from Tiki.

Simple Stake. A stake presses into the ground and clamps onto the torch post, so you can remove the torch when you're not using it (*near right*).

Deck Mount. This bracket clamps onto a deck rail and has holes to accept the torch post (*middle right*). Set screws lock the post in place.

Patio Placement. A cast-metal base allows the torch to stand on a patio (*far right*). The base is heavy to help prevent tipping.





Like these chairs?

We ordered these outdoor chairs unfinished and partially assembled from Cranberry Woodworks
CranberryWoodworks.com or 800-476-0529

add style to outdoor seating

On your patio, just like in your home, the finishing touches really make it your own. A customized outdoor chair is the perfect accessory.

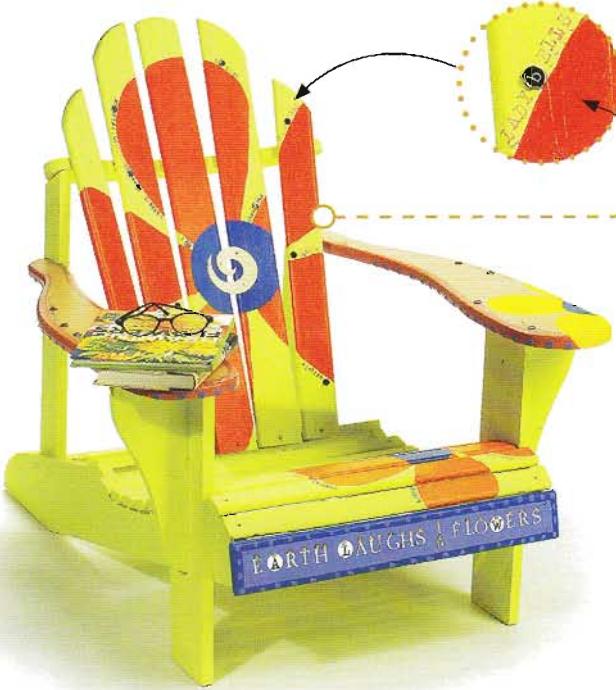
Classic Adirondack-style chairs may be outdoor furniture staples, but when left unfinished (*Photo, below left*), they don't add much personality. You could buy fancy "decorator" chairs to bring colors and patterns to your outdoor space, but their cost may quickly exceed your budget. The solution is to purchase some unfinished Adirondack-style chairs and customize them yourself. Here are a few simple techniques to get that designer look for less. Experiment with paint colors, rubber or foam stamps, stencils, and decorative metal add-ons to create a chair that reflects your personality.

Painted Perfection

Want to start out with an easy project? Pick up a brush, choose a paint color, and get started. A freshly painted chair can add interest to your patio, porch, or deck all year long, whether it's surrounded by springtime blossoms or dusted with winter snow.

Exterior latex paint, like you'd use to paint your house, is the best bet for a chair that's going to sit outside. To make the finish last even longer, brush on a coat of oil-based primer, and let it dry before you paint.

Simpler Priming and Painting. Turn the chair over before you start a new layer of primer or paint, and then coat the underside first. After the coat dries, flip the chair upright and brush primer or paint on the back. That way, you won't have to reach across freshly painted arms.

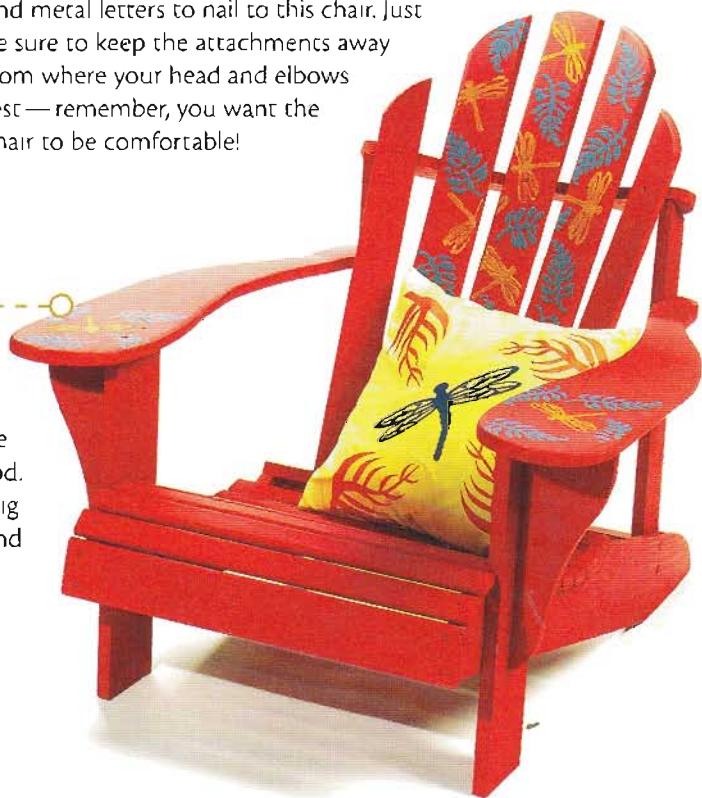


alternate **different styles**
of letters for a laid-back look

Mixed Media

This option lets you express your creativity by combining materials and techniques. We chose a bright base color for the chair and painted on some flower shapes. We also added a gardening quote to the front. The finishing touch was a list of flower names rubber-stamped around the petals, combined with metal letters shaped like typewriter keys.

Keep It Comfortable. We searched craft stores to find metal letters to nail to this chair. Just be sure to keep the attachments away from where your head and elbows rest—remember, you want the chair to be comfortable!



Stylish Stamps

With rubber or foam stamps in craft stores to suit every fancy, you can add leaves, flowers, insects, or almost anything else to your chair. Here, we created a fabric-like effect by repeating two patterns over and over. You'll get the best results from fairly simple stamps. Anything with too many details won't transfer to the wood.

Tidy Stamping Technique. The easiest way to get paint on a big stamp is to make your own "stamp pad." Wrap paper towels around a block of wood, and use a paintbrush to saturate the towels. This method is less messy than dipping the stamp into a pan of paint.

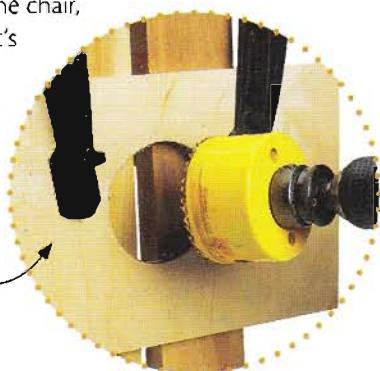


Whimsical Child's Chair

Kids might actually sit down once in a while if they have their own fun chair. Entertain them with a silly cutout pattern that makes a chair look like it's made from cheese. This bright chair brings a touch of humor to your yard with a look that you can achieve in an afternoon.

Hints for Making Holes. We created most of these holes with large drill bits. But for the biggest holes, or holes between two boards, you'll need a hole saw, some clamps, and a guide board with a hole pre-drilled in it. Clamp the guide board to the front of the chair, and cut through the guide and the chair—it's easier to get the hole started that way. Then sand any rough edges before painting.

clamp a **guide board**
in place before you drill





Make Cuts Like a Pro with Your Circular Saw

This helpful saw can handle most any DIY project with ease. Here are a few tips and tricks to help you cut safely, quickly, and accurately every time.

As you peruse the pages of this magazine, you probably notice a lot of references to "cutting the piece to size with a circular saw." There's a very good reason for this.

A Do-It-All Saw. Simply put, no saw is more versatile for crosscutting, ripping, and otherwise making a board the size you need it than the circular saw. The best part is, anybody can head down to the local home center and pick

up a nicely equipped saw (like the one you see below) for \$60 or less.

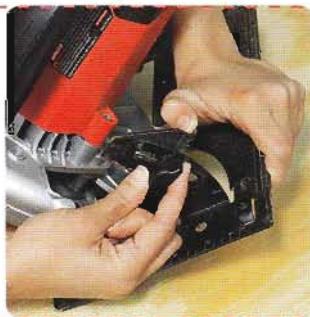
Get to Know the Saw. If you've never seen a circular saw before, it might look intimidating. But it really is a tool that anyone can handle easily with just a little practice. The trick is to get to know many of the saw's important components (*Photos, below*). Then, turn to page 56 for all the tips you need to cut successfully.



A Depth-Adjustment Lever lets you set the blade to cut woods of varying thickness.



A Bevel Gauge allows you to tilt the blade to cut at an angle other than 90 degrees.



Getting Ready to Make the Cut

After familiarizing yourself with the saw components, you're almost ready to start cutting. Here are a few tricks to help you cut safely and accurately.

Safety First. A circular saw has a little bit of setup involved with it, so it's important to leave it unplugged as you put on the blade, set the depth and angle of your cut, and position the saw and your guides on the cut line. Of course, ear and eye protection are also a must when cutting with a circular saw.

Prep Your Piece. The other part of the safety puzzle is properly setting up the board you're planning to cut. We like to cut with a circular saw on sawhorses with "sacrificial" tops. This means the sawhorses have boards (usually 2x4s) attached to them that you can cut into.

A sacrificial top allows you to make a cut with the cut line supported. For example, you can set a panel on top of the sawhorses and cut across it without worrying about part of the piece falling on the ground and getting damaged. This also eliminates the risk of the piece pinching down on the saw blade and causing "kickback."

Cut Straight and Smooth. Once you have your piece set up and ready to cut, you of course want the cut to be as straight and smooth as possible. And believe it or not, you can often do this freehand, even if you're a beginner. To see how it's done, read through the steps at right.

Even a seasoned circular saw veteran has occasions when a freehand cut isn't quite precise enough. For those instances, we have some strategies that are outlined on page 57.

Cutting with a Circular Saw

1 line up the blade

To get started accurately, you need to align the circular saw's blade with the cut line. There is a notch on the saw's "foot" that lines up with the blade, so you can use that notch to position the saw properly. Then back the saw away ever so slightly, so the blade is not in contact with the wood, and pull the trigger to start the saw.



2 start the cut

As you push the saw forward to engage the blade with the wood, you'll be looking not at the saw's foot, but at the blade itself to make sure it's cutting along the line as you desired. If the blade is cutting cleanly along the line, continue to move it slowly and smoothly into the workpiece in as straight of a line as possible.



3 look ahead

If you're making a longer cut across a panel of plywood or lattice, now is the time to take your eyes off the blade and move them back to that notch on the foot. By keeping your eyes trained ahead like this, you are more likely to keep moving in a straight line, just like driving a car. Newer saws have laser guides that help immensely with this step.



Tips & Tricks to Ensure Accuracy

After a few practice runs, the technique outlined at left should have you cutting reasonably straight and smooth lines with your saw. But you will have the occasional job that calls for dead-on accuracy. That's when we recommend one of the following two tools.

Need for Speed. If you're making a short cut across a board (a crosscut) the basic "speed square" is your go-to tool. Available in steel or plastic at the home center, it has a straight arm for 90-degree cuts, an angled arm for 45-degree cuts, and a "foot" that rests against the board. Just hold or clamp it in place, and run the saw along the square to make the cut (Photo, right).

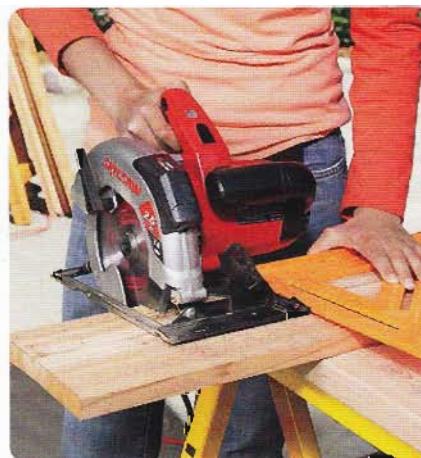
Shop-made Straightedge.

With a piece of hardboard and the straightest 1x2 board you can find, you can make a basic straightedge that will become invaluable for longer cuts on panels or large boards.

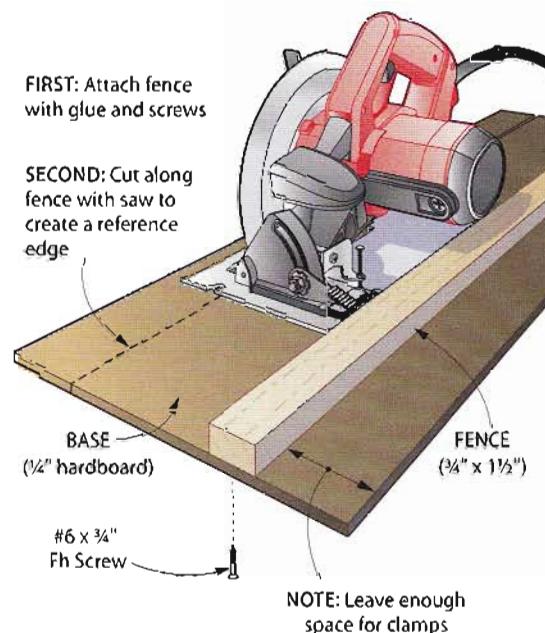
This straightedge couldn't be much simpler to make. The hardboard becomes the base of the straightedge, and the 1x2 becomes the fence. All you have to do is cut the 1x2 to the same length as the hardboard, and

attach it with glue and screws. Next, you want to make one side of the hardboard base a "reference edge" that will line up with the cut line. To do this, just cut down the side of the fence with the circular saw itself (Illustration, right).

That way, when you're ready to cut, you align the edge of the hardboard with your cut line, and the cut will be perfect (Photo, below right).



Crosscuts are easy with a speed square. Just hold it against the edge of the board, and run the saw along the square.



Use this straightedge for longer cuts. It has a "reference edge" that aligns the blade with the cut line as you move the saw.

Different Blades for Different Jobs

Buying a better saw blade

Your circular saw probably came with a 24-tooth blade (Fig. a). For rough cuts in 2x stock, this blade will be just fine. However, you will have some instances where you're working with nice wood and want the smoothest cut possible. In these situations, it's worth picking up a 60-tooth blade (Fig. b).

Finally, they make 140-tooth blades for smooth cuts in always-tricky plywood (Fig. c). These blades work well but tend to get dull quickly.



From Plain Poster to High-Style Wall Art

Looking for art that's more unique than a poster but not much more expensive? We'll show you how to make paper images worthy of your walls with just a few dollars worth of supplies and zero artistic talent.



Budget-conscious decorators don't have to settle for low-profile wall decor. Here's a great way to turn ordinary posters into stunning, substantial pieces of art. All it takes are some MDF panels and a craft product called Mod Podge.

We created this series of wall hangings by cutting up a long poster with three separate images and mounting them to individual panels, but the possibilities of how you can use this technique are limitless. You can find all sorts and sizes of posters in stores and online. Then get creative making a neat configuration.

Cut It. Once you decide how you want to display your poster and divide it accordingly (Fig. 1), you can start creating your masterpiece by taking a few measurements. You'll need to cut an MDF panel to size so that the poster's image wraps around each side with about $\frac{1}{2}$ " of paper reaching the back. (It's fine for a border on the poster to show up on the back, but you'll want the image to cover the sides.) With the panel cut to size, carefully crease the poster where it wraps around each edge. This is the key to achieving the look of a wrapped canvas.

Mount It. At this point, you can adhere the poster to the panel with Mod Podge (Fig. 2), and burnish it (Fig. 3). After folding the corners (Fig. 4), stick the excess paper to the sides and back. You'll have to hold the flaps in place as the adhesive tucks up. Brush on a top coat of Mod Podge to complete the unique look of the wall art (Fig. 5). Once it's dry, you're ready to hang your work (Fig. 6).

Materials List

- Poster
- $\frac{3}{4}$ " MDF panel(s) cut $2\frac{1}{2}$ " smaller in length and width than the poster
- Mod Podge (in "Matte" or "Gloss" finish)
- Foam brush
- Picture hanger(s)



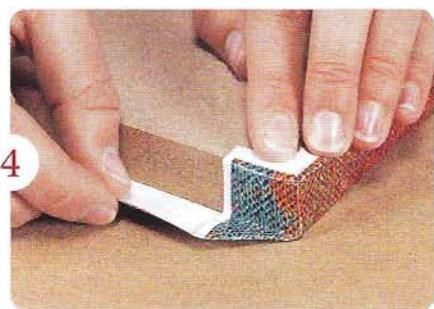
1
Separate images on a single poster can be cut apart and treated individually.



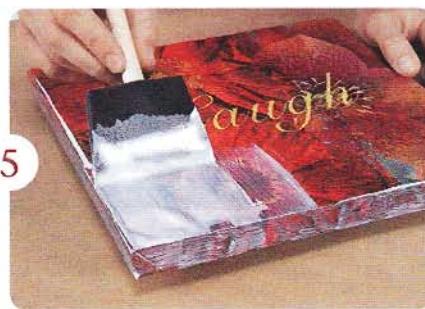
2
Mod Podge acts as glue to hold the poster to the MDF. Use only a thin coat.



3
A credit card helps press the poster to the panel and eliminates air bubbles.



4
To cover the sides, fold the paper like gift wrap. Hold the flaps with Mod Podge.



5
A top coat of Mod Podge will dry clear, leaving artful brush strokes and luster.



6
With a picture hanger attached to the back, it's easy to hang the art straight.



Add "Floating" Storage and Display with Bracket-Free Glass Shelves

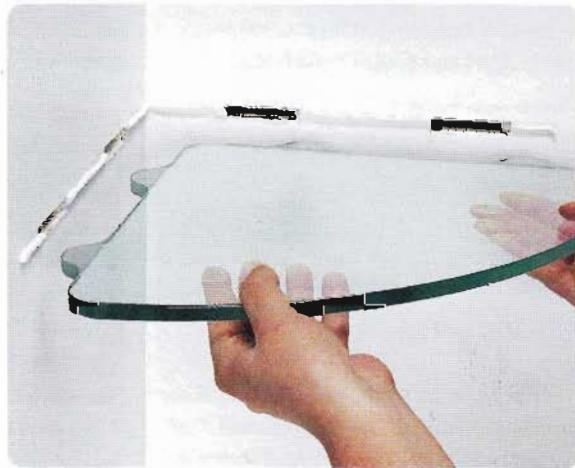
Glass display shelves are nothing new, but these shelves give you a whole new range of style possibilities for your home. The shelves seem to float against the wall with no visible means of support, adding a truly unique and contemporary look to any space.

Instead of using brackets or hardware, the shelves are installed directly into your drywall or plaster. Just cut grooves in your wall using the template that comes with your shelf, apply caulk, and then insert the shelf's tabs into the grooves (*Photo, below*). After you smooth the caulk and let it dry, you'll have a shelf with a load capacity of up to 100 pounds.

The shelves can be installed in a corner or in the center of a wall when you purchase shelf supports. You can turn your shelves into a display area, open storage for towels in a bathroom, or even an entertainment center.

PRICE: \$30 and up

LEARN MORE: FloatingGlassShelves.com
or 800-679-4902



Creative Dresser Knobs Upgrade Kids' Furniture

Replacing boring or outdated hardware is the simplest upgrade you can make to pump up your furniture's appeal. Olive Kids has applied that idea to kids' rooms with Dresserz, their whimsical line of drawer knobs.

The oversized ceramic hardware features colorful labeled graphics of clothing items, which means kids — and parents — will always know where everything goes inside the dresser. They're available in pretty pastels or bold primary colors, so you can choose a set that coordinates with your child's room.



PRICE: \$7 each or \$36 for a set of six

LEARN MORE: OliveKids.com or 877-656-5483



Cut the Cord: Play Music on Your Stereo Wirelessly

Since cord clutter is a common problem around entertainment equipment, wireless receivers are a welcome addition. This music receiver will replace the inconvenient docks and cables that you need to listen to your Bluetooth-enabled music player (such as an iPhone) through your stereo.

The Bluetooth music receiver allows you the flexibility to browse through your device's music collection and change tracks from anywhere in the room. It has a range of up to 33 feet and will remember up to six paired devices.

PRICE: \$50

LEARN MORE: Belkin.com or 800-223-5546

Pull-out Bath Faucet Extends Cleaning and Convenience

The flexibility of pull-out kitchen faucets is now available for your bathroom. The OutReach faucet from American Standard features a spray spout that extends up to 24", which gives it the ability to help with even more household chores.

The faucet can be used for tasks like filling vases or buckets, bathing small pets, or rinsing hard-to-clean areas of the sink. It's available in polished chrome and satin nickel finishes and comes with a lifetime warranty on both the function and finish.

PRICE: \$98

LEARN MORE: AmericanStandard.com or 800-442-1902



turn contemporary
table runners into
a one-of-a-kind
folding screen!

Readers' Tips (page 6)

Rubbermaid Homefree Series Hamper Kit; Large Canvas Basket; Homefree Series Uprights, Rubbermaid.com, 888-895-2110

Stencils and Ink Pads, available at Michaels stores

Clorox Bleach Pen, available at most grocery stores

Q&A (page 8)

National Geographic Black Handford LED Solar Landscape Light #65361, LampsPlus.com, 800-782-1967

Portfolio Solar Landscape Lights (set of six) #81634, Lowes.com, 800-445-6937

Mirrored Door (page 10)

Gardner Glass Products 36" x 24" Frameless Mirror with Polished Edge #96675; Loctite Power Grab All-Purpose White Construction Adhesive with a Pressure Pack Dispenser #185446, Lowes.com, 800-445-6937

½" x ¾" Pine S4S Molding; ¼" x ¾" Pine Flat Screen Molding; Aura Home Design Mirror Mounting Tape; Coping Saw, available at The Home Depot stores

Stanley Clamping Miter Box with Saw #20-600, AceHardware.com, 866-290-5334

PL Mirror Mastic Adhesive, available at True Value stores

Coastal Style (page 12)

"Lenox Tan" Paint #HC-44, BenjaminMoore.com, 800-344-0400

Bristol Lantern; Beachcomber Basket; Coastal Stripe Pillow Cover in Coral; Scattered Shell Pillow Cover; Paper Crochet Pillow Cover in White; Cafe Stripe Pillow Cover, PotteryBarn.com, 888-779-5176

American Living Laurel Grove Sheet Set, JCPenney.com, 800-322-1189

Handcrafted "Beach House" Sign, SignsByDiane.Etsy.com

Shutter (used as a headboard); Side Table, purchased at a local salvage store: WestEndArchSalvage.com, 515-243-0499

Suitcases and Other Accessories, purchased locally



Built-In Bookcases (page 18)

7⅜" x 23⅝" x 75⅝" Besta Shelf Unit (two side cases) #20134046; 15⅓" x 47⅔" x 75⅝" Besta Shelf Unit #70134044, Ikea.com, 800-434-4532

1⅓" x 3⅓" Primed Pine Casing (base molding); 1⅓" x 2⅓" Primed Pine Casing (top trim); 1⅓" x 1⅓" Primed Pine Back Band (top cap), available at The Home Depot stores

DESIGN OPTIONS

15⅓" x 47⅔" x 25⅓" Besta Shelf Unit/Height Extension Unit #40134050; 7⅜" x 11⅓" x 75⅝" Besta Shelf Unit #40134045, Ikea.com, 800-434-4532

Furniture Painting (page 26)

"Opal Silk" Premium Plus Ultra Paint (blue) #UL220-5; "Mojito" Premium Plus Ultra Paint (green) #UL180-10; "Broadway" Premium Plus Ultra Paint (black) #UL200-1, Behr.com, 877-237-6158

Polycrylic Protective Finish, Minwax.com, 800-523-9299

Liquid TSP Substitute, Savogran.com, 800-225-9872

1¼" Round Glass Knob with Satin Nickel Finish; 3" Round Glass Pull with Satin Nickel Finish, RestorationHardware.com, 800-910-9836

Rocking Chair; Two-Drawer Chest, purchased through Craigslist.org

Aquinnah Woven Cotton Decorative Pillow; Aquinnah Woven Cotton Throw, DashAndAlbert.com, 800-658-5035

Kitchen Shelf (page 32)

"Dalila" Paint #319, BenjaminMoore.com, 800-344-0400

¼" x 2" Stainless Steel S-Hook #136743, Lowes.com, 800-445-6937

Satin Nickel 192mm C/C Bar Pull #227447, available at Lowe's stores

3-Cup Stovetop Espresso Maker #413874; Multi Color Stacking Espresso Cups #403842; Chrome Shopping Cart #96025, WorldMarket.com, 877-967-5362

Cream & Sugar Set; Decorative Dog, available at World Market stores

Neoprene Pot Mit in Aqua; Bowls; Drinking Glasses, available at Target stores

{resources}

Outdoor Dining (page 38)

Tufted Outdoor Chair Cushion in Poolside Stripe; Galvanized Metal Mini Bucket; Galvanized Metal Double Caddy; Fisherman Lantern String Lights, PotteryBarn.com, 888-779-5176

Galvanized Party Bucket Wagon, available at Pottery Barn stores

Pandan Basketweave Napkin Rings (set of six) #337744, WorldMarket.com, 877-967-5362

5' Round Maize Rug in Red; Longboard Island Lager Pint Glass; Plaid and Solid Napkins, available at World Market stores

Summer BBQ Tray, available at Williams-Sonoma stores

Circular Braided Jute Placemat; Sea Creature Salad Plate, available at TJMaxx stores

Vintage Jay's Potato Chip Tin Canister, purchased at a local antique store

Folding Screen (page 42)

Lidi Reed Runner #340881, WorldMarket.com, 877-967-5362

1 1/4" x 2" Double-Action Hinge (painted black) #29041; 3/8" Doweling Jig #35242, Rockler.com, 800-279-4441

ALTERNATE PANELS & DESIGN OPTIONS

Heather Table Linens by Brownstone Gallery Chocolate Table Runner #275955, Younkers.com, 800-945-4438

Home Modern Metallic Stripe Table Runner #11230894, Target.com, 800-440-0680

Ramie Table Runner in Natural, available at Target stores

Gold Table Runner with Leaf Print; Teal Jaipur Floral Table Runner, available at World Market stores

Patio Torch (page 48)

Citronella Torch Oil (available in several sizes); Torch Wick Replacement #1508; Torch Stake #8104; Torch Stand #1308045; Deck Clamp #1308056, Lamplight.com, 888-473-1088

Gear Guide: Circular Saw (page 54)

Skil 7 1/4" 14-Amp Circular Saw #296498, Lowes.com, 800-445-6937

8" Speed Square, available at Lowe's stores

Crawford 38" Adjustable Height Folding Steel Sawhorse in Yellow #101866, HomeDepot.com, 800-430-3376

Poster Wall Art (page 58)

AirBeats "Poppy Thoughts" Poster by Tony Stuart/Studio Voltaire; Plaid Mod Podge, available at Hobby Lobby stores

punch up
your room's
personality by
adding casual
textiles with
coastal style!



this sleek storage shelf lets small kitchenware items double as decor!



{a look inside}

18] Easy-to-Build Bookcases

Learn how surprisingly simple it is to create custom built-in bookcases for your home. It just takes some store-bought shelving units and a bit of molding, plus basic tools and skills.

38] High-Style Outdoor Dining

Make the most of your outdoor spaces by turning an ordinary patio table into a stylish dining area. Coordinated accessories and your imagination bring it all together.

54] Circular Saw Secrets

Master the art of making straight, accurate cuts, and learn to do it confidently using one of the most versatile DIY tools around: the hand-held circular saw.



18

54



38