

# Beginner's Tips For Woodworking

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# INTRODUCTION

So, you've decided that you want to learn woodworking. You go into the store, and find mass-produced pieces of furniture, and you want to make your own, something original. That's one of the joys of woodworking as a hobby. You can take a few pieces of lumber and other materials, some tools and your imagination, and with your own two hands create a piece of woodcraft that you can be proud of. Quite often, you can even create something for much less than it would cost to buy one at the store.

This hobby of woodworking is growing in popularity, especially among women. More and more, women are picking up saws, drills, and other tools to create unique furniture and accessories for their homes. So, woodworking isn't just for men anymore.

Woodworking isn't limited to making furniture. You can create toys, figurines, and other items out of wood.

Where do you begin in woodworking? Well, there are several ways to get started in this hobby. You could take a class at a community college, or read up on it in books and magazines. Some people simply jump into it and get started. How you begin should depend on how experienced you are with woodworking tools.

This purpose of this book is to guide you in getting started, learning some woodworking terminology, choosing tools and wood, and to set up a workspace. This is not a comprehensive guide, simply a beginner's guide in getting started.

We'll also give you a couple of projects to get you started, and help you in planning your own woodworking projects.

So, come on in, and learn how to get started with woodworking.

## **YOUR WORK SPACE**

You will need to set up a space for your woodworking activities. Many times, people will set up a space for woodworking in their basement or in their garage. In setting up your space, you should consider several things. You'll need to look at the amount of space, access to light and electricity, and organization. If you have any friends who have a woodworking shop set up in their home, and take note of how they are set up. You'll probably have yours set up a bit differently to suit your own needs, but you can get some ideas by looking at how someone else has set up their shop.

You certainly don't need a huge space to work in. However, it will need to be big enough to accommodate you, your work, and your tools. If you plan on working on small pieces, such as toys, then you don't need much space. A small workbench, and a place to store a few hand tools and small power tools would be sufficient. If you want to build furniture and other large pieces, then you'll need a larger space, both for your work, and for the necessary power tools. So, keep in mind what kind of work you'll be doing, and plan your space accordingly.

A well lit workshop is a necessity, both for comfort and for safety. If you're having to squint to see the piece that you're working on, you probably won't enjoy woodworking for too much longer. If your work bench is well lit, you'll easily be

able to see what you're working on. Likewise, you'll want sufficient light for safety reasons. You'll probably be using a lot of sharp tools, and even a chisel or a screwdriver can be dangerous if you can't easily see what you're doing. Having ceiling lights over your power tools and work bench, along with some desk lamps clamped to strategic locations along the work bench will provide you with plenty of illumination.

If you're using power tools, then obviously, you'll want plenty of access to electrical outlets. You'll want a sufficient number of outlets for the power tools that you are using. This will prevent unnecessary extension cords, which can be a tripping hazard. If you do use extension cords, get some retractable extension cords, which will wind up, out of the way when they are not being used. A few outlets along the workbench will also be useful if you need to plug in some extra lighting or handheld power tools. Also, when locating your power tools, you'll want any accessories to be within easy reach. You don't want to set up your table saw at one end of the workshop, and have to walk clear across the room to find your rip fence or a saw blade.

Another thing to keep in mind is the noise generated by power tools. You'll want to locate your work shop where the noise from the tools won't disturb your family or neighbors.

Once you have decided where to locate your work shop, you'll need a workbench. You don't need to spend a lot of money on a fancy work bench. You just need a space where you can lay out your plans, and work. Choose a workbench with a wooden top, or some other non-marking surface that will not get scuffed up. If you can, then get a workbench with storage space and drawers underneath. Many people mount a pegboard behind their work bench to hang their tools on. If you choose to do this, make sure that the bench is not so wide that you cannot easily reach the tools. Also consider the height of the workbench, you'll want to make

sure that whether you are standing or seated, the bench is the proper height to work comfortably.

Just take some time when setting up your workshop, and make sure that you have plenty of space to work. Make sure that you have sufficient light, and access to power. Take the time to set up a safe and comfortable workshop. The more comfortable, the more you'll enjoy your new hobby. Now, once you have your workshop set up, you'll need to turn your attention to wood, which we'll discuss later, and tools.

## **HAND TOOLS**

You'll need a good set of tools to start woodworking. You will certainly want to look for good quality tools that won't fall apart after only a few uses. You don't need to invest a lot of money in tools to begin. You would be surprised at how much you can do with just a good set of hand tools. After all, before the electric motor, people were building furniture, wagons and carts, and even buildings with nothing more than hand tools. You don't need every tool available for every project, so you can just build up your toolbox as needed.

The following will give you the basics of handtools that you should have for your woodshop.

### **Saws:**

You probably already know what saws do... they cut things. In woodworking, however, there are many different saws for many different jobs.

Crosscut saws and rip saws look very much alike, however, they are designed for different purposes. The

crosscut saw is made to cut across the grain of a piece of wood, while a rip saw is designed to cut in the direction of the grain.

A backsaw is a saw with a rigid blade, designed to make very straight cuts in a piece of wood. Back saws can be used with a miter box, to accurately cut wood at different angles.

Coping saws have very narrow blades, so that you can cut intricate designs in wood. You can use them to cut a pattern in the middle of a piece of wood, by drilling a hole in the wood, passing the saw blade through the hole, and then inserting the blade in the saw frame.

### **Planes:**

Planes are sharp blades held in a wooden or metal frame. The end of the blade extends below the frame, and can be adjusted. Planes range in size from 10 inches up to 22 inches, depending on their purpose.

Planes are generally used to smooth the wood or to reduce the thickness of a piece of wood. Some planes also have blades designed to cut a channel in a piece of wood.

When you buy a wood plane, you'll want to buy one with a sturdy frame that holds the blade securely in place. The plane should also be comfortable to hold and to use. Planes come in several different sizes, but you certainly don't need to buy one in every size. One smoothing plane should be sufficient. You can always buy more as you need them.

### **Chisels:**

Chisels are tools with a flat blade with a square cut edge. They are used for removing unwanted wood, and for

carving. The chisel is held in one hand, while the other hand holds a hammer, striking the handle of the chisel and driving it into the wood.

Chisels come in various sizes, the larger chisels being used to rough out a shape, while smaller chisels are used in finishing the shape, and adding detail.

Other types of chisels, called gouges, are also available. These chisels have a U-shaped blade, rather than a square blade, to create concave carvings in the wood. Other sizes and shapes of chisel are also available for carving and shaping wood.

As with planes, you don't need to run out and buy every size of chisel that you can find. Choose a few chisels that will suit your needs. If you're going to be using the chisels to carve large openings in a piece of wood, you'll need large chisels. If you plan on doing a lot of small detailed work, then a few smaller chisels will do.

### **Screwdrivers:**

A good set of screwdrivers is invaluable for woodworking. A lot of woodwork is screwed together, so you'll want a few different sizes of both flat head and Philips head screwdrivers. A good electric screwdriver will make driving screws a lot easier than using only hand tools.

### **Measuring & Accuracy Tools:**

If you want a quality piece of work, you'll need to make sure that you properly measure your wood, and then you put the pieces of wood together accurately. To do so, you'll need a good set of measuring tools.

A metal straight edge will help to measure and mark the wood accurately. A small straight edge can be used for

measuring smaller pieces of wood, while a larger straight edge will serve for larger pieces of wood.

Tape measures are invaluable for measuring longer pieces of wood. You should look for a tape measure  $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide or wider, so that the tape will remain rigid so that you can measure accurately. If your tape is bending and flexing, you won't get an accurate measurement. You can find tape measures with markings at 1 foot or 16 inch intervals. For woodworking, you'll probably want one marked at 12 inches. The ones marked at 16 inches are intended for construction, with the 16 inch markings making it easy to locate studs.

Square corners are essential in many woodworking projects. A carpenter's square will help you to keep those corners straight. A typical square is 24 inches long, with a 16 inch tongue. A try square is a metal tongue attached to a wooden handle. They are small enough to fit into tight areas, and then can assure accurate marks on the wood when you're ready to cut.

A level is an important tool in making sure that things are straight. You can find levels in many shapes and sizes, the most common size being 24 inches. Levels typically have both vertical and horizontal vials, and some have 45 degree vials as well. Inside each vial is a liquid, with a bubble. When the bubble is centered between the two lines, your work is level.

### **Clamps:**

Unless you happen to have a few extra hands, you'll need some way to hold your materials. You'll need something to hold the wood while you're working on it, and you'll need to hold pieces of wood together when you're gluing them.

A good bench vise is important to hold the wood while you're using a saw or a plane. It just isn't safe to try to hold a piece of wood with one hand, while you're trying to cut it with the other hand. A vise with a 7-9 inch opening should work just fine. You'll want a vise with wooden jaws or inserts to keep from damaging the wood. If you can't find a vise with wood inserts, you can simply place some scrap lumber between the jaws and your work to keep from scratching or denting the wood.

You'll need some clamps to hold things in place while you're joining pieces of wood together. If you're gluing the wood together, a set of clamps will ensure a nice tight joint. If you are screwing or nailing pieces together, then a set of clamps will hold things in place while you're working. A set of c-clamps or small hand clamps will hold smaller pieces together. For larger pieces, you can get a set of bar clamps or pipe clamps to hold the wood together. Instead of a fixed length, pipe clamps can be set to any size you need, depending on the length of the pipe you use.

These are the basic hand tools that you'll want to have in your toolbox to begin woodworking. Just buy the tools as needed, rather than trying to stock your toolbox all at once. When you go to buy your tools, make sure that they are comfortable to hold, since you will be using them quite a bit. You certainly won't have fun woodworking if your tools hurt your hands.

Now that you have an understanding of basic hand tools for woodworking, we'll turn our attention to power tools.

## **POWER TOOLS**

As stated earlier, you certainly can get started in woodworking with just some simple hand tools. If you're

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