

WOODWORKER'S JOURNAL

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Classic Project



In this plan you'll find:

- Step-by-step construction instruction.
- A complete bill of materials.
- Construction drawings and related photos.
- Tips to help you complete the project and become a better woodworker.

Child's Desk & Bench

GIFT SHOP

Little Folks Desk & Bench

We sized this sturdy desk set for a child about four years old, but the dimensions can be easily changed to adapt it to a larger or smaller child. It features a good-sized "cubby," which is handy for storing books, papers and supplies. And the four plastic cups are ideal for holding pencils, crayons, and paintbrushes. We chose to make it from pine (to reduce cost and weight), but most any wood can be used.

The two front legs (A) and the two back legs (B) can be made first. Start with four pieces of 1 1/2 in. square stock, each one measuring about 21 1/2 in. long. Avoid stock that contains knots or other defects that would affect strength. (If you don't have 1 1/2 in. stock on hand, you can get it by face-gluing 3/4 in. thick stock.)

Use the miter gauge to trim and square the bottom end of each leg, then set the miter gauge to 5 degrees and cut the front legs to an overall length of 20 1/2 in. and the back legs to an overall length of 21 in.

Next, set up the dado head to cut the 3/4 in. by 1 1/2 in. notches on each leg. Note that the notches start 16 in. from the bottom. The back (C) can now be made. Start with stock a bit wider and longer than necessary. With the table saw blade set to a 5-degree angle, rip the back to 5 in. wide. Then, set the saw blade to 90 degrees and crosscut the back to final length.

Now, cut the two sides (D) to the dimensions shown in the Bill of Materials. To establish the taper along the top edge, temporarily clamp the sides to the legs (remember to allow for the 3/4 in. thick back), then lay a straightedge across the tops of the legs and scribe the angle. Use a band saw to cut just outside the marked line. A sharp hand plane will do a nice job trimming the cut exactly to the line.

You'll probably need to edge-glue stock in order to get enough width for the bottom (E). When edge-gluing, it's best to cut the stock a bit longer and wider than necessary. After the clamps are removed, trim to final length and width.

Final sand all the parts, then assemble the two sides to the bottom with 1 1/4 in. long by no. 10 flathead wood screws, countersunk and plugged. Because the bottom is rather wide, it must be able to move freely with changes in humidity, so don't use any glue here. To help allow for that inevitable wood movement, you'll need to bore the two frontmost screw shank holes slightly oversized (we used a 1/4 in. diameter bit).

The back is next. Apply glue to the mating surfaces, then add several countersunk and plugged wood screws.

Now, assemble the four legs. Use glue and wood screws as shown. Keep in mind that you'll need to use shorter (1 1/4 in. long) screws as the 1 1/2 in. screws will break through the side if used here. Check for squareness before setting aside to dry.

Edge-glue stock for the top (F) and trim it to final length and width. Lay out and mark the centerline location of the cup holes, then bore them using the drill press with a circle cutter.

Before boring the holes though, it's a good idea to purchase the plastic cups, as you may need to adjust the diameter slightly for a good fit. You'll want cups that have a sturdy rolled lip that can support the cup in the hole. We used a 3 in. diameter (measured across the top), 9 ounce plastic cup made by the Solo Cup Company of Urbana, Illinois (their part no. P-9B). Our local discount department store carried a good supply of them.

Cut the pencil stop (G) to size and apply a slight radius all around the top edge. It will be added later on after painting.

Next, cut the bench sides (I) to final length and width. Use the dado head to cut the 3/4 in. wide by 1 1/2 in. deep dado in each one as shown. Use a compass to scribe the 5 1/4 in. top radius and the 2 1/2 in. bottom radius, then cut them with a band saw. Use a 3/4 in. diameter drill bit to establish the ends of the handle hole cutout. Once the holes are bored, complete the cutout with a hand held jig saw. The seat (J) and stretcher (K) are now cut to size. With the dado head, cut the 3/4 in. wide by 1/4 in. deep groove on the underside of the seat. Final sand, then assemble the parts as shown.

The desk and bench are ready for painting. Note that the top has not yet been assembled in order to make it easier to paint the cubby later on.

Kids shouldn't be exposed to sharp edges so, before going

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The two front legs (A) and the two back legs (B) can be made first. Start with four pieces of $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. square stock, each one measuring about $21\frac{1}{2}$ in. long. Avoid stock that contains knots or other defects that would affect strength. (If you don’t have $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. stock on hand, you can get it by face-gluing $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick stock.)

Use the miter gauge to trim and square the bottom end of each leg, then set the miter gauge to 5 degrees and cut the front legs to an overall length of $20\frac{1}{8}$ in. and the back legs to an overall length of 21 in.

Next, set up the dado head to cut the $\frac{3}{4}$ in. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. notches on each leg. Note that the notches start 16 in. from the bottom.

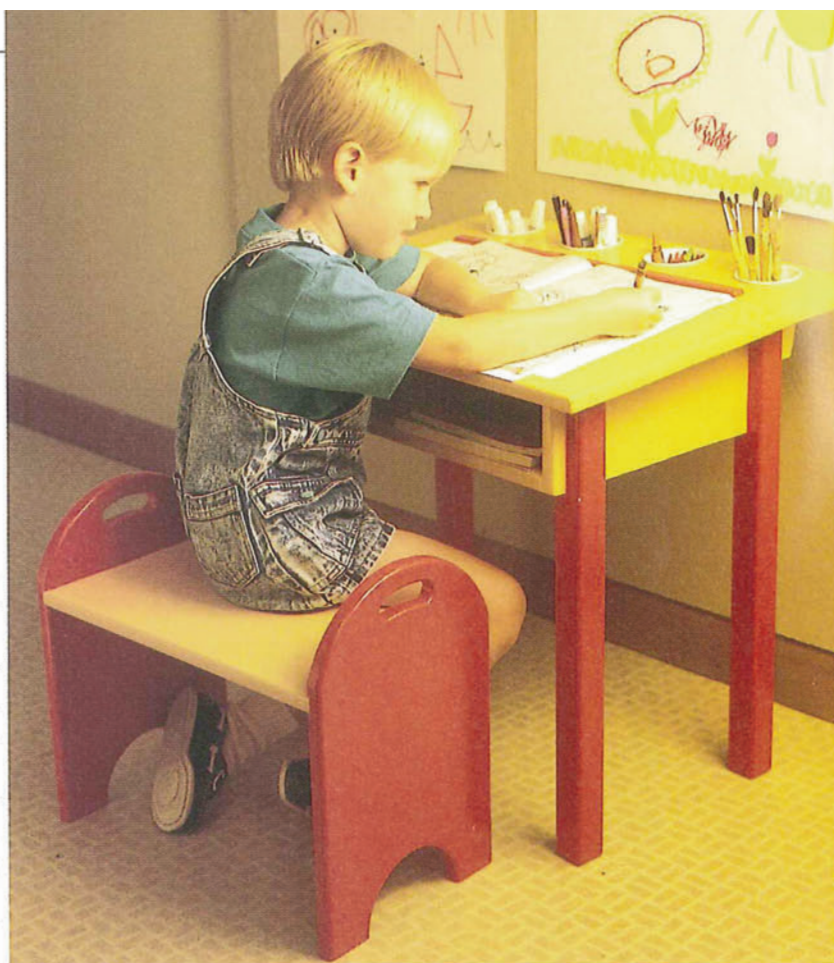
The back (C) can now be made. Start with stock a bit wider and longer than necessary. With the table saw blade set to a 5-degree angle, rip the back to 5 in. wide. Then, set the saw blade to 90 degrees and crosscut the back to final length.

Now, cut the two sides (D) to the dimensions shown in the Bill of Materials. To establish the taper along the top edge, temporarily clamp the sides to the legs (remember to allow for the $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick back), then lay a straightedge across the tops of the legs and scribe the angle. Use a band saw to cut just outside the marked line. A sharp hand plane will do a nice job trimming the cut exactly to the line.

You’ll probably need to edge-glue stock in order to get enough width for the bottom (E). When edge-gluing, it’s best to cut the stock a bit longer and wider than necessary. After the clamps are removed, trim to final length and width.

Final sand all the parts, then assemble the two sides to the bottom with $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. long by no. 10 flathead wood screws, countersunk and plugged. Because the bottom is rather wide, it must be able to move freely with changes in humidity, so don’t use any glue here. To help allow for that inevitable wood movement, you’ll need to bore the two frontmost screw shank holes slightly oversized (we used a $\frac{1}{4}$ in. diameter bit).

The back is next. Apply glue to the mating surfaces, then add several countersunk and plugged wood screws.



Now, assemble the four legs. Use glue and wood screws as shown. Keep in mind that you’ll need to use shorter ($1\frac{1}{4}$ in. long) screws as the $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. screws will break through the side if used here. Check for squareness before setting aside to dry.

Edge-glue stock for the top (F) and trim it to final length and width. Lay out and mark the centerline location of the cup holes, then bore them using the drill press with a circle cutter.

Before boring the holes though, it’s a good idea to purchase the plastic cups, as you may need to adjust the diameter slightly for a good fit. You’ll want cups that have a sturdy rolled lip that can support the cup in the hole. We used a 3 in. diameter (measured across the top), 9 ounce plastic cup made by the Solo Cup Company of Urbana, Illinois (their part no. P-9B). Our local discount department store carried a good supply of them.

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Next, cut the bench sides (I) to final length and width. Use the dado head to cut the $\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide by $\frac{1}{4}$ in. deep dado in each one as shown. Use a compass to scribe the $5\frac{1}{8}$ in. top radius and the $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. bottom radius, then cut them with a band saw. Use a $\frac{3}{4}$ in. diameter drill bit to establish the ends of the handle hole cutout. Once the holes are bored, complete the cutout with a hand held jig saw. The seat (J) and stretcher (K) are now cut to size. With the dado head, cut the $\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide by $\frac{1}{4}$ in. deep groove on the underside of the seat. Final sand, then assemble the parts as shown.

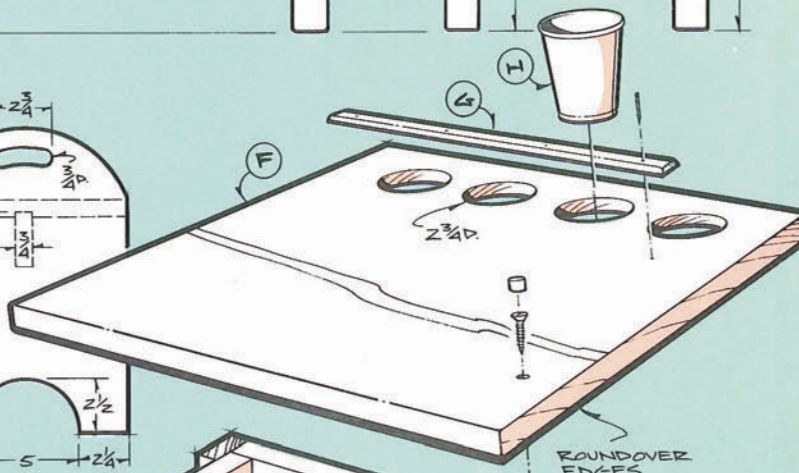
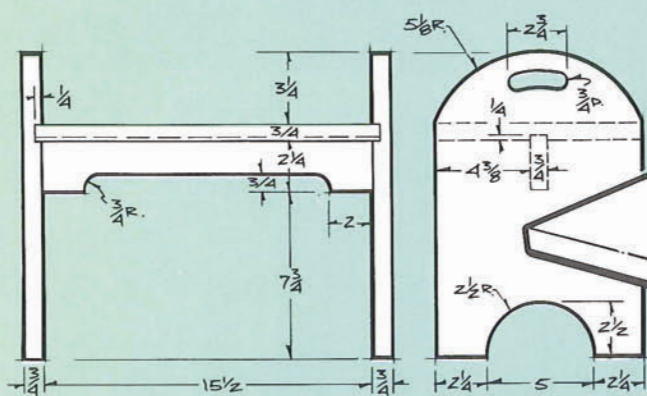
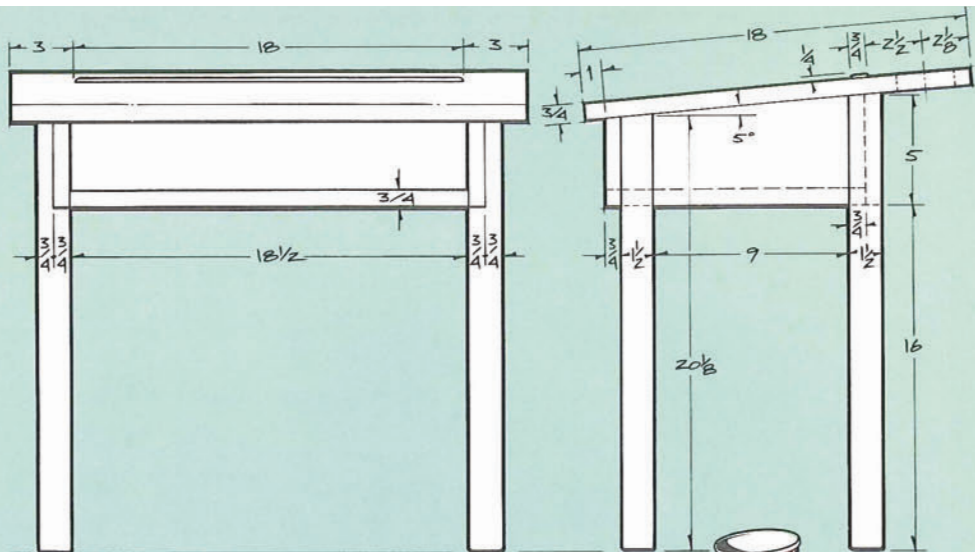
The desk and bench are ready for painting. Note that the top has not yet been assembled in order to make it easier to paint the cubby later on.

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(all dimensions actual)

Part	Description	Size	No. Req'd.
Desk			
A	Front Leg	1 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 20 1/8	2
B	Back Leg	1 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 21	2
C	Back	3/4 x 5 x 20	1
D	End	3/4 x 5 1/2 x 12 *	2
E	Bottom	3/4 x 12 x 18 1/2	1
F	Top	3/4 x 18 x 24	1
G	Pencil Stop	1/4 x 3/4 x 18	1
H	Cup	3 dia.	4
Bench			
I	Side	3/4 x 9 1/2 x 14	2
J	Seat	3/4 x 9 1/2 x 16	1
K	Stretcher	3/4 x 2 1/2 x 15 1/2	1

* Extra width allows for later trimming

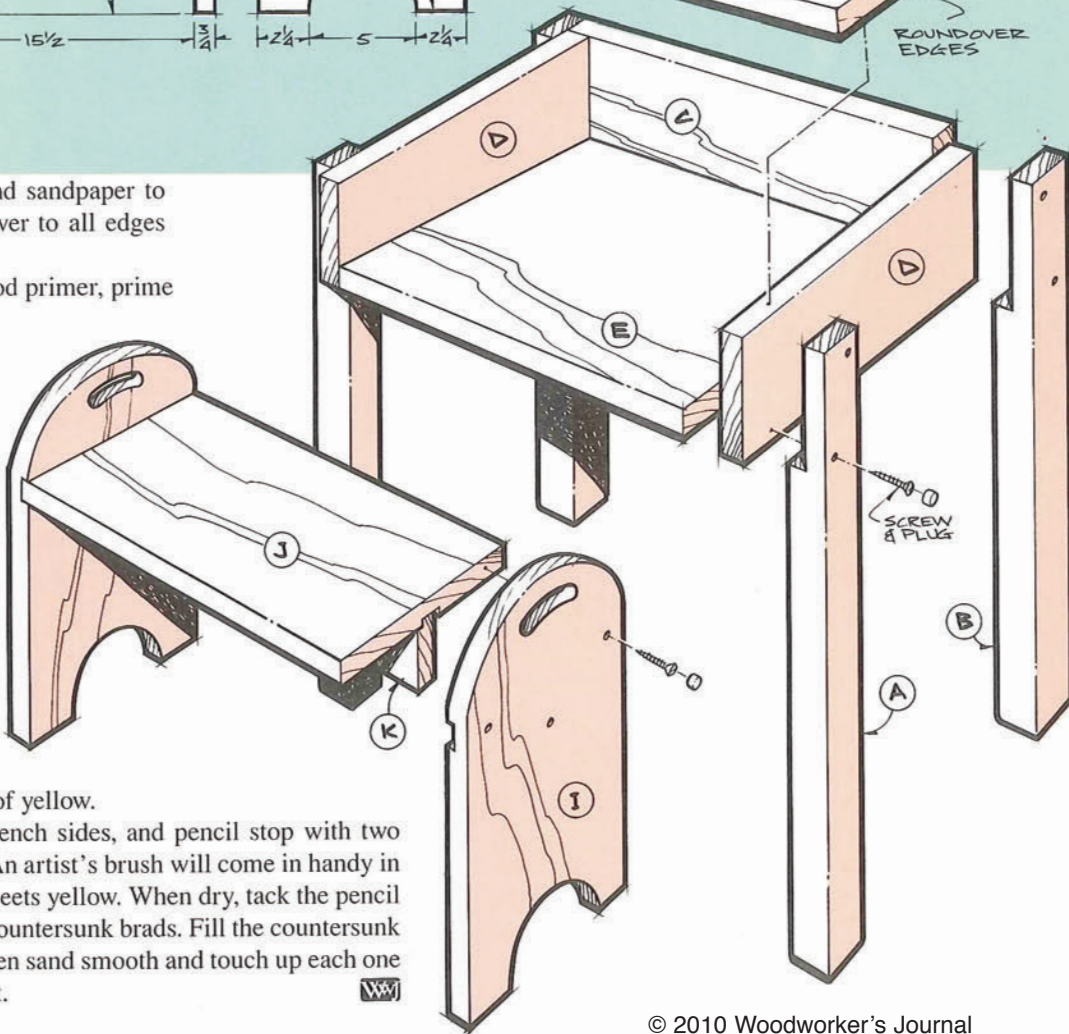


any further, use a file and sandpaper to apply a generous roundover to all edges and corners.

Using an oil based wood primer, prime all the desk and bench surfaces except the upper surface of the top. When dry, paint the ends, back, bottom, underside of the top, bench seat and stretcher with two coats of yellow enamel paint.

Now, assemble the top (again use oversized screw shank holes to allow for movement) and apply a coat of the primer. Allow to dry before adding two coats

Next, paint the legs, bench sides, and pencil stop with two coats of orange enamel. An artist's brush will come in handy in the areas where orange meets yellow. When dry, tack the pencil stop in place with a few countersunk brads. Fill the countersunk holes with wood putty, then sand smooth and touch up each one with a bit of orange paint.



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Thank you again for your purchase, and happy woodworking!

Matt Becker
Internet Production Coordinator