


Packed with more than ten projects to help you
start building your own furniture!

Woodworking

FOR DUMMIES[®]

A man with a watch and a ring is shown in a workshop, focused on assembling a wooden chair. He is wearing a yellow t-shirt with the number '1972' on it. The background shows various tools and wooden materials.

Jeff Strong

Author, craftsman, and furniture maker

A Reference for the Rest of Us!



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by Jeff Strong



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About the Author

Jeff Strong began creating sawdust at a very young age while helping his father, a master craftsman, build fine furniture. An accomplished woodworker, Jeff has designed and built countless pieces of furniture and currently accepts commissions to build his creations. His woodworking style marries Arts and Crafts, Southwestern, and Asian influences. This is his third book.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my dad who shared with me both the skills and love of woodworking.

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Introduction

So, you want to work with wood? Well, I can't think of a better way to spend your free time than building a tangible project that will last for a lifetime or longer.

Woodworking For Dummies is a great place for you to start developing the skills of a craftsman and gaining the satisfaction of creating a work of art (or at least a decent table or bookcase). This book gives you the essential information to help you do just that.

About This Book

Woodworking For Dummies introduces you to the wonderful world of woodworking (how's that for alliteration?). Whether you have very little knowledge of the hobby or some experience but with a few gaps in your knowledge base, this book is for you.

I tried to write a book that contains all the essential information for the novice woodworker as well as some more advanced tips and tricks to jumpstart your existing woodworking skills. You won't find any useless theories or unnecessary technical jargon to bog you down. What you will find is practical, hands-on information and advice that will save you hours of frustration (pretty good deal, huh?).

Here's some of what I cover in this book:

- ✓ Choosing the right wood for your projects
- ✓ Getting the best tools for you and your goals
- ✓ Setting up your workshop
- ✓ Making wood joints and knowing the best joint for the job
- ✓ Building projects that you'll be proud of
- ✓ Sanding and finishing

If that's not enough, I also try to make this book as fun as possible to read. After all, there's no sense in suffering through a book, is there?

How to Use This Book

This book is organized modularly, which means that you can read it from cover to cover and progressively build your woodworking knowledge. Or you can skip around and choose a subject that interests you from the table of contents or index, and start reading it immediately without feeling lost. Throughout the book I also include cross-references to where you can find more information about a subject.

Conventions Used in This Book

Woodworking is a fairly technical subject with its own rules and language. Because of this, I include a lot of terms you may not be familiar with. Rather than include a glossary of terms, I've chosen to provide definitions or cross-references for terms that are part of the woodworking vocabulary. These terms are in italics to help you identify them.

Not So Foolish Assumptions

When I wrote this book, I made some assumptions about you, the reader.

First, I assumed that you want to build furniture projects and not a house or some other large-scale construction project. For that, you're probably better off with a book on carpentry, because if you apply all the little details that go into a good piece of furniture to framing a house, for example, it'll take you too long to get the job done. (Of course, it will look awesome and be a work of art when you're through.)

Second, I assumed that you want to do things the fast and easy way and not necessarily the old-fashioned way.

As you'll likely find out by talking to other woodworkers, you can find almost as many ways to perform a task as you can find woodworkers. Everyone has his own unique way to do things and mine involves taking advantage of modern tools and shortcuts, rather than using old-fashioned, time-consuming, and often frustrating approaches that can be done better with modern tools and approaches (do you sense a little bias here?). For example, if you want to find out how to craft dovetails by hand with a chisel and backsaw, buy another book. But if you want to make joints that are just as strong and beautiful in a fraction of the time with a router and a jig, then this book is for you. (Don't worry, in this book, you will still get to see many of the traditional ways things are done, if for no other reason than to help you decide for yourself how you want to approach a task.)

Aside from these two things, I don't assume that you want to make a certain type of furniture or whether your goals include wanting to make a few things for your house or getting really serious and entering your work in juried shows.

How This Book Is Organized

Woodworking For Dummies is organized into six parts so that you can find the information you're looking for quickly and easily. What follows is a closer look at each part and what it covers.

Part I: What's All the Buzz about Woodworking?

Part I is your introduction to woodworking, wood, and woodworking shops. Chapter 1 gives you an overview of the woodworking process and gets absolute beginners up to speed on this fascinating hobby. Chapter 2 helps you to understand the unique qualities of wood. You discover the various types of wood used in furniture and how to find and buy the right boards for your projects. Because woodworking is an inherently dangerous activity, Chapter 3 shows you how to create a safe working environment and gives you some guidelines for working as safely as possible.

Part II: Tool Time: Selecting and Setting Up Your Equipment

Part II is the section for anyone who loves tools. Chapter 4 helps you determine the best tools for your goals. It opens your eyes to the type of woodworking you intend to do and what tools will help you accomplish your goals. Chapter 5 introduces you to the tried-and-true hand tools and provides tips on how to choose and use them. Chapter 6 explores portable power tools. It gets you up to speed on what to use for what purpose. Chapter 7 is all about the big machines. This chapter gives you the lowdown on the machines that most woodworkers drool over (and that make woodworking easier, faster, and more fun). Chapter 8 helps you set up your tools and lets you get started using them by providing some projects to make some tool helpers called *jigs*.

Part III: Together Forever: Basic Wood Joinery

Part III gets into the nuts and bolts of joining wood together (you don't use actual nuts and bolts, though). Chapter 9 is all about adhesives (glues). This chapter demystifies all the different glue choices you have to contend with. After reading this chapter, you'll be able to walk into a woodworking store and get the right glue for you. Chapter 10 shows you how to make all the wood joints you'll encounter in this book. Wood joints are the basis for almost all woodworking, and making them well is the difference between a project that lasts for a few years (at most) and one that is still solid after generations. Chapter 11 offers your wood joints some assistance with mechanical fasteners such as screws and nails. This chapter shows you when adding a nail or screw to your project can help and when it's a waste of effort.

Part IV: Getting Your Hands (And Shop) Dirty: Turning Raw Wood into Furniture

Part IV is filled with really cool projects. The purpose of this section is to give you some woodworking experience and to progressively build your skills. Chapter 12 leads you through the process of making a project so that you know what you're getting into before you begin cutting wood. Chapter 13 gets you started woodworking with the easiest project to build — a bookcase. Not just one bookcase, but several, so you're sure to find one that fits your design ideals. Chapter 14 builds on the skills you developed in Chapter 13 by helping you build tables. Like Chapter 13, you have several table designs to choose from (heck, build 'em all; you can never have too many tables!). Chapter 15 ups the ante by providing projects for making cabinets with either drawers or doors. Again, you get to choose among several really good designs (if I do say so myself).

Part V: The Grand Finale: Sanding and Finishing Your Masterpiece

A woodworking project wouldn't be complete without the finish. Part V helps you make this often hated (trust me, I'm being nice here) process of sanding and finishing into a chore that you'll love (okay, maybe just *tolerate*).

Chapter 16 explores the often short-shrifted process of filling and sanding the wood smooth. Chapter 17 shows you how to add color to the wood. Chapter 18 demystifies the topcoat process. In this chapter, you discover the best type of finish for your project and go through the steps of applying it for best results.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

A staple of every *For Dummies* book, Part IV presents the Part of Tens. Chapter 19 includes ten good habits to get into to make your woodworking experience safer.

Chapter 20 offers ten woodworking pitfalls that almost everyone encounters at one time or another. (Oh, and ways to avoid or fix them, too.) Chapter 21 gives you some woodworking resources so that you can keep expanding your woodworking knowledge.

Icons Used in This Book

As in all *For Dummies* books, I include a few icons to help you along your way. They include:



Certain techniques and information bear repeating. This icon gives you those gentle nudges to keep you on track.



This icon highlights expert advice and ideas that can help you to make better projects.



Woodworking is an inherently dangerous hobby. This icon alerts you to those times when you need to take extra care so as not to injure yourself or damage your workpiece or tools.



This icon contains some background information about the material you're working with to help you better understand the reason for doing a task a certain way.