

The Home HANDYMAN

January/February 2025 • Vol 35 No 01



SA'S
ORIGINAL
DIY
MAGAZINE

DIY

DELIGHTS

PAINT LIKE A PRO:

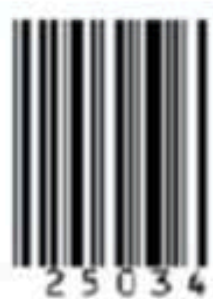
**TIPS AND
TECHNIQUES FOR
PERFECT WALLS**

**ESSENTIAL TOOLS
AND TECHNIQUES
FOR METALWORKERS**

WOODWORK:
BUILD A KITCHEN BENCH

PROJECT:
MAKE A KNEELING CHAIR

WOODWORK:
CARVING 101: WHITTLE A BIRD

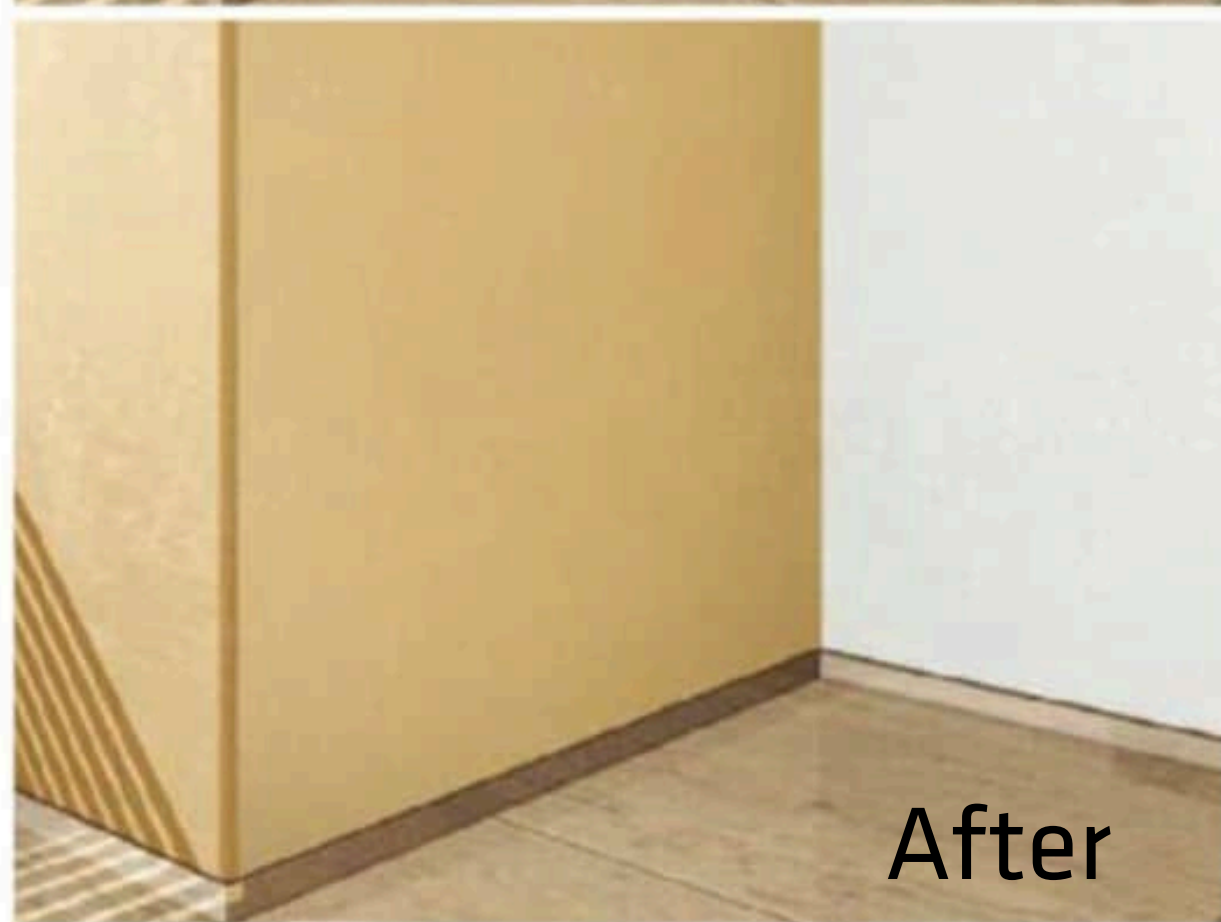


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BUILDING TRUST



FROM THE WORKBENCH

A fresh start

Welcome to our January/February issue – a fresh start to a new year filled with creativity, inspiration, and the joy of making. There's something special about this time of year, isn't there? It's a season of possibilities, where we can reflect on the year past and plan for the one ahead. Whether your resolution is to pick up a new skill, tackle those long-delayed projects, or simply spend more time doing what you love, we're here to guide and cheer you on.

DIY has a unique way of bringing people together, whether it's through shared projects with family, tips exchanged with friends, or the satisfaction of completing something entirely on your own. It's not just about what you create – it's about the process. The moment you transform raw materials into something beautiful or functional, you're reminded of the power of ingenuity and determination.

For many of us, the start of the year is an opportunity to take a step back, clear the clutter, and focus on what truly matters. This theme is woven throughout this issue, from simple and practical ideas for organising your workspace to bigger projects that can transform your home. If your tools are still scattered after the festive season, or your spare room has become a dumping ground, now is the perfect time to turn those spaces into places that spark creativity and productivity.

This year, one of my personal goals is to approach DIY with a more sustainable mindset. We've all seen the impact of waste and overconsumption on our environment, and as DIY enthusiasts, we have the chance to make a difference. Whether it's repurposing old furniture, using recycled materials, or upcycling everyday items, there are countless ways to breathe new life into things that might otherwise be thrown away. That's why this issue features several eco-conscious projects, helping you start 2025 with both style and sustainability in mind.

Of course, DIY is also about learning. Every project teaches us something new – a better way to sand wood, the perfect angle for a cut, or the right adhesive for a tricky material. And let's not forget the life lessons we pick up along the way: patience, problem-solving, and the occasional reminder to double-check our measurements!

In this issue, we've included projects and tips for every skill level. Beginners can try their hand at simple weekend projects, while seasoned DIY'ers can dive into the more ambitious builds. And because we know not every project goes smoothly, we've packed in troubleshooting advice and expert insights to help you avoid common pitfalls.

Before I sign off, I'd like to thank you, our readers. Your support, feedback, and enthusiasm are what make this magazine more than just pages of ideas – they make it a community. Please keep sending us your stories and photos; they inspire us as much as we hope to inspire you.

Here's to a year of creativity, connection, and accomplishment. Let's make 2025 the best year yet – one project at a time.

Gregg



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2025

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The Home Handyman is published bi-monthly (6 issues per annum) and is available in hard copy and in digital format

PUBLISHER: BB Publications (Pty) Ltd (2023/818376/07)
Address: #25 Leeugedacht, Welgedacht JR130, Dinokeng, Gauteng, 1000, RSA
Office number: 065.849.3264 (during office hours)
Website: www.homehandyman.co.za

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About *The Home Handyman* magazine:

The Home Handyman magazine is a specialized DIY publication and caters for a well-defined niche market since November 1993. The magazine equips its readers with relevant DIY information, knowledge and skills.

Editorial includes new products for DIY'ers, along with projects, home improvement ideas and expert advice. Expert advice from various fields (such as adhesives, abrasives, power tools, welding, plumbing, paint, lighting, waterproofing, wood and metalworking), provides readers with simple, cost effective solutions and methods in a series of practical, step-by-step features that are comprehensively illustrated. All projects feature local products and metric measurements, making the ideas easy to implement.

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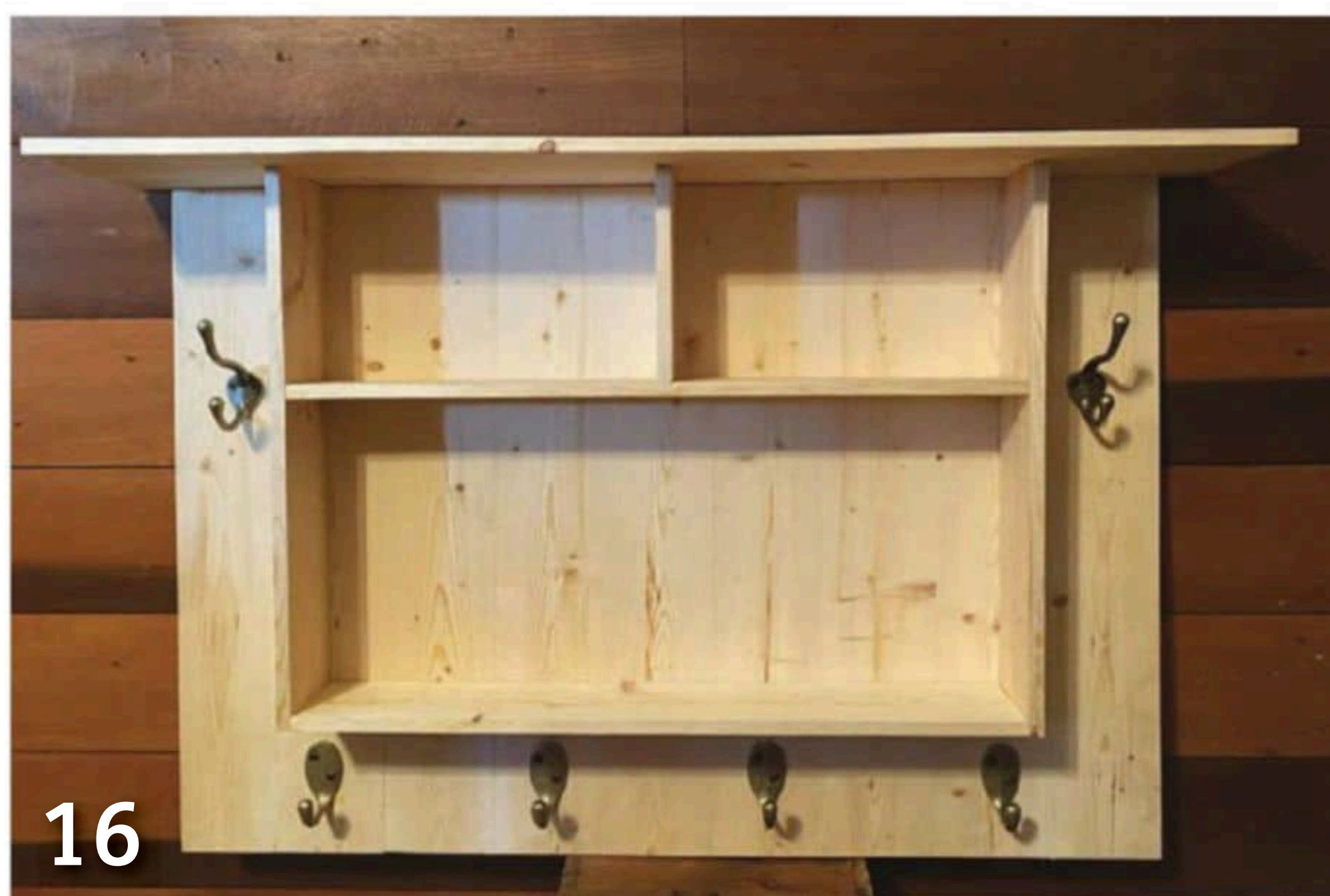
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FROM OUR READERS

Sharing letters, ideas, and questions from our community

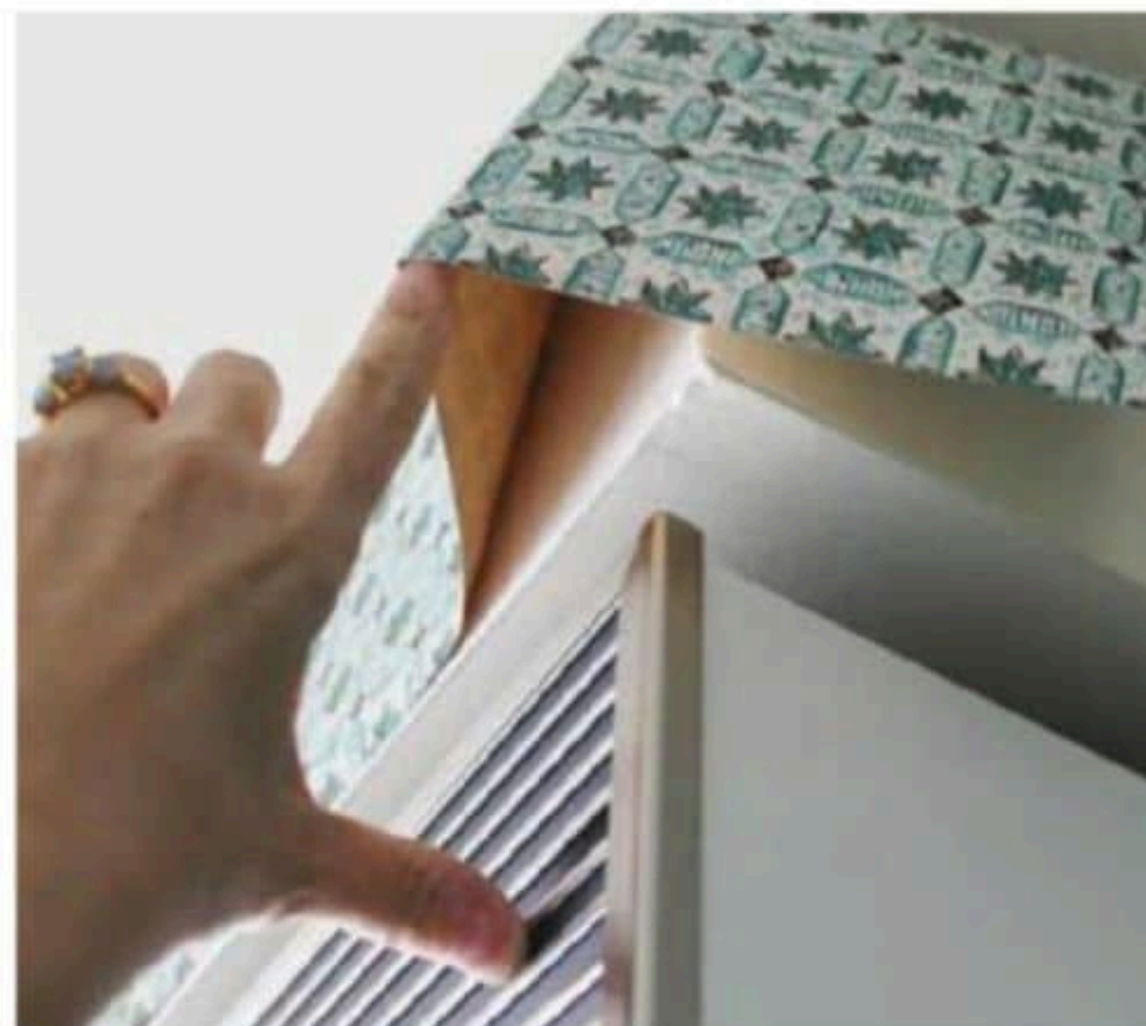
Dealing with peeling wallpaper edges

The edges of my wallpaper have started peeling away from the wall. Is there a way to fix this without redoing the entire wall?

Michael Pillay, by email

Ed replies: Yes, peeling edges can be fixed easily with the right adhesive. Start by gently lifting the peeling section and wiping away any dust or debris underneath. Apply wallpaper adhesive or a small amount of white glue to the back of the peeling section with a brush or a cotton swab. Press it back onto the wall and smooth it out with a clean, damp sponge to remove air bubbles.

Use a seam roller to ensure the edges stick firmly, and wipe away any excess adhesive before it dries.



Paintbrushes and cling film

Struggling to keep paintbrushes fresh between coats? Wrap them in cling film to prevent them from drying out. I recently painted my entire dining room, and this little trick saved me loads of time on washing brushes after every break. Plus, it's far better for the environment than tossing out brushes after a single use.

It's a small tip, but it makes a big difference when you're in the thick of a painting project.

Mpho Thaban, by email

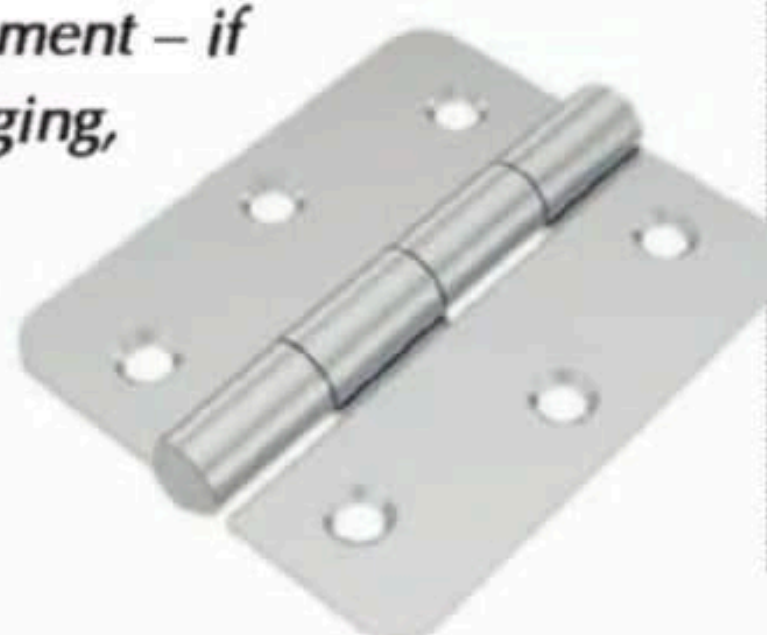


Fixing a squeaky door hinge

My front door hinge has started squeaking every time it's opened or closed. I've tried applying oil, but the noise keeps coming back. Is there a more permanent fix for this?

Daniel Botha, by email

Ed replies: Squeaky hinges are a common issue, but oil alone might not be enough. Start by removing the hinge pin and cleaning it thoroughly with a cloth to get rid of dirt and rust. Then, apply a lubricant like silicone spray or a small amount of petroleum jelly, which lasts longer than standard oil. Reinsert the pin and swing the door back and forth to distribute the lubricant. For a lasting solution, check the hinge alignment – if the door is sagging, tightening the screws or replacing worn hinges can also help.



Plumbing perfection

Your recent guide on plumbing repairs was an absolute lifesaver! I've always been a little wary of tackling home plumbing projects, but your clear and concise steps gave me the confidence I needed. With your tips, I managed to fix a persistent leak under my kitchen sink that had been causing me sleepless nights.

The section on choosing the right washers and seals was particularly useful – it's amazing how such a small part can make such a big difference. Thanks to you, I now feel more equipped to handle basic plumbing issues without immediately picking up the phone to call a professional.

I'm eagerly awaiting more articles like this. You've certainly won a loyal reader!

Fiona Adams, Constantia

The joys of tinkering

I wanted to take a moment to say how much I enjoy your magazine. As someone who's always tinkering with one project or another, I love having a resource that speaks directly to people like me. From small household repairs to ambitious builds, your advice is spot on.

My latest project – reupholstering an old ottoman – was inspired by a project in a previous issue. I'd never tried anything like it before, but your guidance gave me the confidence to dive in. The ottoman now looks better than ever, and I'm already eyeing my next challenge.

Keep the fantastic content coming. You're making DIY more accessible to everyone!

Elaine Harris, by email

Storing nuts and bolts securely

Keeping small hardware items like nuts, bolts, and washers organised can be a challenge. I've started using old spice jars to store them. The transparent glass makes it easy to see what's inside, and the screw-top lids keep everything secure. Plus, they're a great way to repurpose something that might otherwise go to waste.

Henk Turner, by email

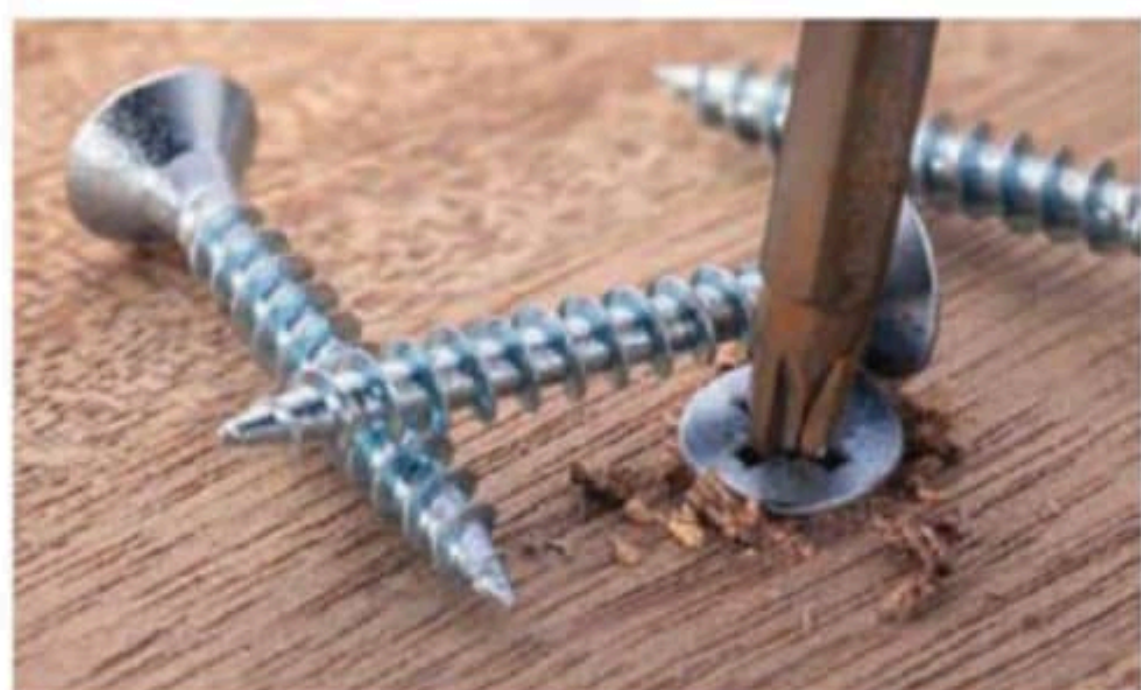


Preventing wood from splitting

When driving screws into wood, I used to struggle with the wood splitting. A friend suggested drilling a small pilot hole first, and it's been a game-changer. For particularly delicate wood, rubbing the screw on a bar of soap before driving it in reduces friction and makes the process smoother.

This has transformed my DIY woodworking projects, and I'm sure it'll help others too.

Simon Baker, Hillcrest



Practical advice for everyday problems

Your magazine has been a wonderful source of inspiration and advice. As a retiree, I now have more time for DIY projects, but I also want to keep things practical and cost-effective. Your features strike the perfect balance.

One request: could you include more content on eco-friendly projects? I'm trying to reduce waste and reuse materials as much as possible, and I'd love to see tips on that.

Thank you for all that you do!

Alan Fisher, North West

***Ed replies:** Thank you, Alan, for your thoughtful suggestion. We're thrilled to hear how much you enjoy the magazine and appreciate your feedback. Eco-friendly DIY is definitely something we'll explore more in upcoming issues. Keep an eye out – we've got some exciting features in the pipeline!*

Magnetic tool strip for small metal parts

I'm always losing small screws, nails, and other metal bits when working on projects, so I installed a magnetic strip along the edge of my workbench. Now, whenever I'm working, I stick these small parts to the strip, and they stay put! It's much easier than fishing around on the floor for that one lost screw when you need it.

Amanda Botha, by email



Preventing paint bubbles on walls

I recently painted my living room, and a few bubbles have formed on the walls. What causes this, and how can I prevent it in the future?

Dusty Petersen, by email

***Ed replies:** Paint bubbles often occur due to moisture or poor surface preparation. Before painting, make sure the surface is clean, dry, and free from dust, grease, or old peeling paint. Sand the area and apply a primer if necessary. If moisture is the issue, address the source (like a leak or high humidity) before painting. To fix the current bubbles, scrape them off, sand the surface smooth, and repaint using thin, even coats. Avoid painting in very hot or humid conditions, as this can also cause bubbling.*

Reader's projects



The Home HANDYMAN

www.homehandyman.co.za

Willing to share your latest project with our readers? Send a step-by-step write up of how to make the project, along with step-by-step photographs (at least 300kb) and a picture of the finished product.

Email projects and photographs to:

editorial@homehandyman.co.za

Build your own ergonomic kneeling chair.



SIT HAPPENS

>> Shane Mitchell

An ergonomic kneeling chair is a practical and stylish solution for anyone who spends long hours working at a desk. Inspired by the Variable Balans design from the 1970s, this chair promotes better posture and strengthens core muscles while adding a dynamic, rocking motion to your seating experience.



What you will need

The materials and tools required include hardwood or plywood for the chair frame (I used 50mm thick ash for its cost-effectiveness and durability), 19mm plywood for the seat and shin rests, and basic woodworking tools like a table saw, bandsaw, and router. High-density foam, fabric, and batting are used for upholstery. Make sure you also have clamps, wood glue,

spray adhesive, and a staple gun for assembly and finishing.

Supplies:

- Wood: Hardwood or plywood (I used 50mm ash)
- 19mm plywood (for the seat and shin rests)

Tools and materials:

- Table saw
- Bandsaw
- Jointer/planer
- Domino joiner/dowels
- Wood glue
- Router (with spiral up/down bit and 6mm round-over bit)
- Sandpaper and sander
- Clamps
- Penetrating oil (for finishing)
- High-density foam (75mm thick)
- Fabric and batting
- Rotary blade/scissors
- Spray adhesive
- Staple gun
- Sewing machine

This project uses ash wood for its durability and aesthetic appeal, complemented by 75mm thick, high-density foam cushions on the seat and shin rests. However, you can opt for plywood or other hardwoods if you prefer. The angled seat and rocking feature ensure maximum comfort, making it a rewarding build for DIY enthusiasts.

Not only does the chair look intriguing, but it also provides numerous ergonomic benefits. Regular use can improve posture, reduce back pain, and help develop a stronger core. Be mindful that transitioning to a kneeling chair takes time, particularly if you're new to this seating style, but the long-term benefits are well worth the adjustment.

Here's a detailed guide to help you craft your own kneeling chair.

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Mill the lumber and mark out templates

Begin by milling the wood to create flat and square edges using a jointer and planer (or order your wood pre-cut to size). Once milled, trace the chair templates onto the wood. Use a bandsaw to rough-cut the leg pieces, leaving extra material at the joint areas for clamping during assembly. This extra material will provide better leverage and make the gluing process more manageable later.

Step 2: Shape and assemble the legs

Next, use a track saw or table saw sled to cut the leg sections to precise angles. Mark the placement for dominoes or dowels at each joint and plough mortises to ensure strong connections. It's advisable to use two dominoes or dowels at each joint, as these areas will bear significant stress during use.

Step 3: Glue and refine the legs

Glue the leg sections together,

ensuring proper alignment. Once the glue has dried, trim the excess material at the joints using a bandsaw. Attach the leg templates to the glued sections with double-sided tape and use a router with a spiral bit to refine their shape. Clean up any inconsistencies along the curves with a spindle sander to achieve a smooth and uniform finish.

Step 4: Make the front stretcher

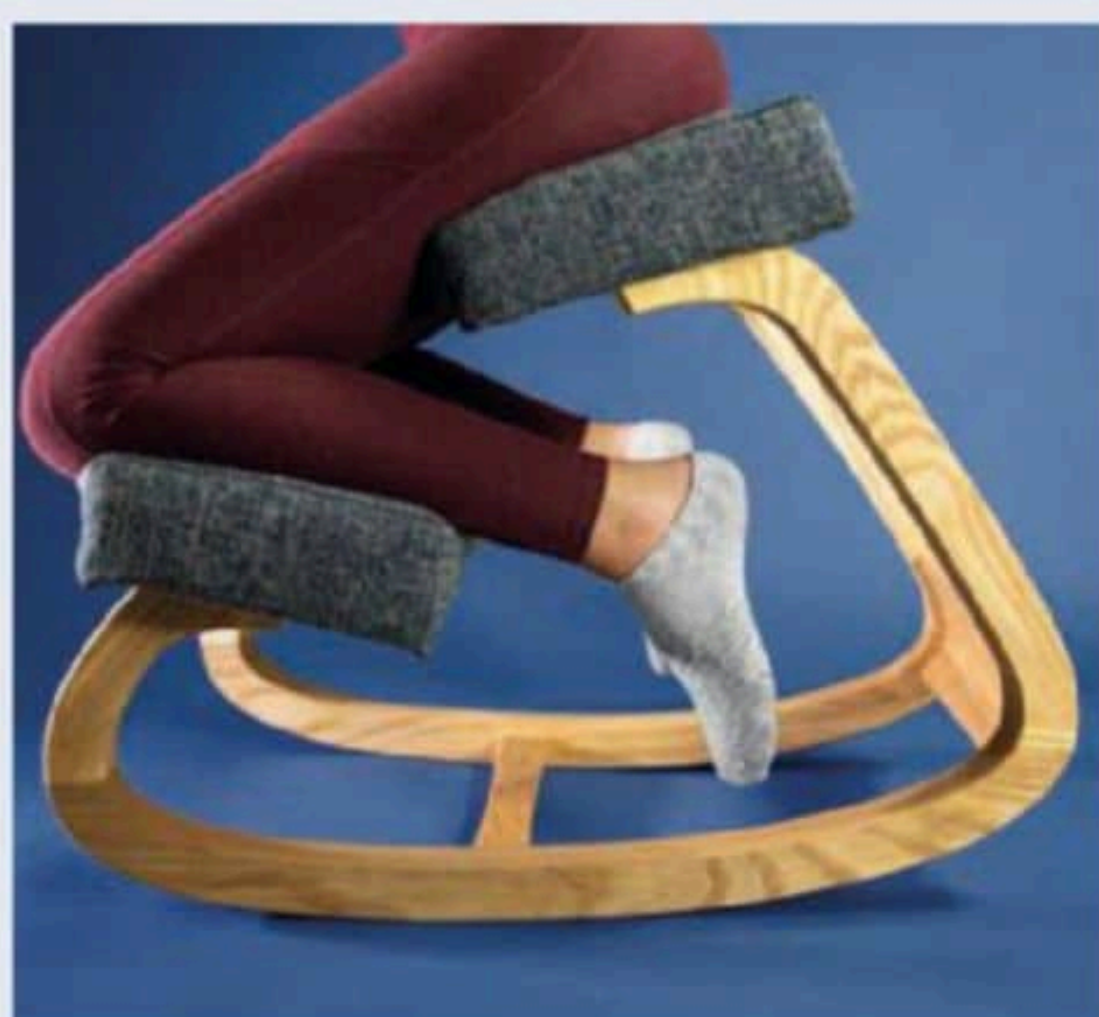
The front stretcher requires careful shaping due to its curved design. Start by cutting bevels into the wood, then trace the template onto the piece. Use a bandsaw to cut the curves and sand them smooth. Drill dowel holes at the ends using a drill press, ensuring they align perfectly with the leg joints. Dowel centre markers can help you accurately position the stretcher on the legs before final assembly.

Step 5: Make the bottom stretcher

Cut and plane a piece of wood to 19mm thickness for the bottom stretcher. Mark and shape the curves using a bandsaw, sanding them smooth afterward. Attach the stretcher to the legs using dominoes or dowels. The bottom stretcher adds stability to the frame and is essential for the chair's structural integrity.

Step 6: Prepare the tops of the legs

The tops of the legs need slight bevels to accommodate the angled seat. Use a mitre sled to make precise cuts, ensuring the angles align correctly. Double-check your measurements, as any misalignment could affect the seat's fit and overall balance.



Step 7: Sand and round over edges

Once all the components are shaped, sand them thoroughly up to 220 grit for a smooth finish. Use a router with a 6mm round-over bit to soften the edges, giving the chair a polished look while also removing sharp corners for safety and comfort.

Step 8: Assemble the legs and stretchers

Glue the leg sections and stretchers together, using off-cuts from the bevelled stretcher for clamping aids. These off-cuts will help maintain proper angles and ensure a strong, square assembly. Allow the glue to cure fully before moving on to the next step.

Step 9: Cut and attach the seat and shin rests

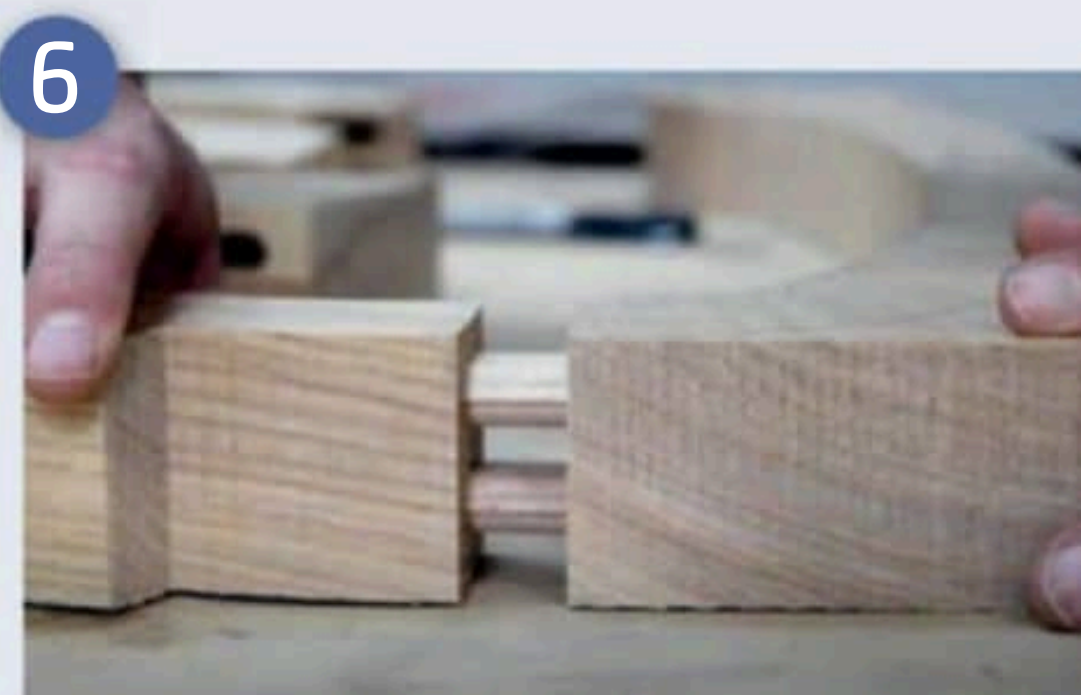
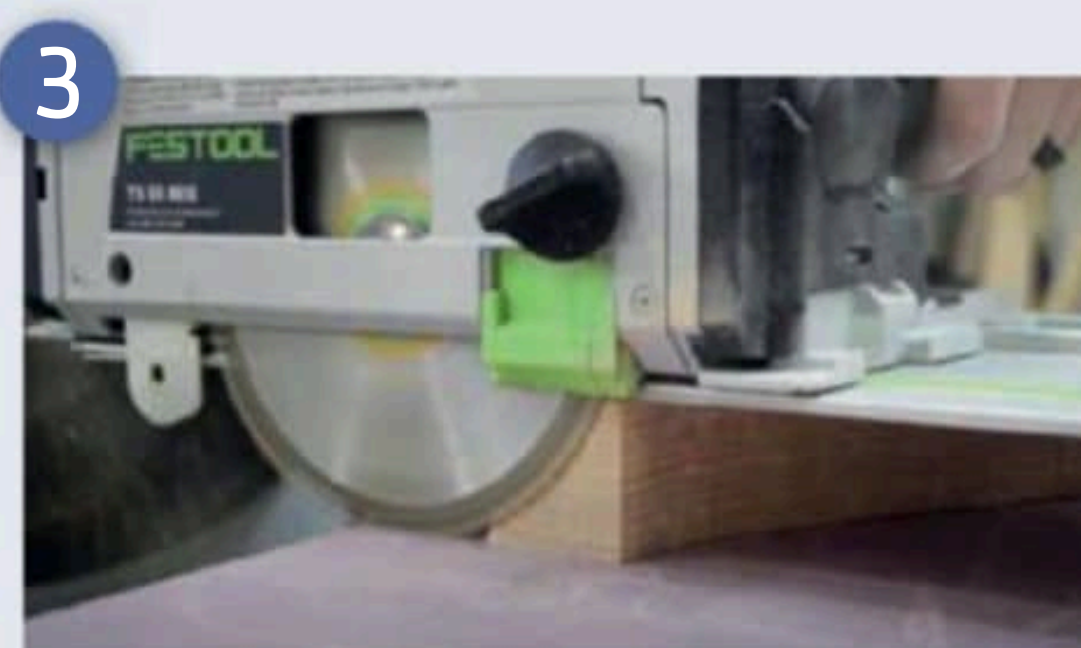
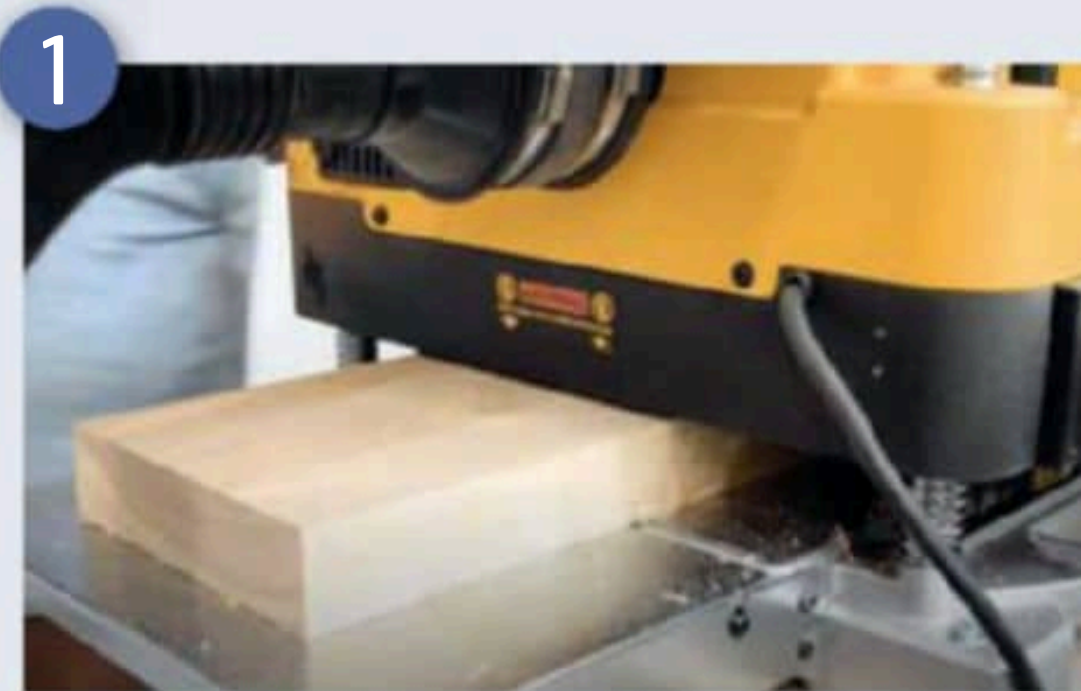
Cut the seat and shin rests from 19mm plywood to their final dimensions. Mark the mounting locations on the tops of the legs, drill holes for dowels, and attach the pieces securely. Use a 3mm round-over bit to smooth the edges, which enhances the finished look and prevents splinters.

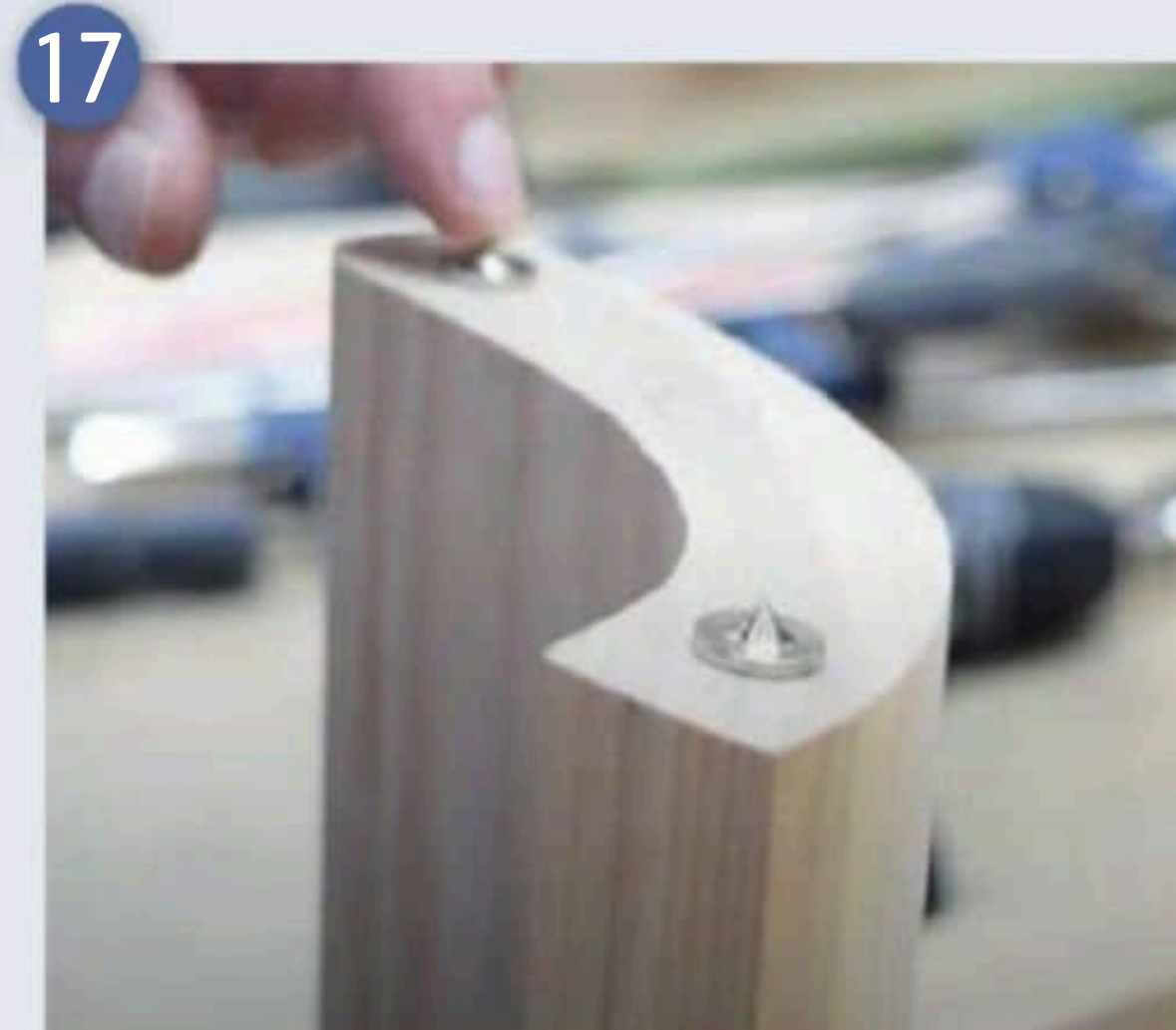
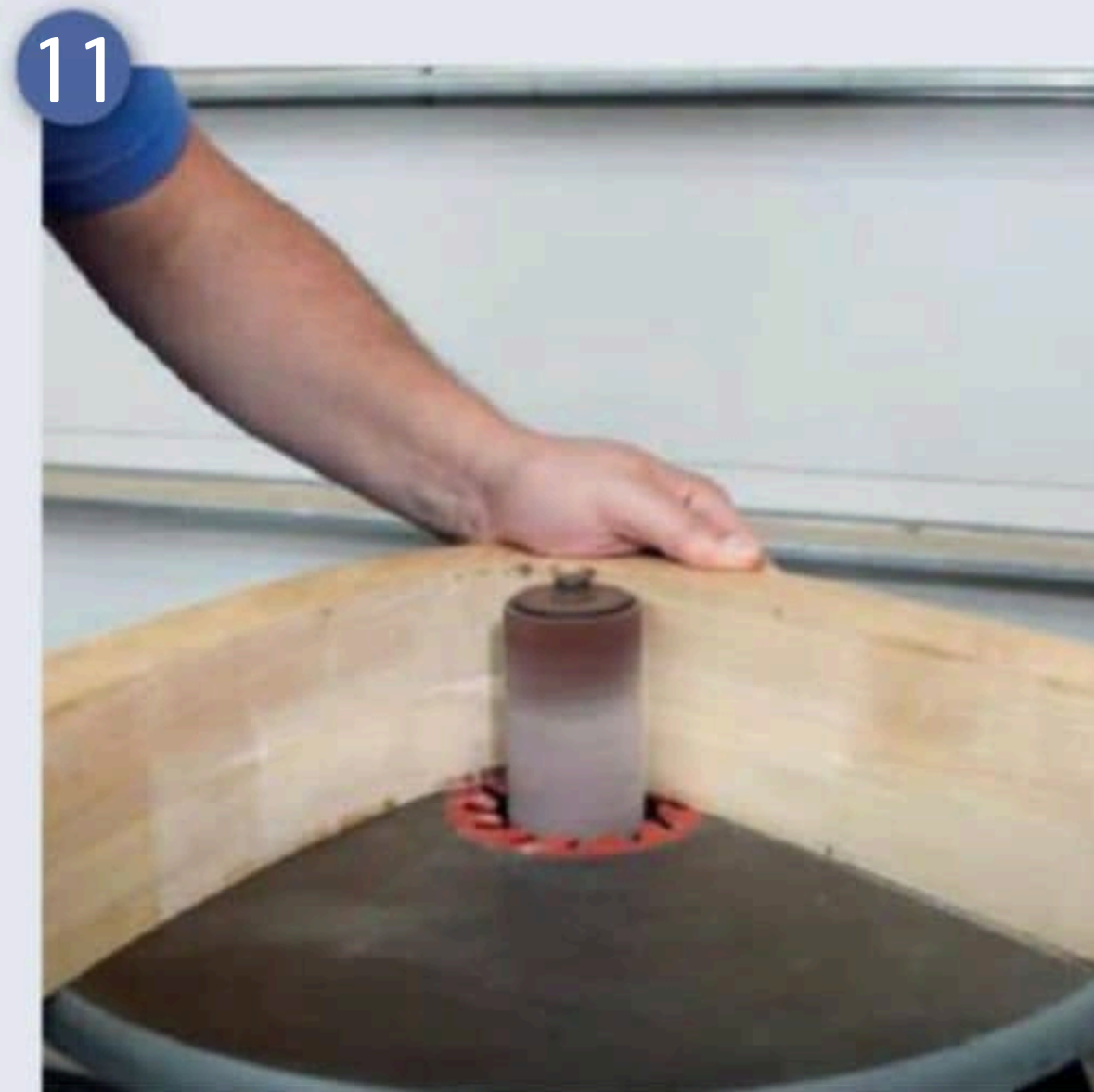
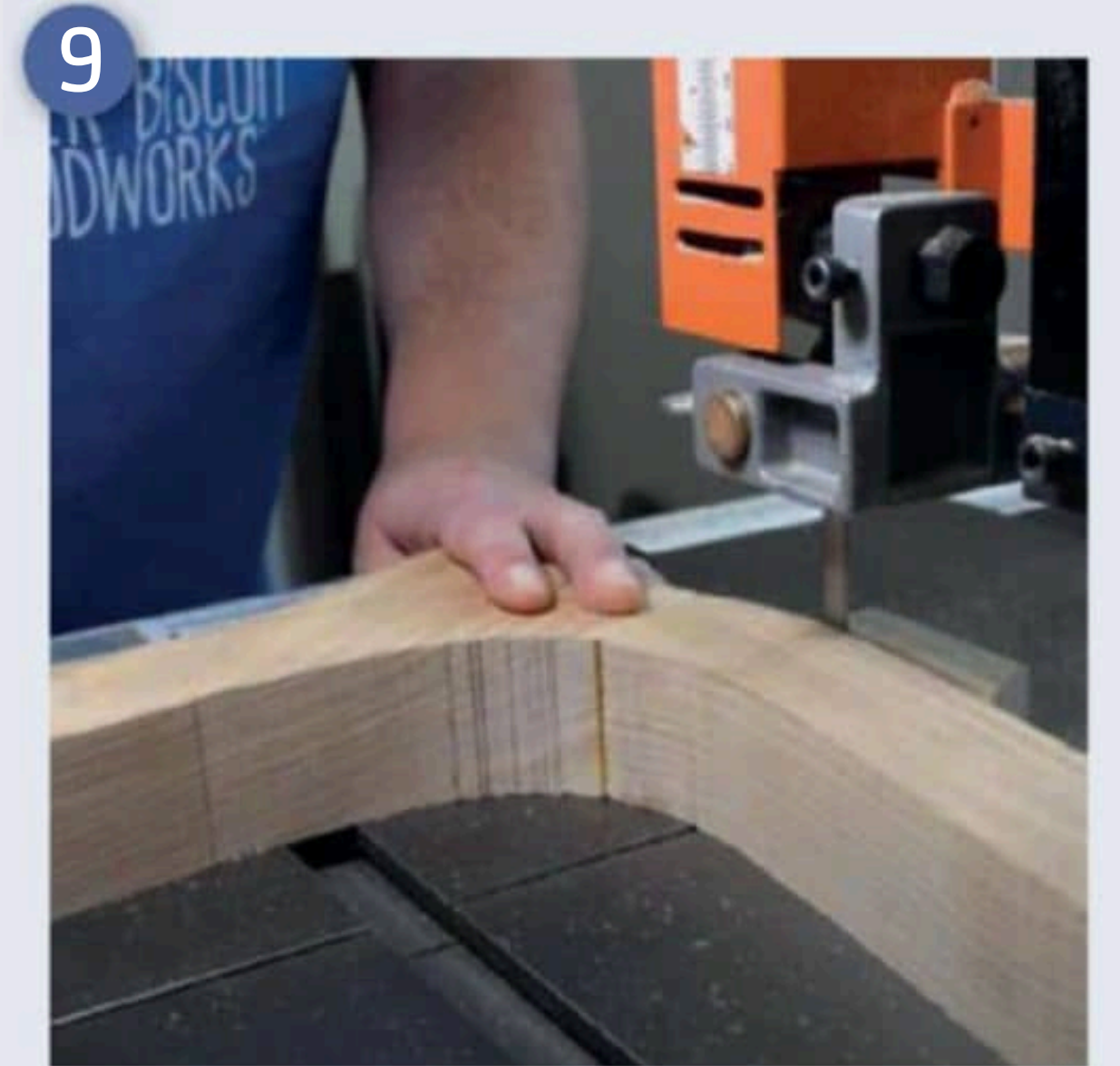
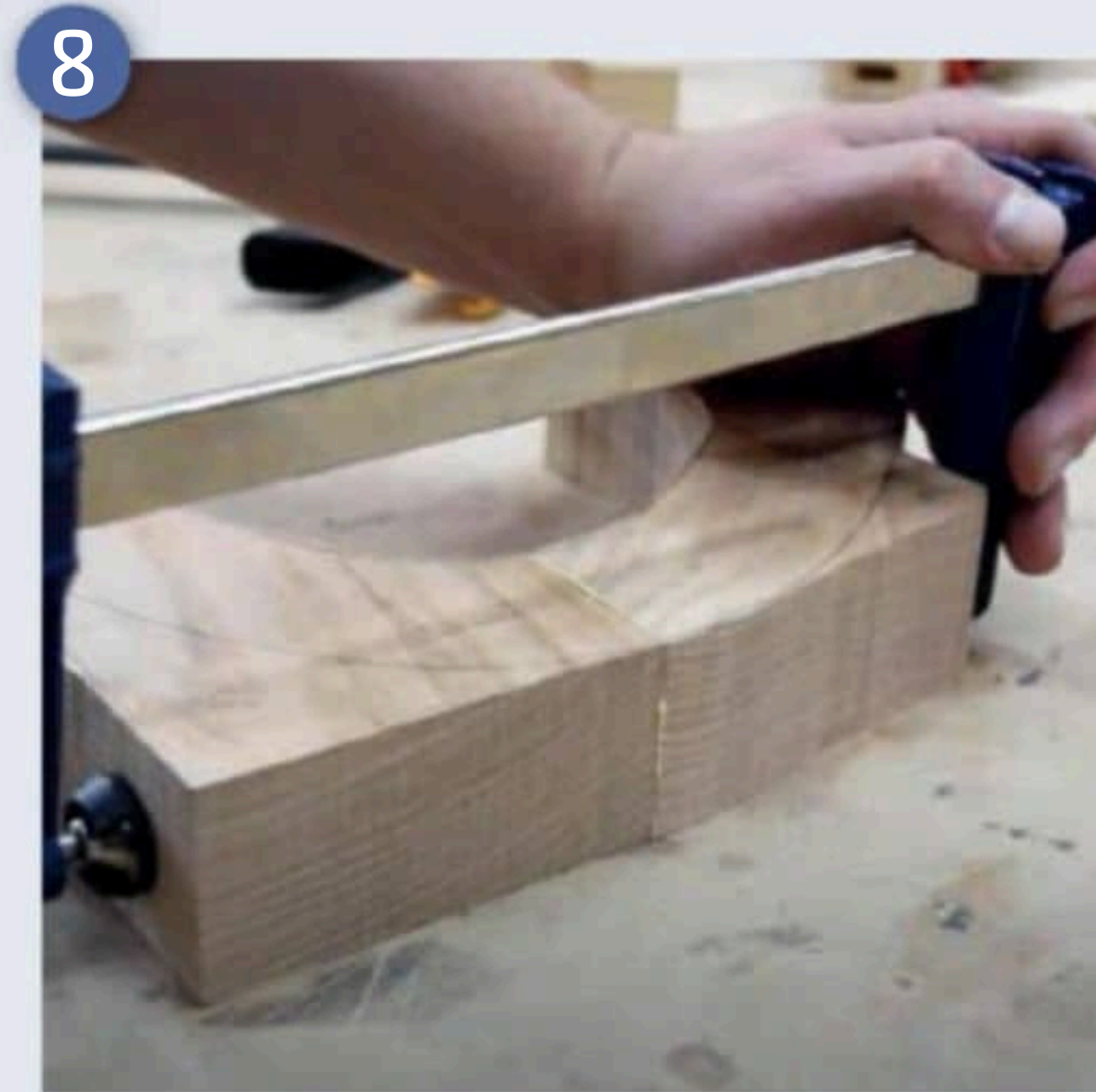
Step 10: Apply finish

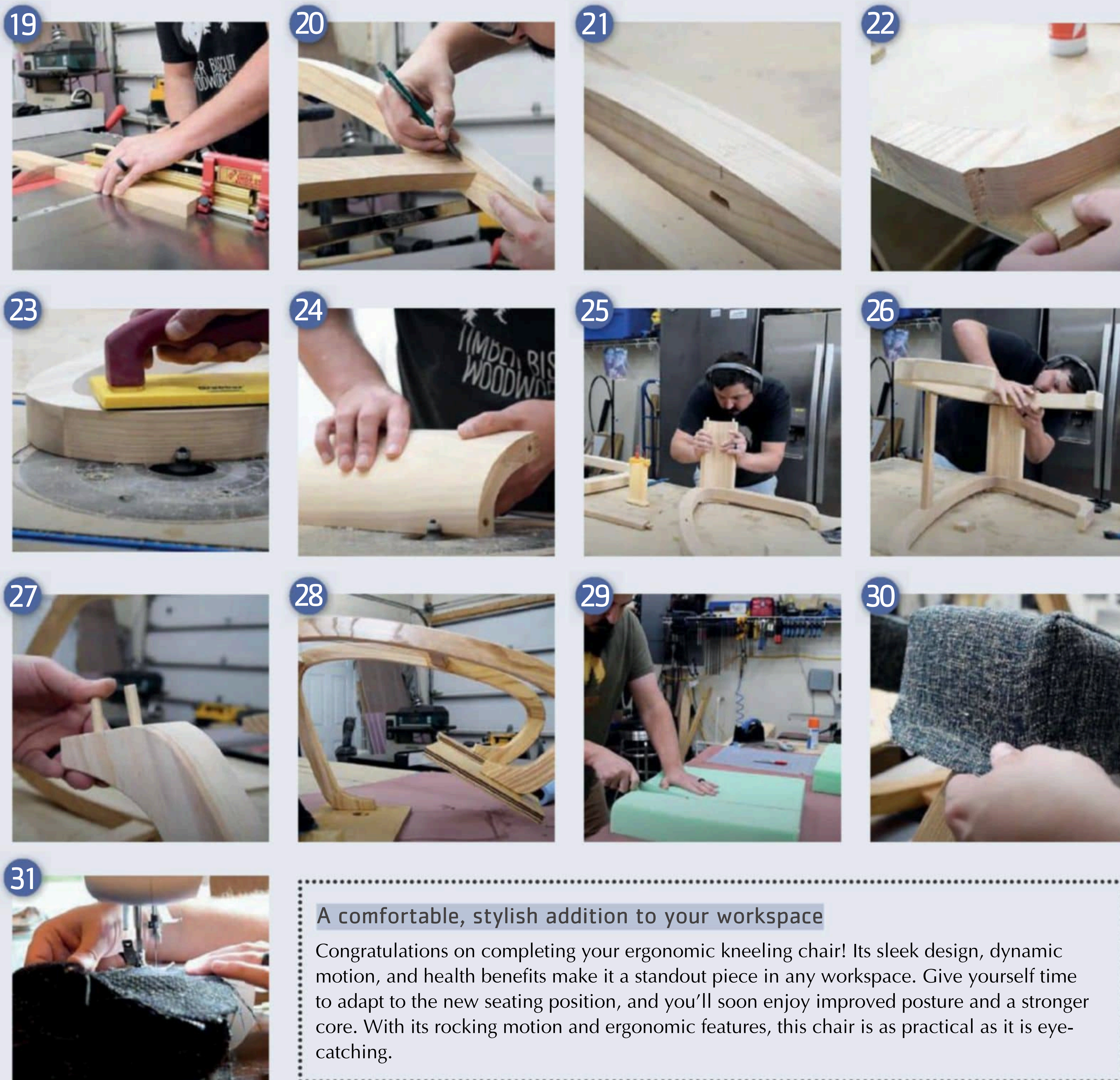
Apply three coats of penetrating oil to the chair base for a durable and attractive finish. Wait 12 hours between coats to allow the oil to cure properly. Wipe off any excess oil after 15 minutes of application to avoid sticky residue.

Step 11: Upholster the seat and shin rests

Cut high-density foam to the size of the seat and shin rests. A bread knife works well for this task. Attach the foam to the plywood using spray adhesive, then cover it with batting and fabric. Leave enough material to wrap around the edges and staple underneath. For a cleaner look, sew the fabric seams using heavy-duty thread and a strong needle. Once the upholstery is complete, secure the finished pieces to the chair frame.







A comfortable, stylish addition to your workspace

Congratulations on completing your ergonomic kneeling chair! Its sleek design, dynamic motion, and health benefits make it a standout piece in any workspace. Give yourself time to adapt to the new seating position, and you'll soon enjoy improved posture and a stronger core. With its rocking motion and ergonomic features, this chair is as practical as it is eye-catching.

1. Mill the wood using a jointer and planer 2. Trace the template onto the wood and rough cut the legs at the bandsaw 3. Cut the legs to size 4. Mark out the location for the dominos (or dowels) for each of the sections 5. Plow the mortises 6. Make sure that you measure enough space to allow for two dominos (or dowels) in these joints since they occur in some higher stress areas 7. Glue up the leg sections 8. Clamp until dry 9. Once the glue dries, cut off the remaining clamping tabs at the bandsaw 10. Line up the template and attach it to the glued legs with double sided tape. Use a spiral up/down bit at the router table to cut them out 11. With the legs still stuck together clean up the curved transitions at the spindle sander 12. Sanding them as one piece will help fix any inconsistencies 13. Reattach the off cuts with tape to give yourself a 90% surface to work off of 14. Trace the template onto the stretcher piece 15. Using a resaw blade, cut away the material for the curve 16. Mark out the placement for the dowels 17. Use some dowel centre markers to help find the location of the dowels on the leg 18. Marking where to add the dowels 19. At the bandsaw, cut the curves just outside the line to allow some space to sand back too 20. Marking on the legs 21. Plow mortises using a domino into the legs and stretcher 22. Attach registration blocks to cut the angles on the tops of the leg 23. At the router table... 24. : ...round over the edges of the legs 25. Glue-up the stretchers to the legs 26. Use the saved bevel off-cuts from the centre stretcher to form a 90 angle clamping surface 27. Drill the holes for the dowels and place them into the tops of the legs 28. Apply three coats of penetrating oil to finish the chair base 29. Cut the high density foam to the same dimension as the seat and leg rests 30. Staple the batting into the plywood 31. Using the sewing machine, stitch the seams together

Looking for a cost-effective way to upgrade your kitchen seating? Here's how I built a sturdy and stylish bench with just basic tools and determination.



BUILDING A SIMPLE KITCHEN BENCH

I needed a kitchen bench, so I built one... When you're in need of furniture but don't want to spend a fortune, building it yourself can be both a cost-effective and satisfying solution. This was my first attempt at woodworking on this scale, and it was a journey full of learning, problem-solving, and rewarding outcomes.

If you're a beginner or someone looking to tackle their first major woodworking project, I hope this guide inspires and helps you take the plunge. Let's dive into how I built my kitchen bench using simple tools and a modest setup.



What you will need

As a beginner, I didn't have an extensive collection of tools. My goal was to make do with what I had, improvising where necessary.

Tools:

- **Handsaw:** A rough one for cross-cutting and ripping wood

- **Fine handsaw:** Ideal for precision cuts
- **Jigsaw:** Optional, but helpful for curved cuts
- **Circular saw:** I rented this from a home centre for quick rip cuts
- **Hand plane:** Grandpa's trusty wooden plane turned out to be a star tool for smoothing and shaping wood
- **Cordless drill/screwdriver:** A worthwhile investment for this and future projects
- **Pocket hole jig:** I opted for a cost-effective jig instead of a high-end Kreg model
- **Hammer, chisel, rasp, and sandpaper:** Essential for shaping and smoothing
- **Square, pencil, and utility knife:** For accurate marking.

Materials:

- **Wood:** Four discarded cabinet doors (2000 x 500 x 25mm each). They were softwood, likely pine

- **Wooden dowels:** 10mm diameter, 1000mm long
- **Wood screws:** 40 pieces of 4 x 40mm and 20 pieces of 4 x 30mm
- **Wood glue:** For joining parts
- **Bandages:** Handy in case of minor mishaps (safety first!).

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Warming up with confidence projects

Before tackling the bench, I wanted to get comfortable working with wood. So, I set up my tiny outside storage room as a makeshift workshop and completed two smaller projects:

1. A quick five-minute keychain project, which marked the room's transformation into a 'workshop.'
2. A three-hour wooden mallet project, allowing me to create a tool I could actually use in future builds.

These warm-ups helped me ease into the process and provided a sense of accomplishment, which was just the motivation I needed to start the bench.

Step 2: Planning the bench

I wanted a simple yet functional design, so I started by browsing photos of basic bench constructions online. Using my kitchen chairs as a reference for height, I sketched a 1:1 scale plan on drafting paper.

The bench consists of:

1. Two leg assemblies: Each assembly includes a back leg (supporting the backrest), a small connector, a long connector, and a short front leg.
2. Two stretchers: These connect the leg assemblies.
3. A seat board: It rests on the stretchers and leg assemblies.
4. A backrest: Screwed to the back legs.

For joinery, I avoided visible screws by using pocket holes. This decision added a clean, professional look to the finished piece.

Step 3: Making the back legs

To create the back legs, I made cardboard templates, traced them onto the wood, and cut them out. Since the legs needed to be thicker, I glued two pieces of wood together for each leg. After the glue dried, I used a hand plane to make the pieces flush.

Planing the convex side of the leg was straightforward, but the concave side was tricky. Without a spokeshave, I relied on a rasp and sandpaper for the curved areas. Once the legs were smooth, I trimmed the top ends with a fine handsaw.

Step 4: Crafting the other leg parts

The other leg components were simpler to cut. Using templates, I carefully marked the angles with a utility knife to ensure clean, precise cuts and used the fine handsaw to make the cuts.

For the front legs, I glued and screwed two pieces of wood together to achieve the required thickness. This method was practical because it saved me from clamping, allowing me to work on other parts simultaneously.

The connectors were cut from 80mm wide boards. Unlike the legs, these didn't need doubling since they formed strong joints in the final assembly.

Step 5: Assembling the legs

Once all the pieces were ready, I tested the layout by placing them on my template. The small connector was attached to the back and front legs using pocket screws, followed by the longer connector, which was glued and screwed to the subassembly.

Each leg assembly is a mirror of the other, creating left and right sides. After assembly, I tested the structure by clamping a temporary seat board

across the legs and sitting on it. Thankfully, no disasters occurred!

Step 6: Preparing the seat board

The seat board required joining two 230mm wide pieces of wood. This step proved challenging because I lacked a jointer plane. Instead, I used a small hand plane to shape the edges, checking the fit frequently to achieve a tight joint.

To strengthen the joint, I drilled seven dowel holes along the edges. Additionally, I prepared three small wooden supports to screw onto the underside of the seat board. These supports ensure stability and align with the stretchers in the final assembly.

Without long clamps, I improvised wedge clamps using cut-offs. Although the glue-up process was hectic, the result was satisfying.

Step 7: Adding the stretchers and backrest

The stretchers and backrest were straightforward to prepare. I cut these pieces to size and planed them smooth. Planing the backrest surface was particularly enjoyable – a calming task that contrasted with the more technical aspects of the seat board jointing.

Step 8: Final assembly

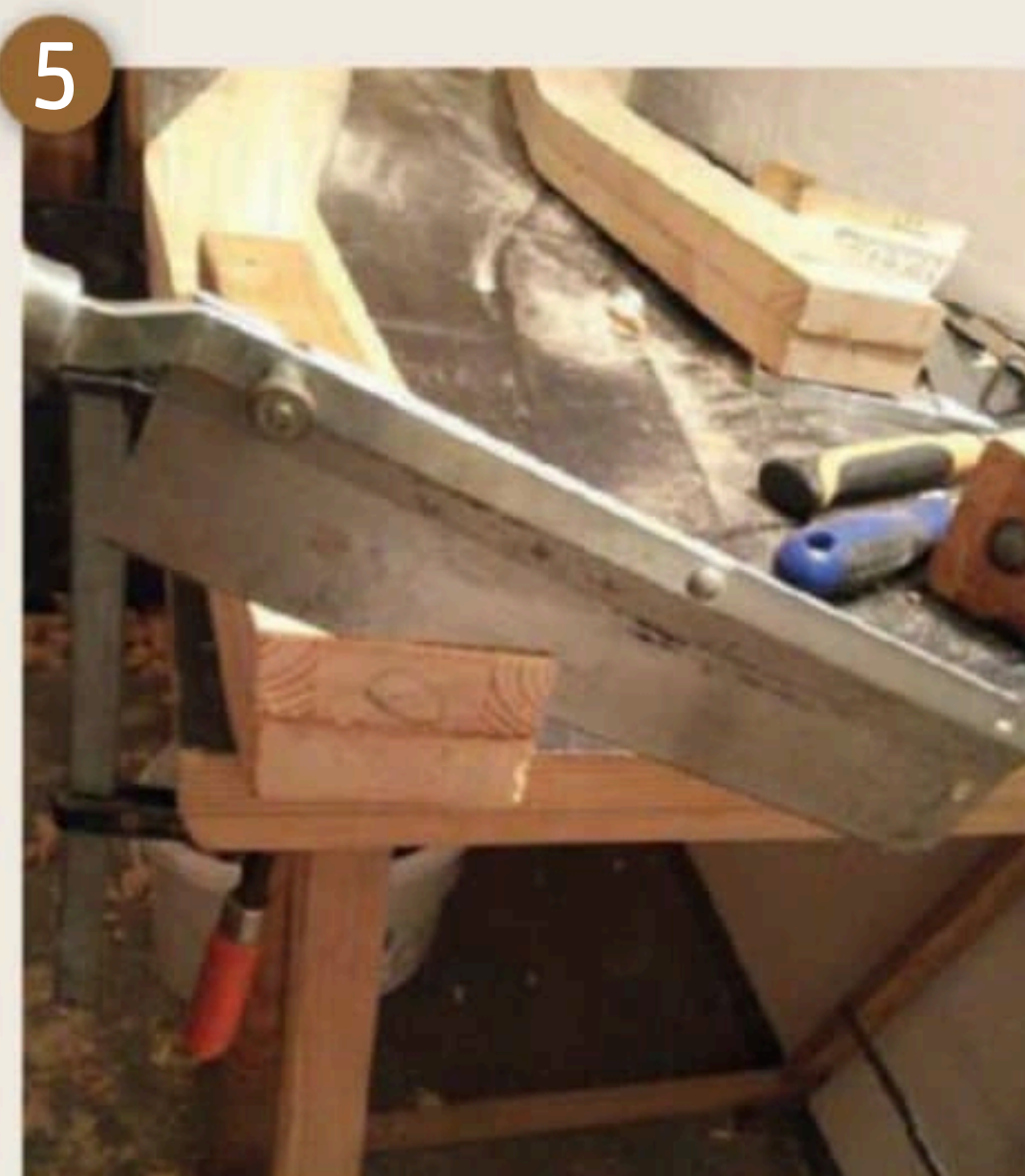
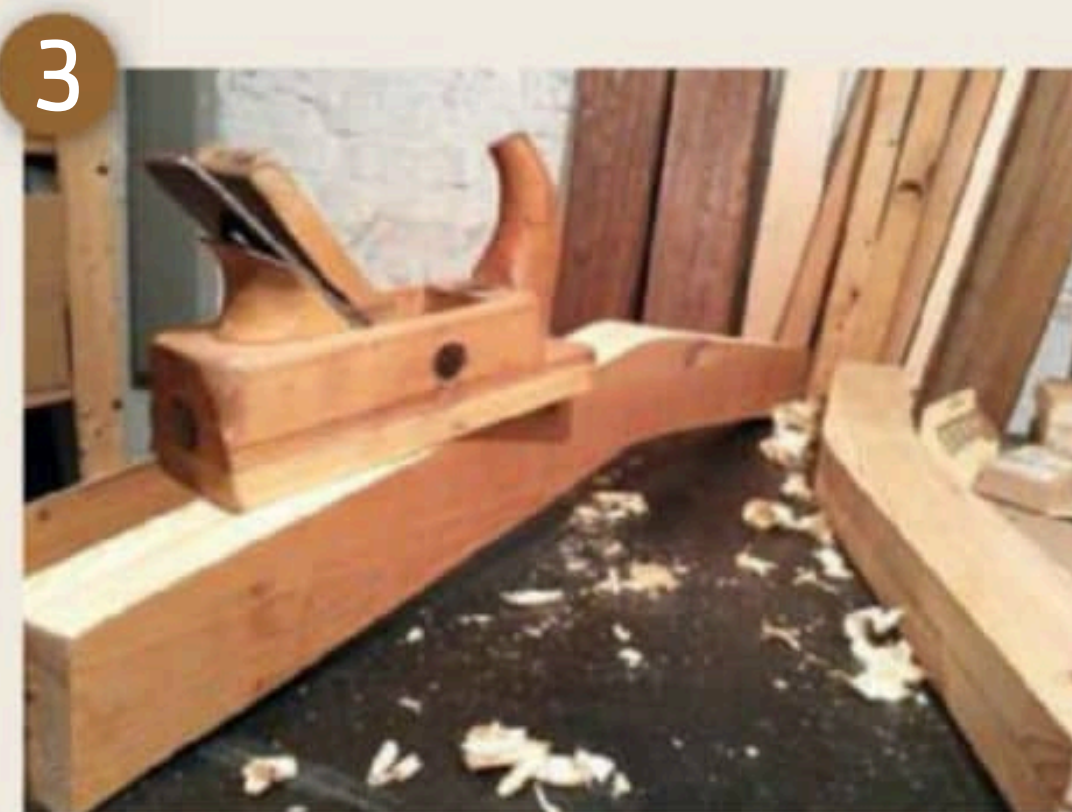
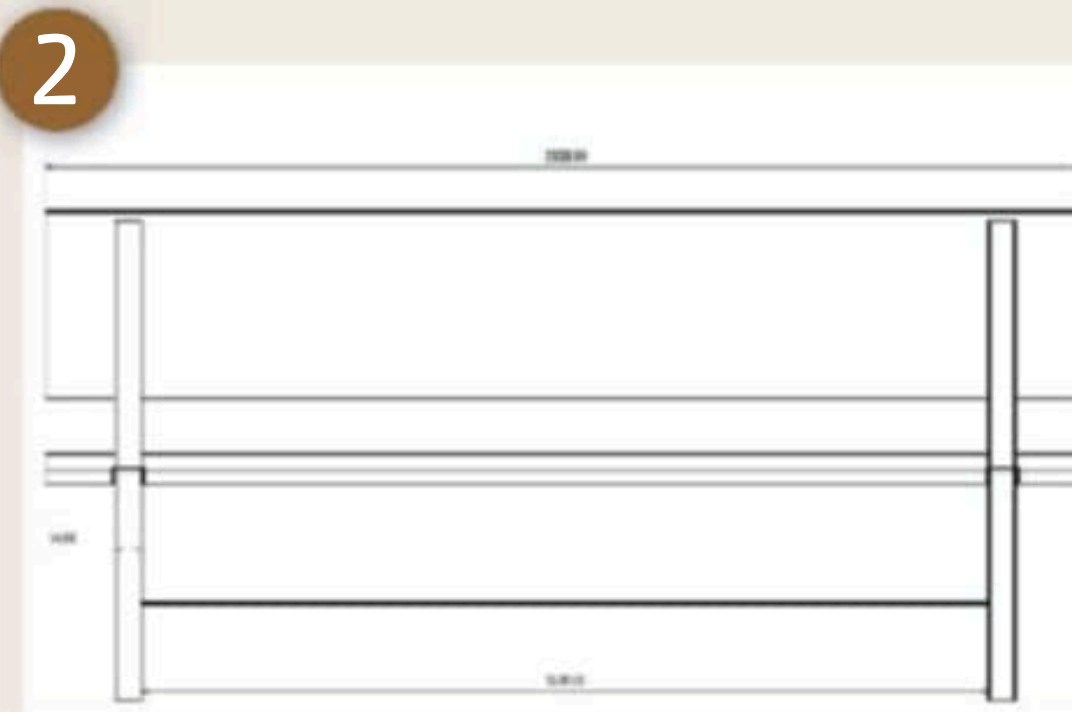
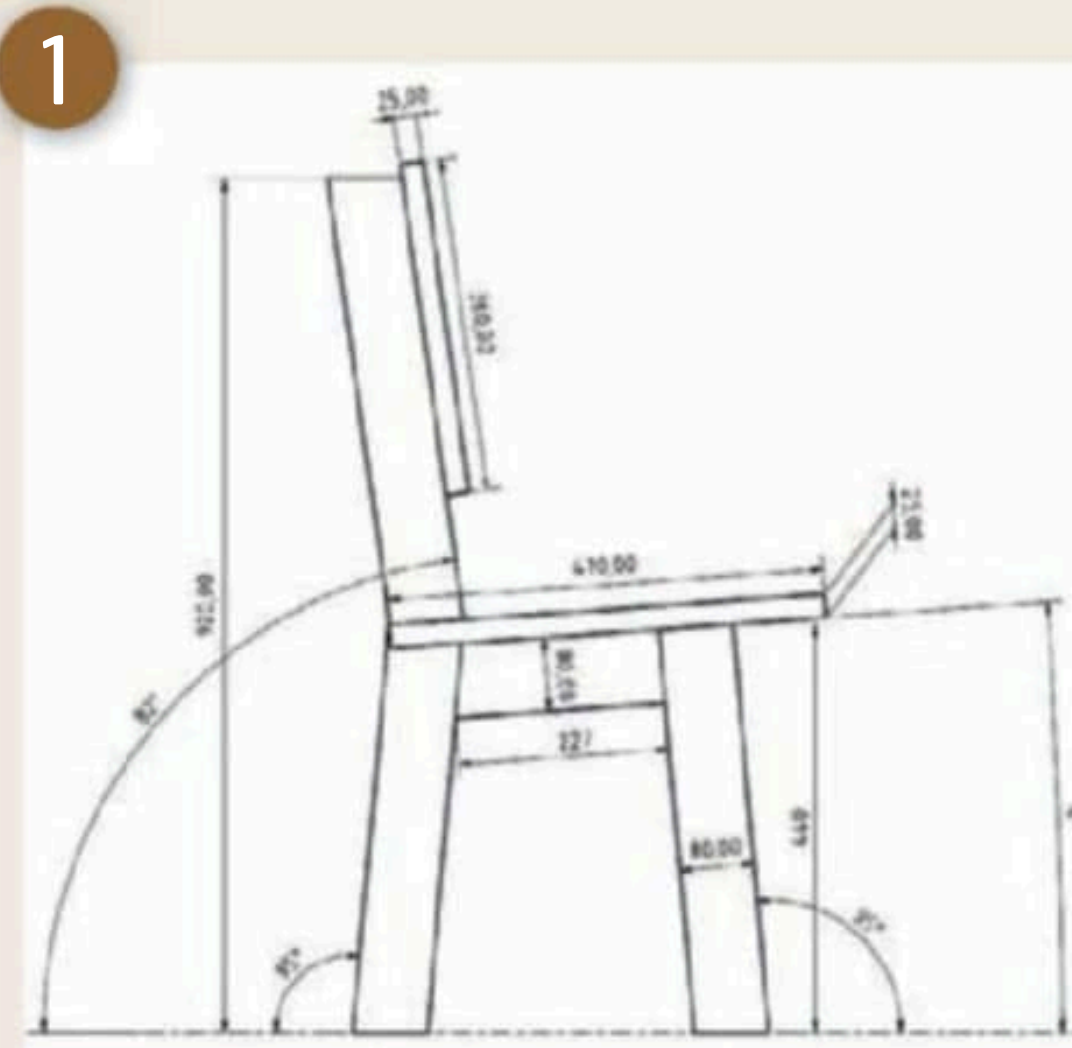
The stretchers attached to the leg assemblies with screws. The seat board slid into place and was secured from underneath using pocket screws. Finally, the backrest was fastened to the back legs, completing the structure.

This step is easier with a second pair of hands to hold pieces steady during assembly.

Step 9: What's left to do?

The bench is functional, but a few finishing touches remain:

1. **Edge rounding:** I plan to round over all edges and corners, particularly the seat board's top front edge and the long edges of the backrest.
2. **Sanding:** All edges will get a light sanding to ensure smoothness.



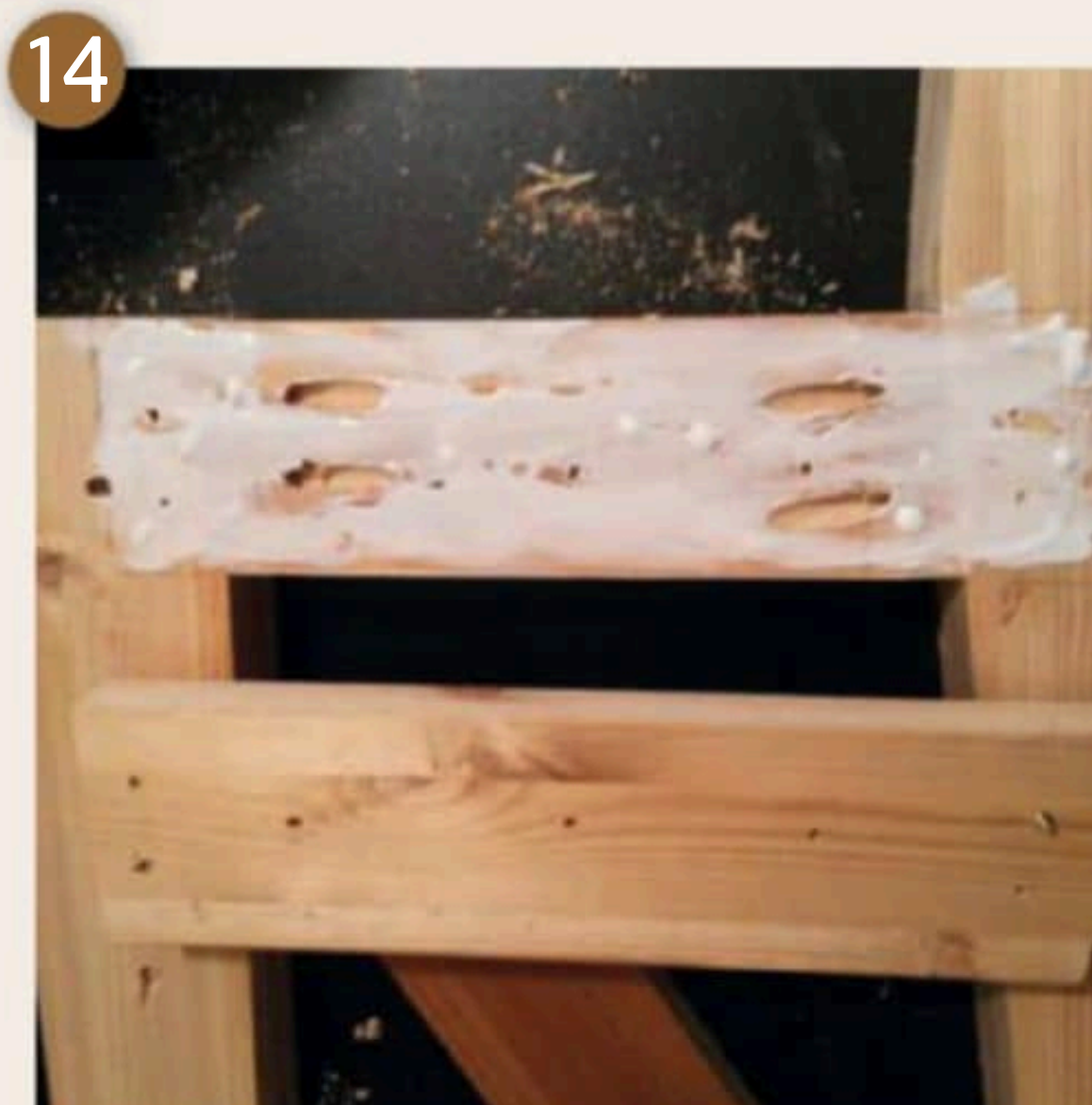
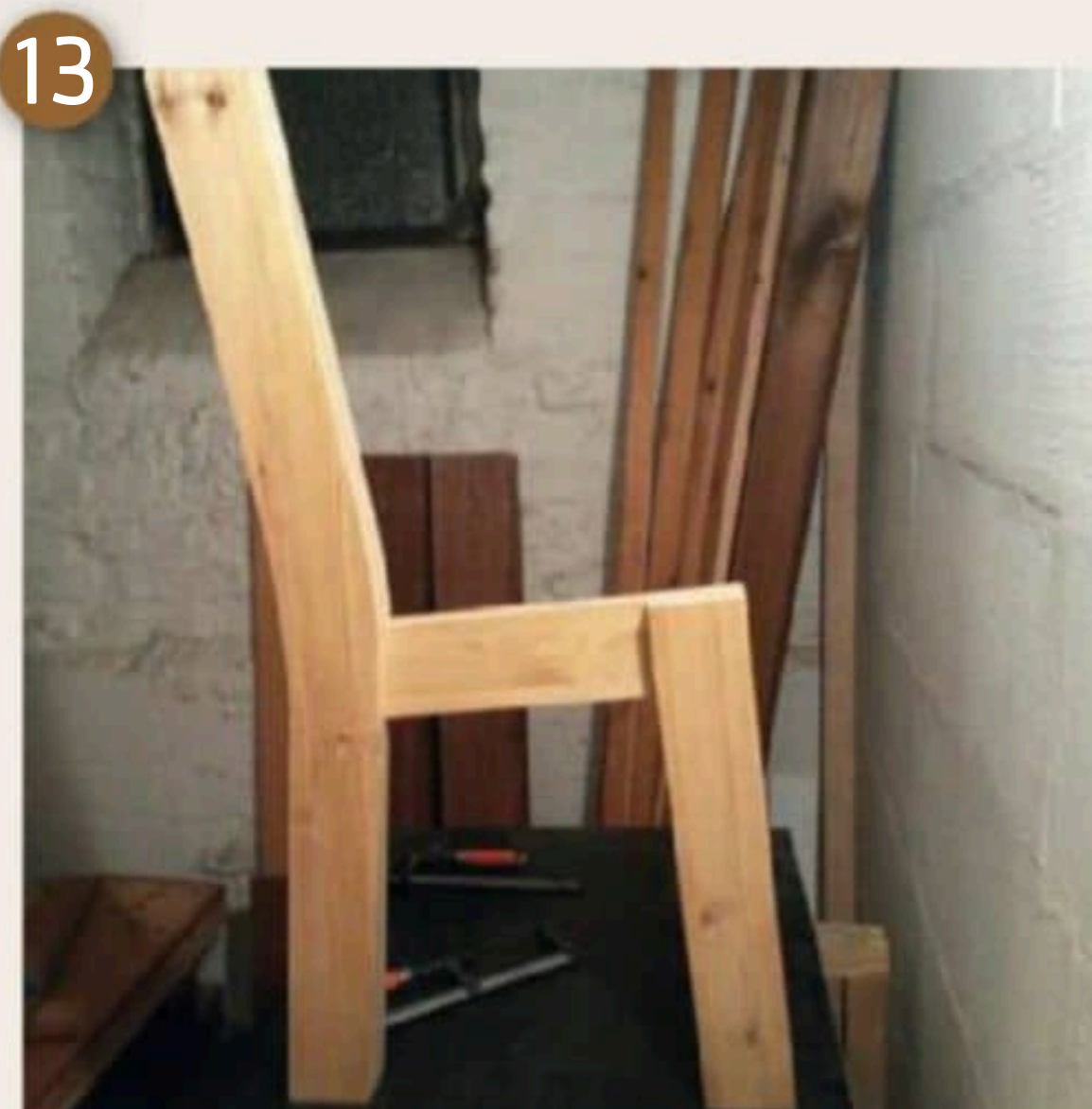
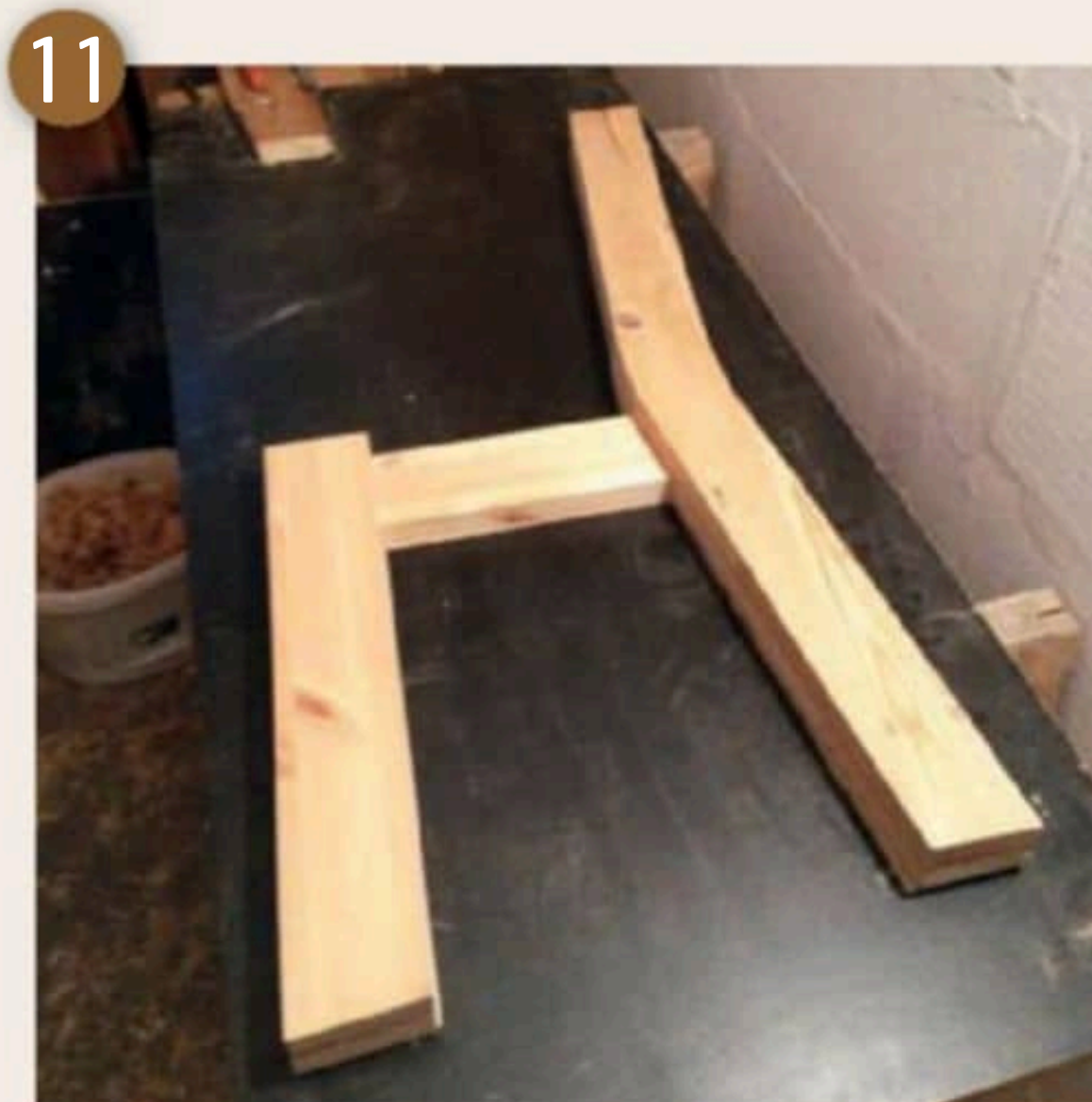
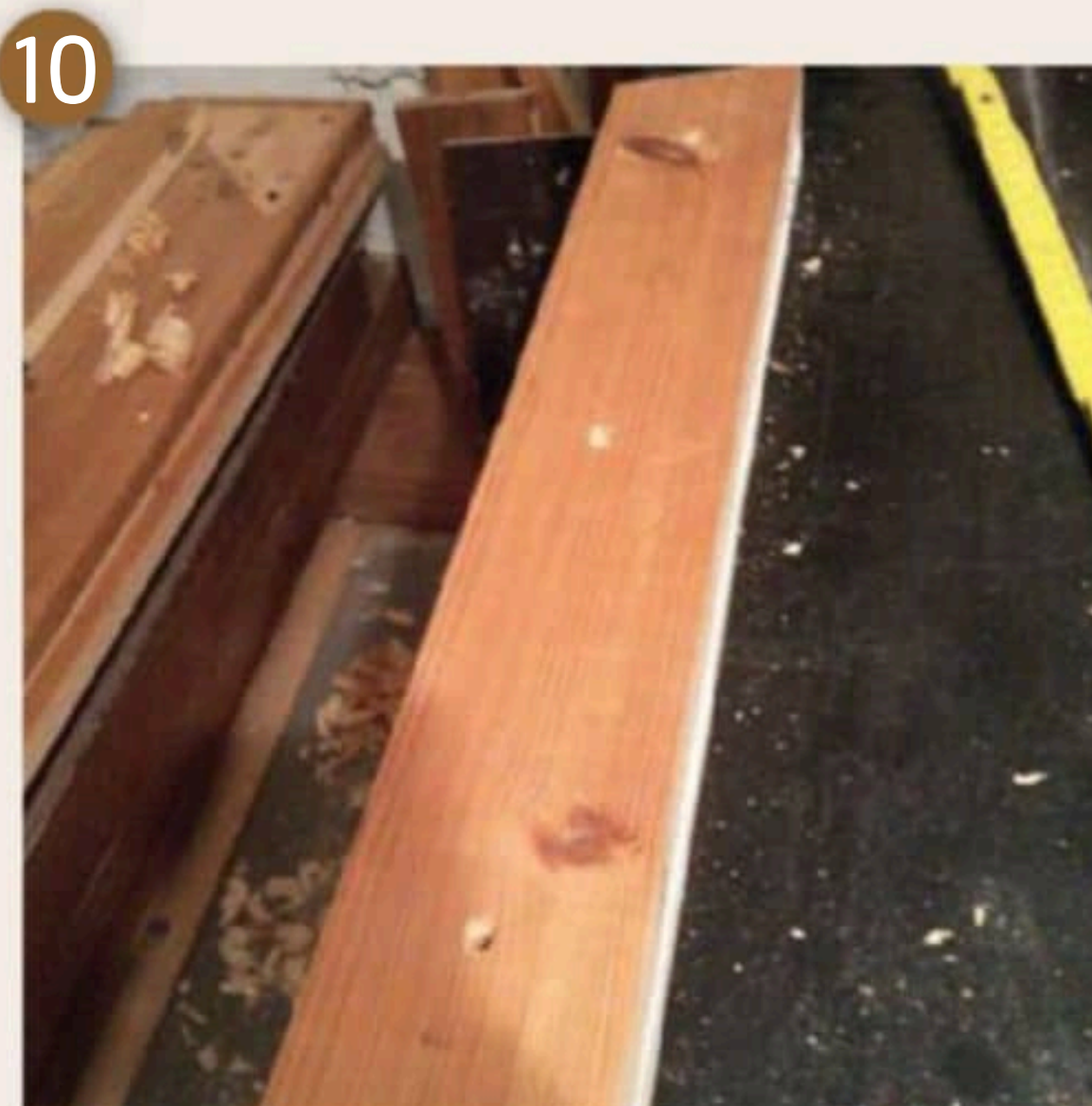
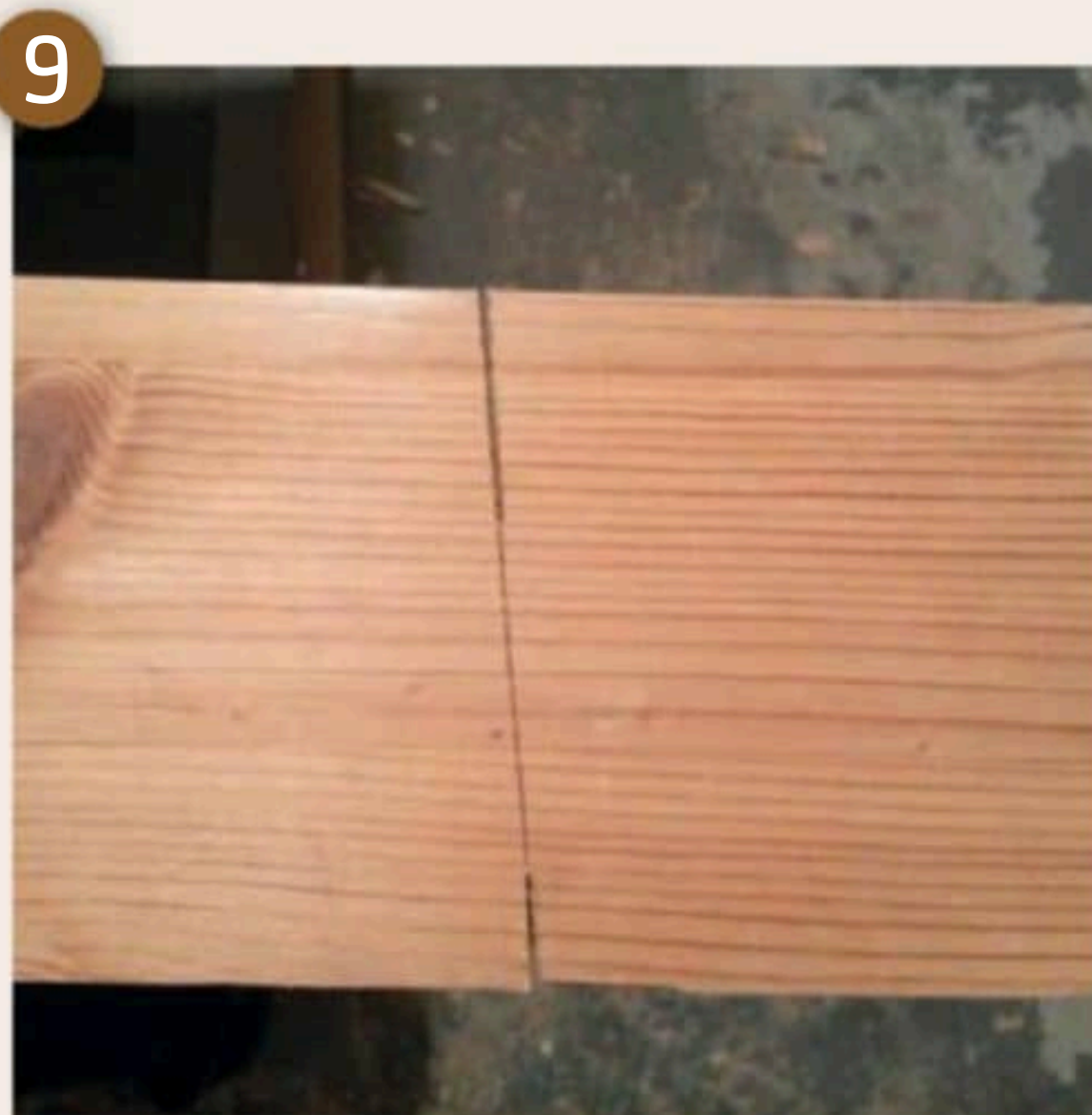
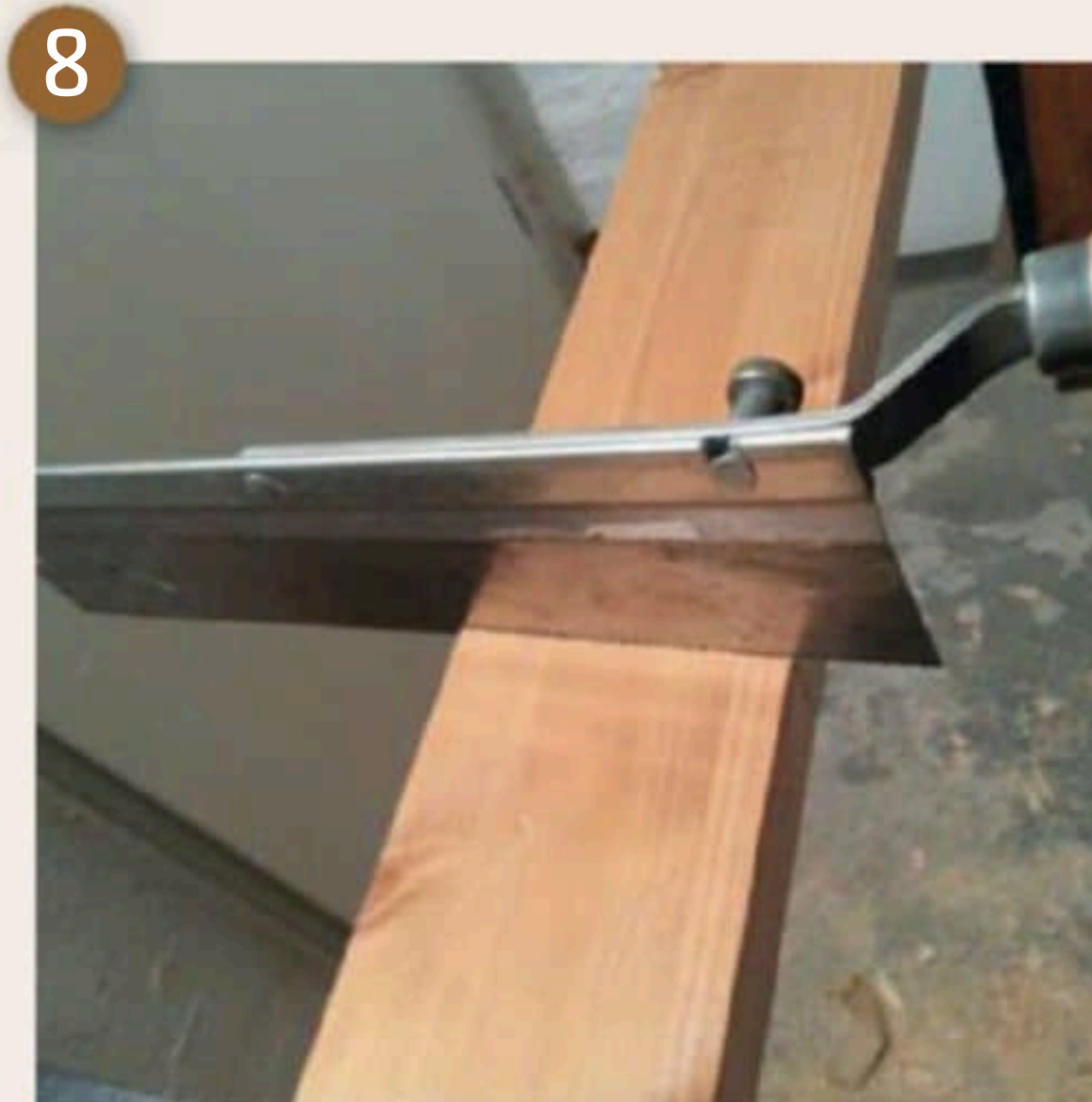
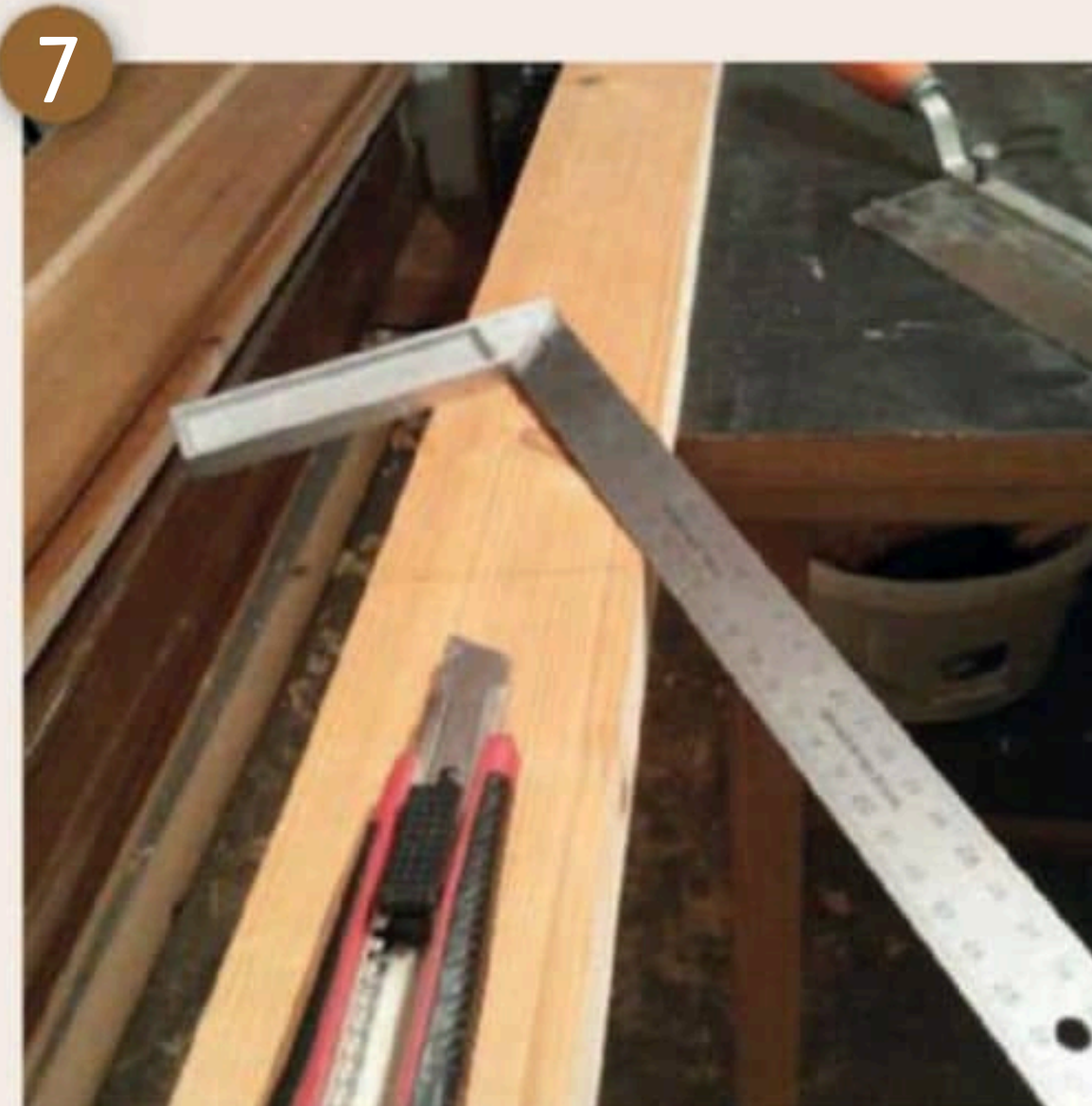
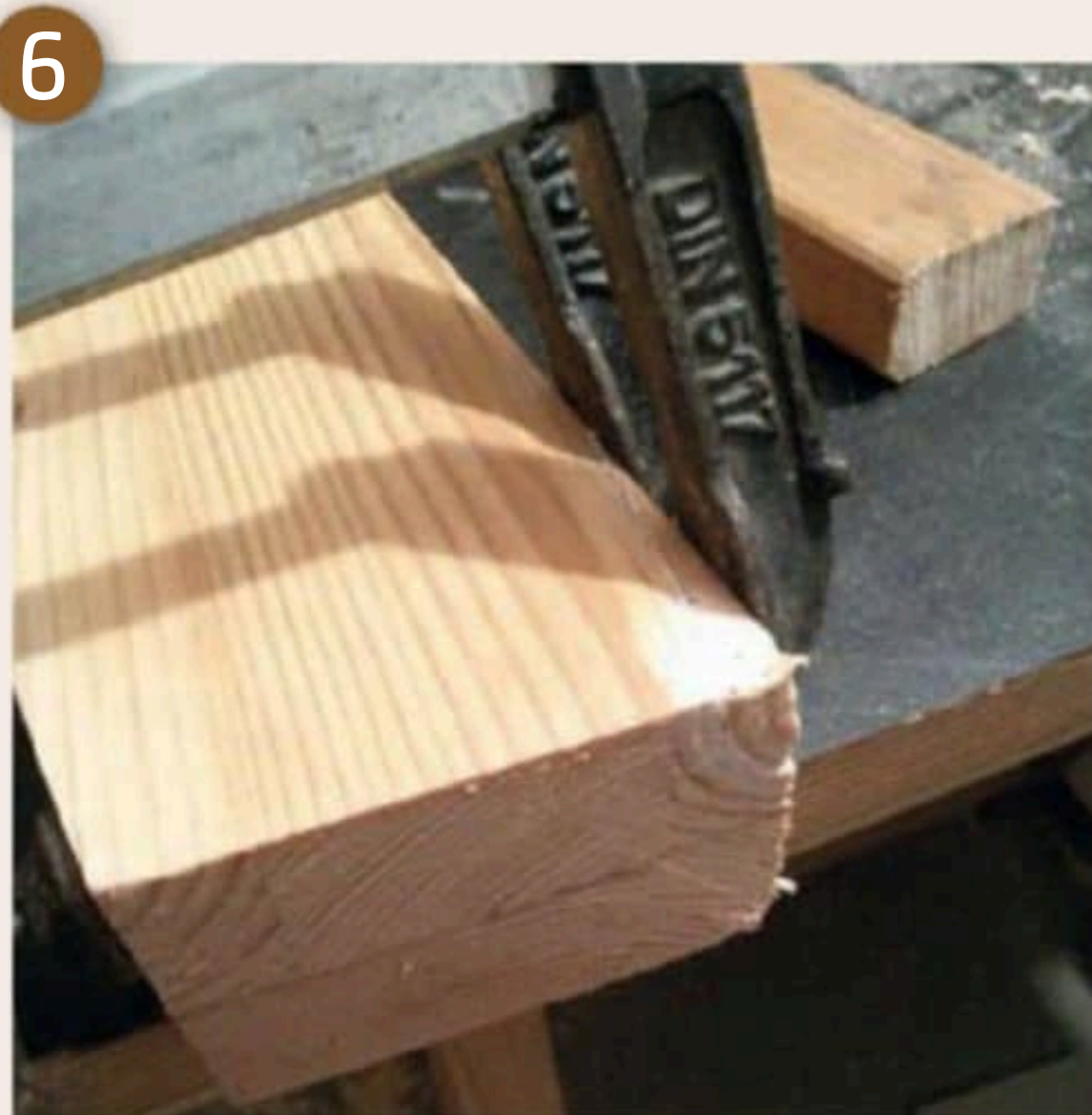
3. Finishing:

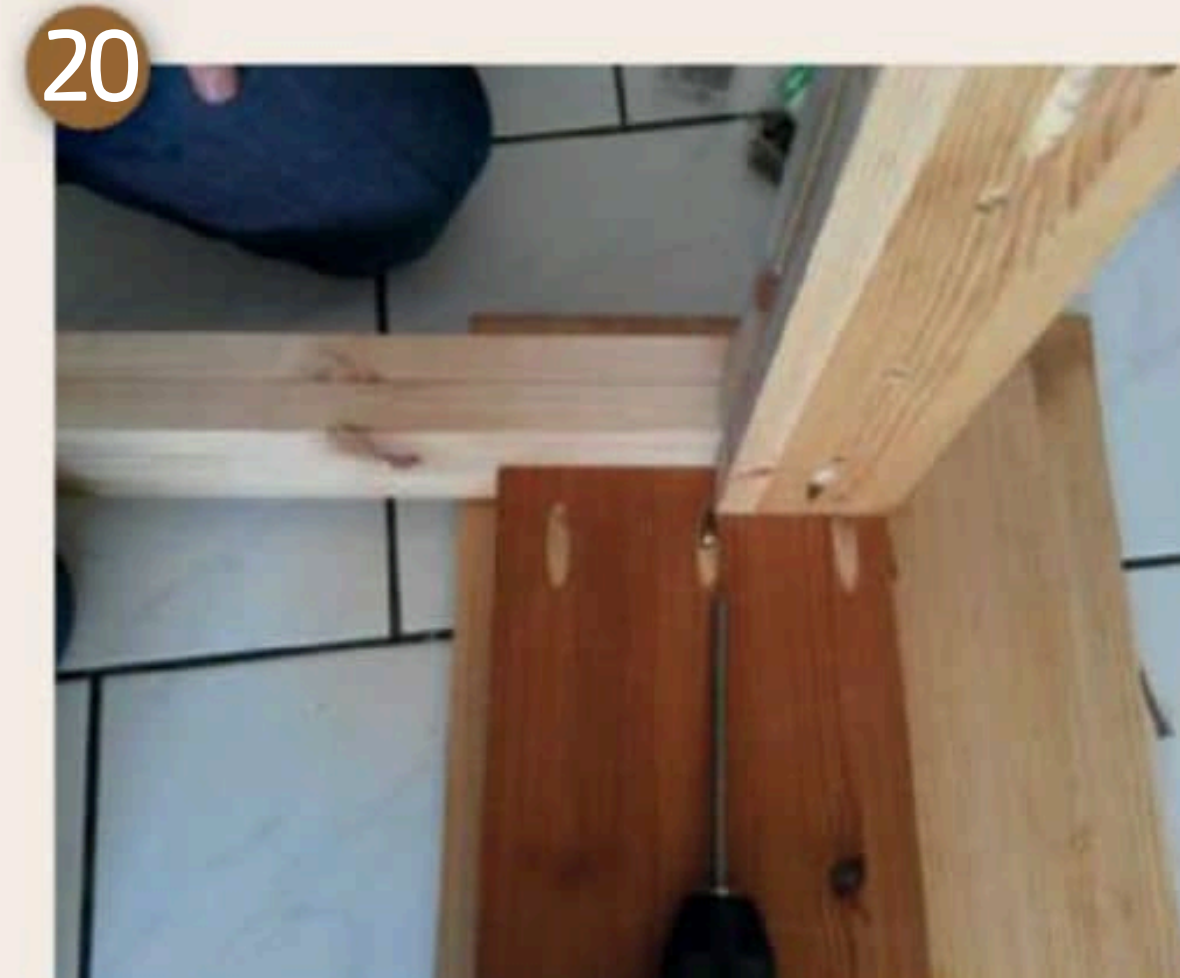
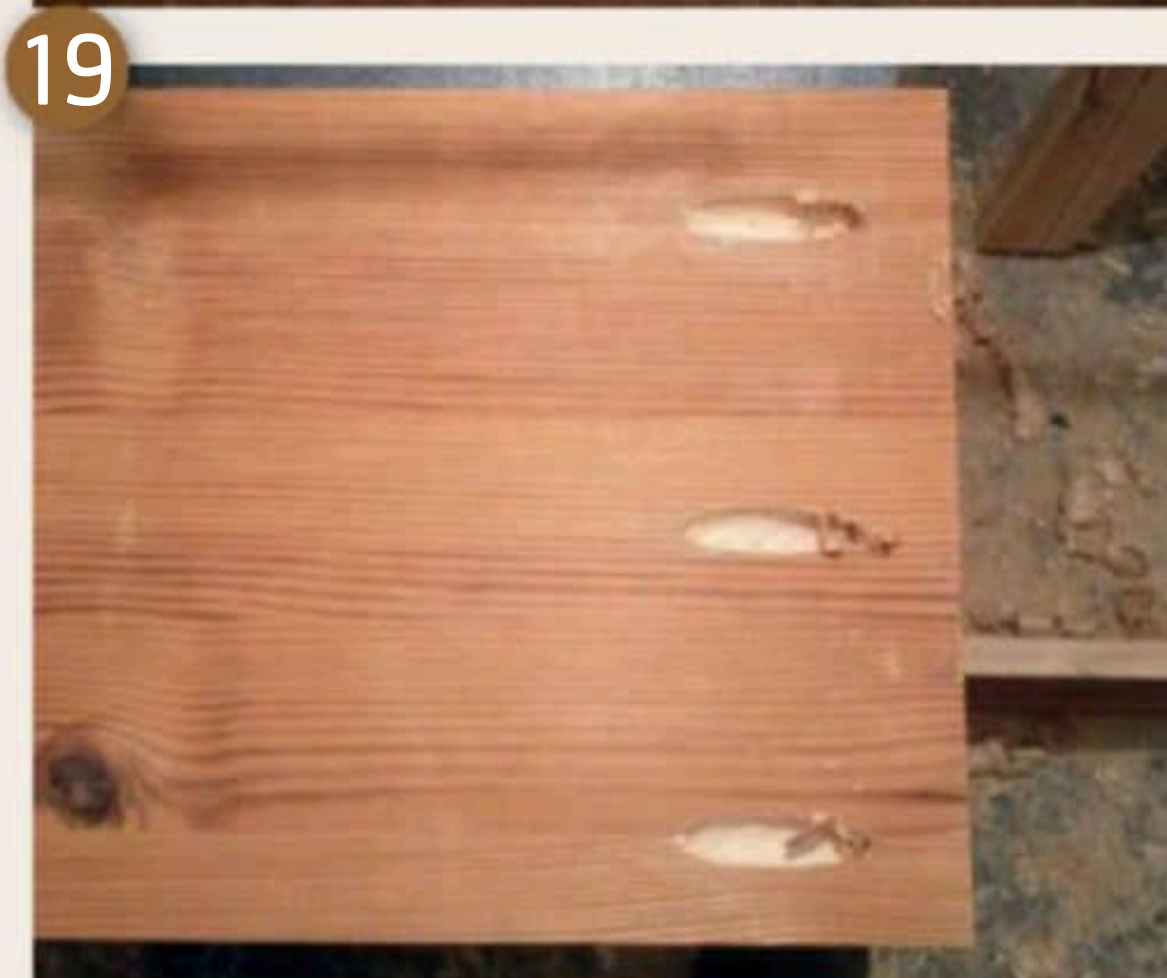
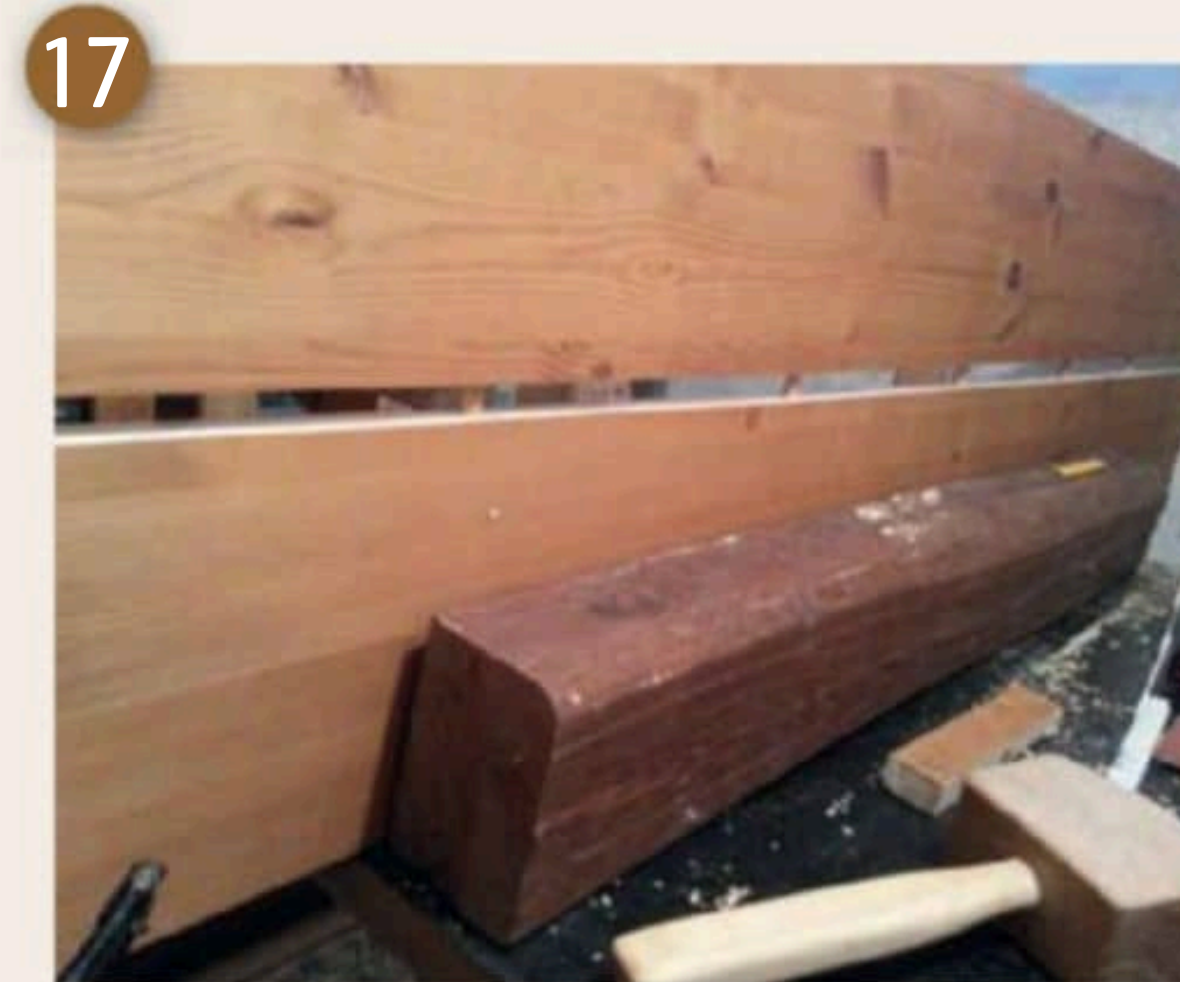
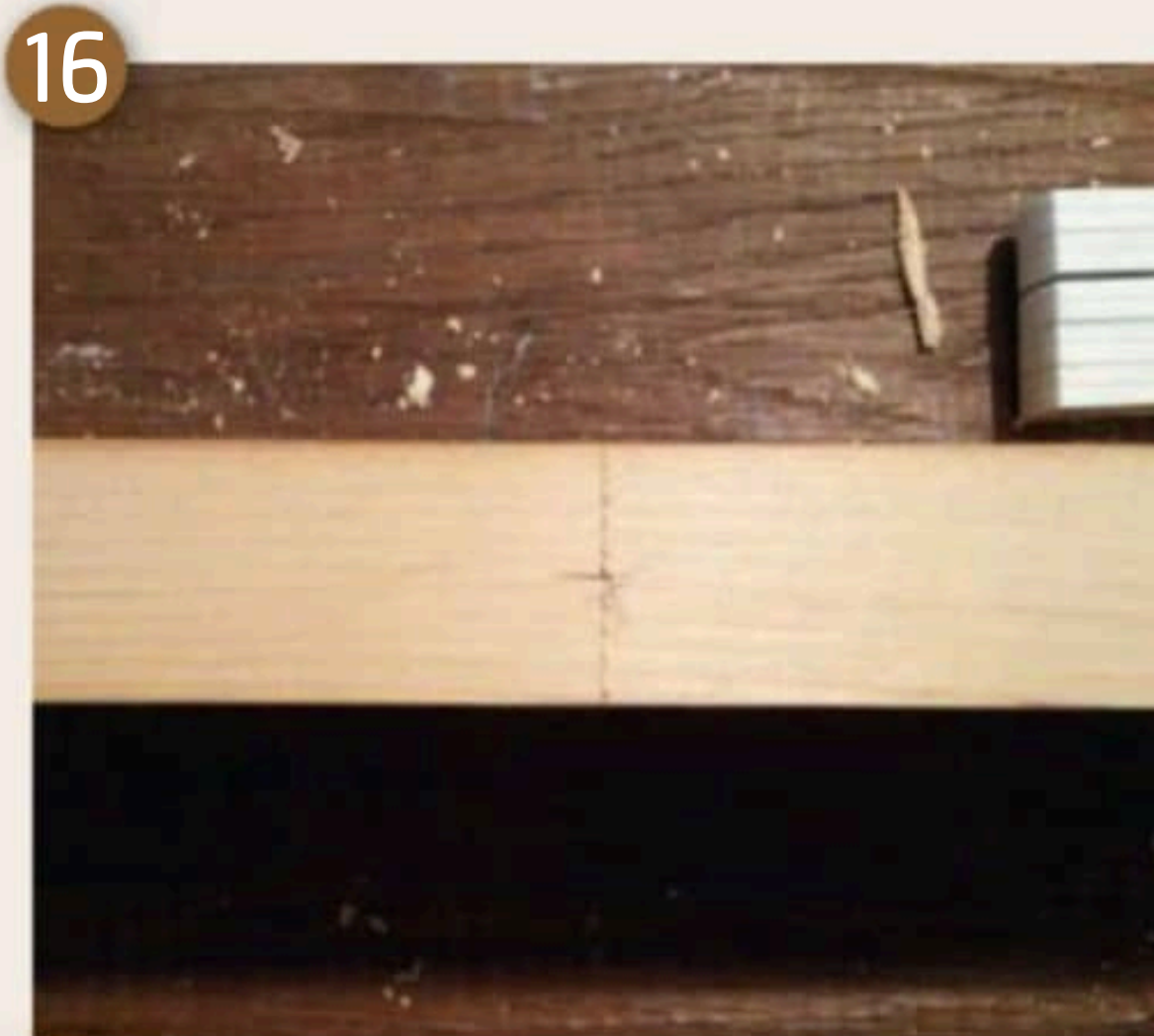
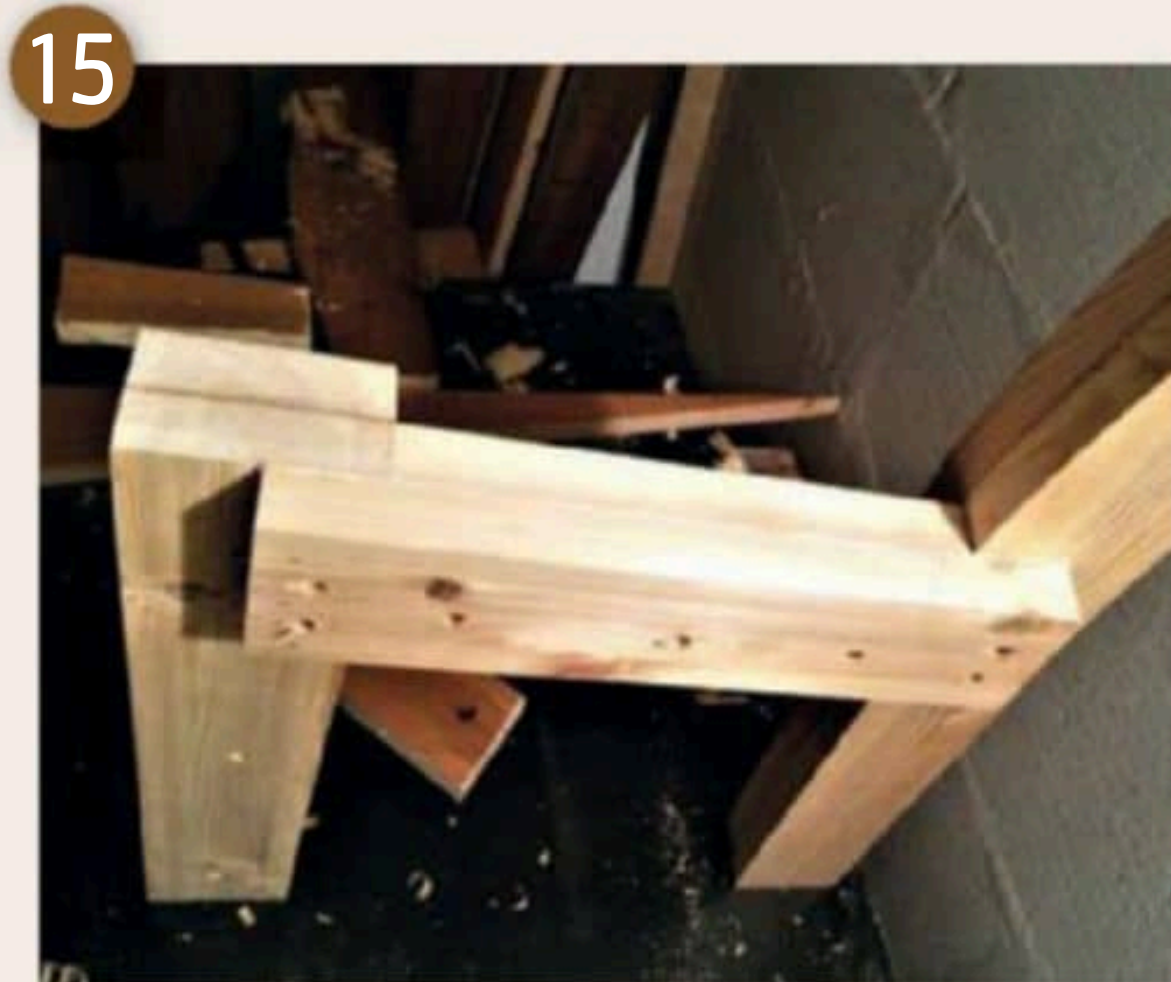
- The frame and backrest will likely receive two coats of clear oil or varnish.
- The seat board may be painted – I'm considering dark green or red for a bold yet rustic look. Suggestions are welcome!

Lessons learned

This project was an incredible learning experience. Here are a few key takeaways:

- Plan thoroughly, but don't overthink: My simple 1:1 scale sketch worked just as well as fancy CAD drawings.
- Improvise with what you have: From using discarded wood to creating makeshift clamps, necessity sparked creativity.
- Take your time: Rushing leads to mistakes. Precision in measuring, marking, and cutting is worth the extra effort.
- Embrace imperfections: Minor flaws add character and remind you of the journey.

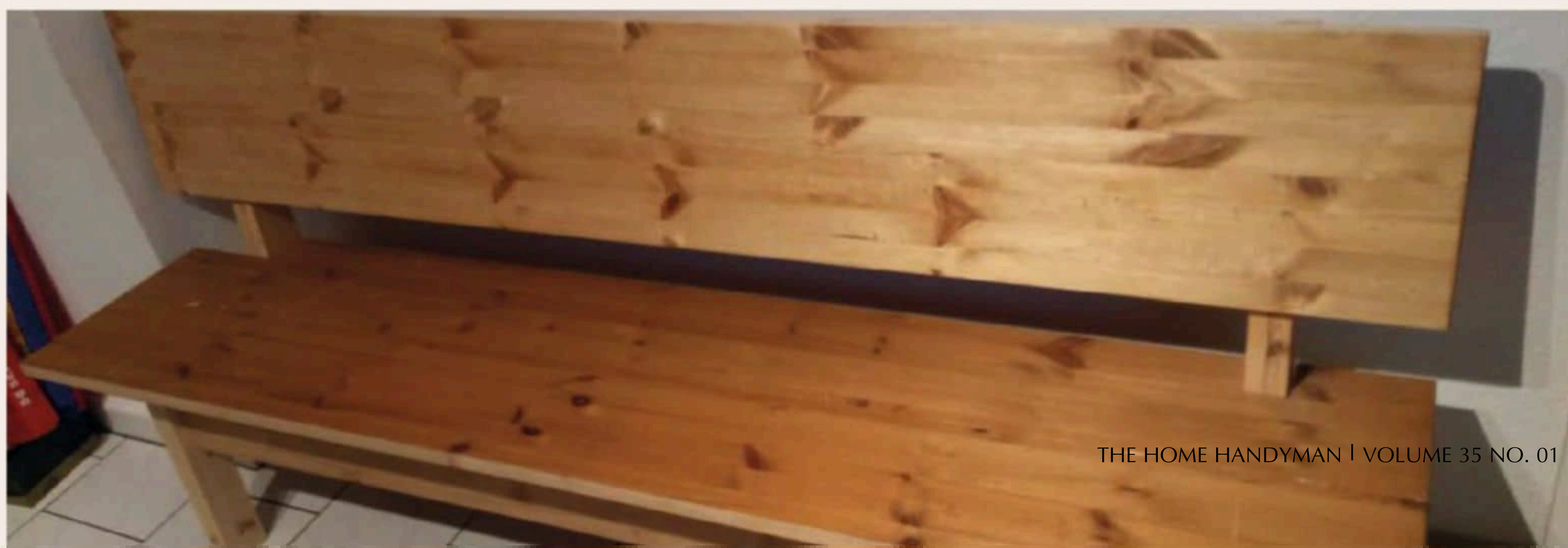




Conclusion

Building this kitchen bench was challenging but deeply rewarding. I now have a functional piece of furniture made entirely by my own hands, which I use daily. Beyond that, I've gained confidence and skills that will serve me well in future woodworking projects.

1. Side view 2. Front view 3. Planing the back legs 4. The plane cannot 'reach into' inside curves 5. Trimming the top ends of the legs 6. A piece of the corner accidentally ripped off – so I did a quick fix 7. Marking out with the square and knife along the pencil lines 8. The underside while cutting 9. Cutting down both sidelines and letting the two cuts meet in the middle gives you accurate results easily 10. Two front leg halves glued and screwed together 11. Check for fit on template 12. Small connector gets screwed to the legs 13. One leg assembly done 14. Adding the long connector on the short one and the legs. It is glued and screwed in place. 15. Together the connectors make a very stable structure. 16. Marking for drilling the dowel holes 17. A dry fit. It looked okay at this point 18. Self-made clamps. The lower stop is angled to the same angle as the wedge to make everything tight 19. Pocket holes on the stretchers ends. These will connect them to the leg assemblies on each side 20. This is the right leg assembly (seen from front) for orientation 21. It's coming together... 22. After sawing in from the edge I drilled a couple of holes to get out the waste, and finished up with a chisel



How to build a wooden bed from scratch.

RACK IT UP

If you've ever wanted to create a custom shelf that combines industrial style with functionality, this project is for you! Using metal tubing and wood, you'll build a robust shelving unit perfect for organising your space. Along the way, we'll also cover essential welding techniques to help you achieve professional results.



What you will need

Metal tubing cuts:

- 4 pieces, 635mm
- 4 pieces, 356mm
- 4 pieces, 302mm
- 2 pieces, 622mm
- 6 pieces, 1,118mm

Wood shelves:

- 3 pieces, 350mm x 1,108mm

Tools and safety gear:

- Safety glasses
- Gloves
- Cutoff wheel or metal chop saw
- Grinder with flap discs
- Welding machine (MIG, TIG, or stick welding)

- Welding clamps and magnet squares
- Measuring tape
- Screws

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Cutting the metal tubing

Safety first! Put on your gloves and safety glasses to protect yourself while cutting. Use a cutoff wheel or metal chop saw to cut the 25mm tubing into the specified lengths. Double-check your measurements before each cut for accuracy.

For smoother edges and better welds, grind down any burrs or rough spots on the tubing ends using a grinder with a flap disc attachment. This ensures a clean and tight fit when joining the pieces.

Step 2: Assemble the frame

Start by arranging the pieces of tubing. Lay out the 635mm and 356mm pieces to form the vertical sections of the shelf frame. These will support the overall structure. Use

clamps or magnet squares to hold the pieces in place.

Step 3: Welding crosspieces

Weld the 302mm crosspieces horizontally between the vertical supports. These will act as braces for the structure, ensuring stability.

Pro tip: When welding, always tack weld first (apply small welds at each corner) to hold the pieces in place. This lets you make adjustments if necessary before laying down full weld beads.

For MIG or TIG welding, ensure you set the machine to the correct voltage and amperage based on the tubing thickness. Practice on scrap metal if you're new to welding to perfect your technique.

Step 4: Adding the top frame

Take the 1,118mm tubing pieces and weld them to the top of the shelf frame. These pieces will outline the uppermost section and add to the aesthetic appeal of the unit.

Step 5: Adding shelves

Next, weld the bottom shelf frame in

place at the base of the structure. Then, weld the middle shelf frame halfway between the top and bottom sections. Use the 622mm pieces as supports for the middle shelf.

Tips for precise welding:

- Use a level to ensure each shelf frame is straight before welding.
- If the tubing warps slightly due to heat, allow it to cool before continuing.

Step 6: Welding tabs to support the wood

To secure the wooden shelves, weld small metal tabs along the inside edges of the tubing. These tabs will act as supports to hold the wood securely in place. Space the tabs evenly for the best weight distribution.

When welding tabs, avoid overheating them to prevent distortion. Short, controlled welds are ideal for this task.

Step 7: Preparing the wood

Cut the wood into three pieces, each measuring 350mm x 1,108mm. Sand the edges to remove splinters and apply your chosen finish, such as wood stain, paint, or a clear coat.

For a modern industrial look, a dark stain or natural finish pairs beautifully with the metal frame.

Step 8: Attaching the wood shelves

Place the wood pieces onto the metal frame, resting them on the welded tabs. Secure the wood by screwing it into place using screws. Pre-drill holes in the wood to avoid splitting, and use screws with a low profile for a clean finish.

Tips for welding success

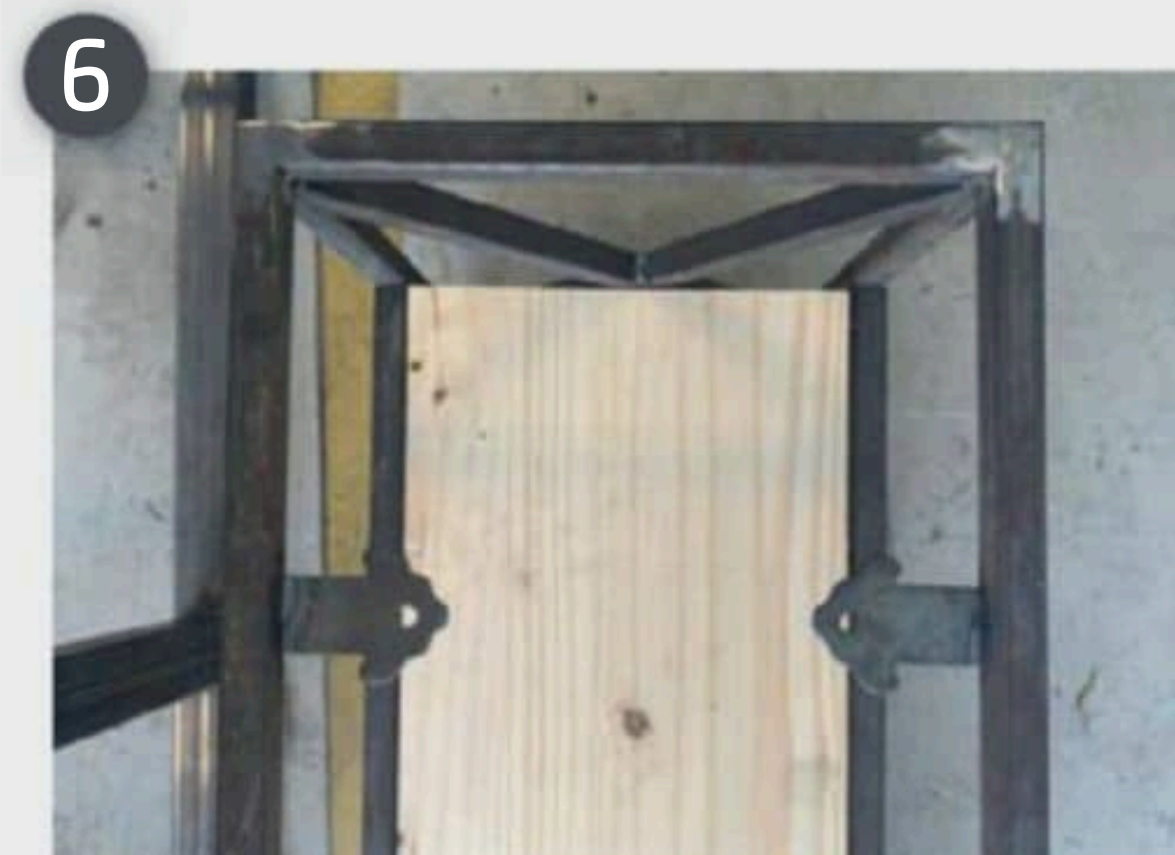
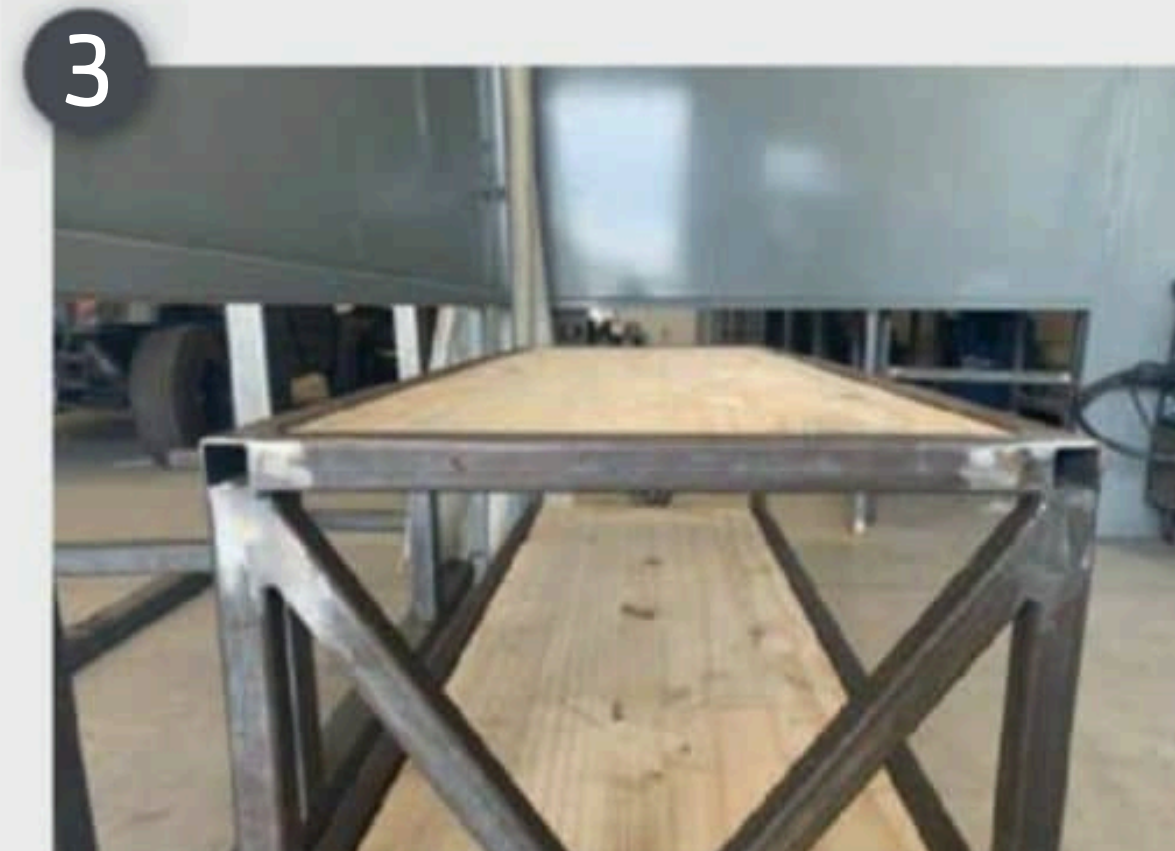
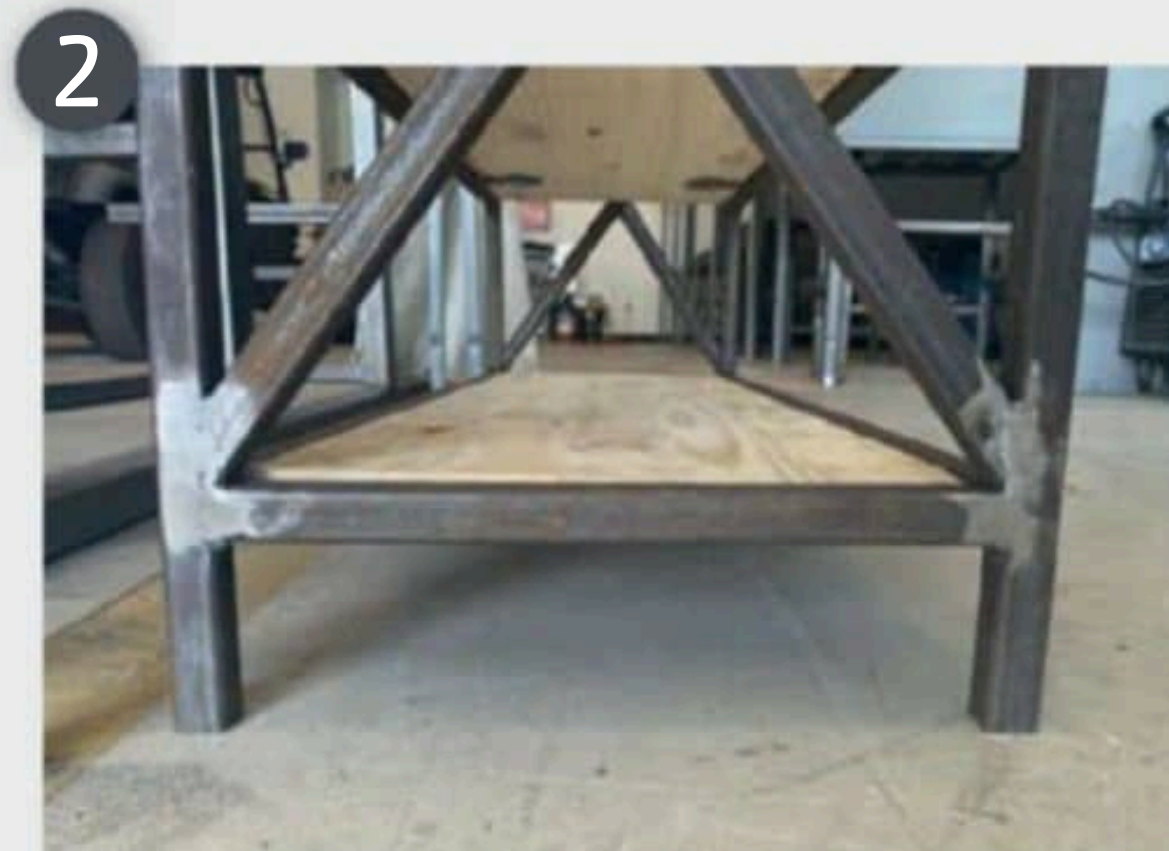
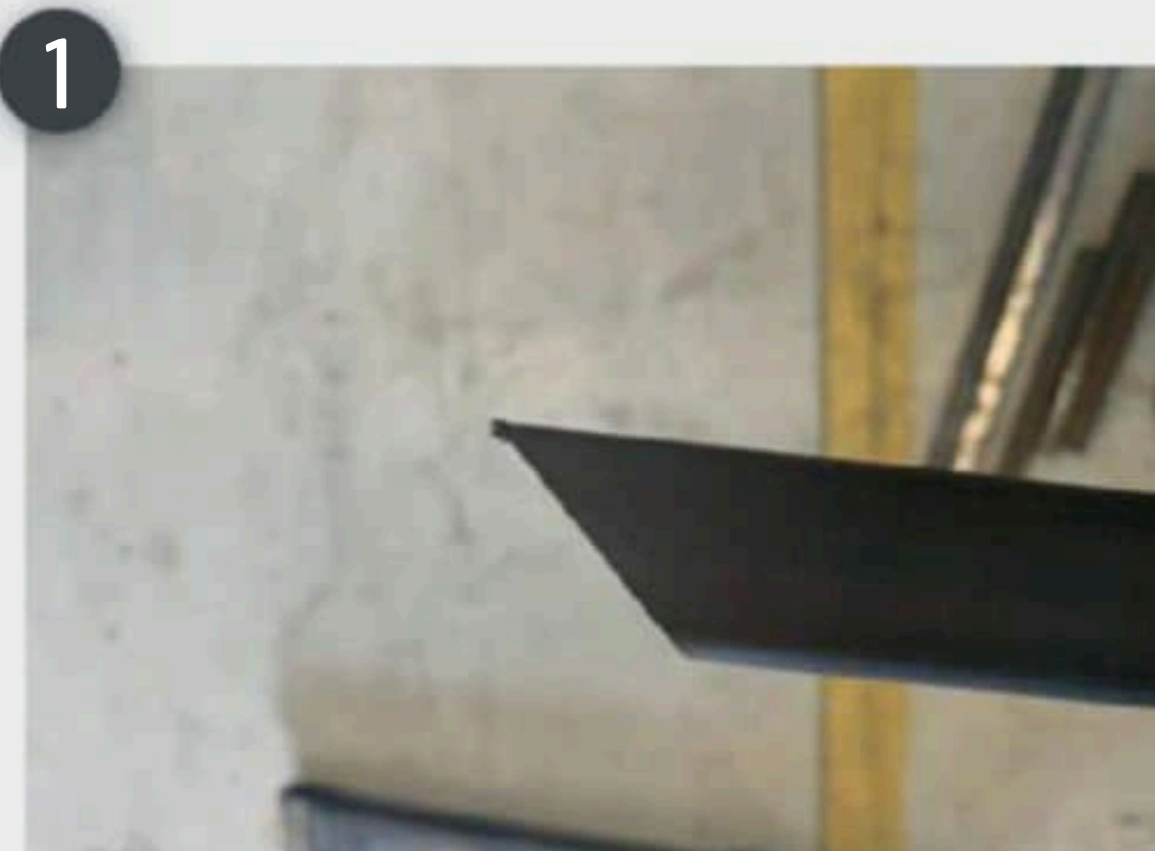
- **Material prep:** Clean the tubing with a wire brush or acetone before welding to remove grease or oxidation. This ensures better weld penetration.

- **Practice your welds:** A steady hand and consistent travel speed are crucial for strong, visually appealing welds. Don't hesitate to practice on scrap metal first.
- **Ventilation:** Always work in a well-ventilated area to avoid inhaling harmful fumes.

Finished project

Once the shelves are secured, your industrial-style metal and wood shelving unit is ready to use! Its clean lines and sturdy construction make it perfect for organising books, tools, or décor items. Best of all, you've mastered some valuable welding techniques along the way.

This project is an excellent introduction to combining wood and metal in your DIY creations, opening the door to countless other industrial-inspired projects.



1. Use a cutoff wheel or metal chop saw to cut the 25mm tubing into the specified angles and lengths 2. For smoother edges and better welds, grind down any burrs or rough spots on the tubing ends using a grinder with a flap disc attachment 3. When welding, always tack weld first (apply small welds at each corner) to hold the pieces in place 4. Weld the 302mm crosspieces horizontally between the vertical supports 5. Take the 1,118mm tubing pieces and weld them to the top of the shelf frame 6. To secure the wooden shelves, weld small metal tabs along the inside edges of the tubing 7. Cut the wood into three pieces, each measuring 350mm x 1,108mm



COAT RACK-ORGANISER SHELF

>> Brad Goldsmith

While clearing scrap in my workshop and thinking about the single board challenge, I spotted a leftover piece of 50mm x 100mm x 3,048mm wood on the rack. It wasn't exactly a showstopper – slightly curved and better hidden inside a wall – but it seemed like a fun piece to experiment with.

I stood there for a moment, letting inspiration strike, and decided to recreate a coat rack-organiser shelf I had previously made using pallet wood. That version now happily resides at a friend's beach house, holding dog leads, sunscreen, bug spray, and swimming goggles. This new project would serve a similar purpose at our place by the river.



What you will need

- One 50mm x 100mm x 3,048mm board
- Wood glue
- 25mm brad nails and a nailer (or finishing nails and hammer)
- Tape measure
- Square
- Clamps
- Table saw (or band saw)

- Mitre saw (or hand saw)
- Sander and sandpaper
- Paint or wood stain (optional)
- Coat hooks
- Metal file

The cut list

After ripping the slats, I cut the pieces as follows. Feel free to adjust these dimensions to suit your needs:

Back

10mm x 75mm x 600mm (10 pieces)

Top shelf

10mm x 75mm x 787mm (2 pieces)

Box sides

10mm x 75mm x 457mm (2 pieces)

Box shelves

10mm x 75mm x 489mm (2 pieces)

Shelf divider

10mm x 75mm x 152mm (1 piece)

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Prepare the board

Firstly, if you don't have access to these specialised tools, Skip to the

cut list and take that to your nearest hardware store to have it cut for you. If you do have the tools, read on! To maximise the wood, I decided to rip the board into slats measuring 10mm thick. First, I crosscut the wood into shorter, straighter sections that were easier to handle and trimmed off the milled edges using a table saw.

To ensure stability while ripping, I clamped a guide to the table saw fence. Ideally, this job would have been better done on a band saw with the right blade width –poor planning on my part!

Step 2: Glue up

Using wood glue and clamps, I assembled the parts and let them dry for several hours, or overnight when possible. After drying, I found some burn marks and ridges left over from milling, which I smoothed out with hand planing and sanding.

If you have access to a thickness planer or drum sander, this process will be quicker. For a smooth finish, sand with increasingly fine-grit paper using a palm sander or sanding block.

Tip: Painting or staining at this stage is easier than waiting until the assembly is complete, as you avoid dealing with tricky inside corners. If you prefer a natural wood look, consider applying a clear finish to protect against grime and discolouration. Sand lightly between layers for the best results.

Step 3: Assembling the box shelf

Once the glue dried, I trimmed the edges of the back and top shelf to ensure they were square. A couple of backboards had shifted slightly during clamping, so I removed about 6 mm from the top and bottom edges.

Using wood glue and 25mm brad nails, I assembled the box shelf and centred it on the back panel. If you're using finishing nails, drill pilot holes to prevent the 10 mm-thick slats from splitting.

Unfortunately, the slight curve in the wood caused a couple of seams to pull apart after the glue dried. Re-clamping didn't fix the issue, so I had to fill the gaps. This meant painting instead of staining and tackling those inside corners after assembly. Lesson learned!

Step 4: Adding the top shelf and hooks

Centre the top shelf on the box and attach it with wood glue and 25mm brad nails. Initially, I had planned for the

top to be 150mm wide but decided it looked too large and trimmed it down to 125mm. Adjust the width to your liking.

Attach coat hooks to the front, spacing them as desired. Use screws no longer than 12mm to avoid piercing the back. If the screws are longer, you'll need to file down the points – an angle grinder can speed up this process.

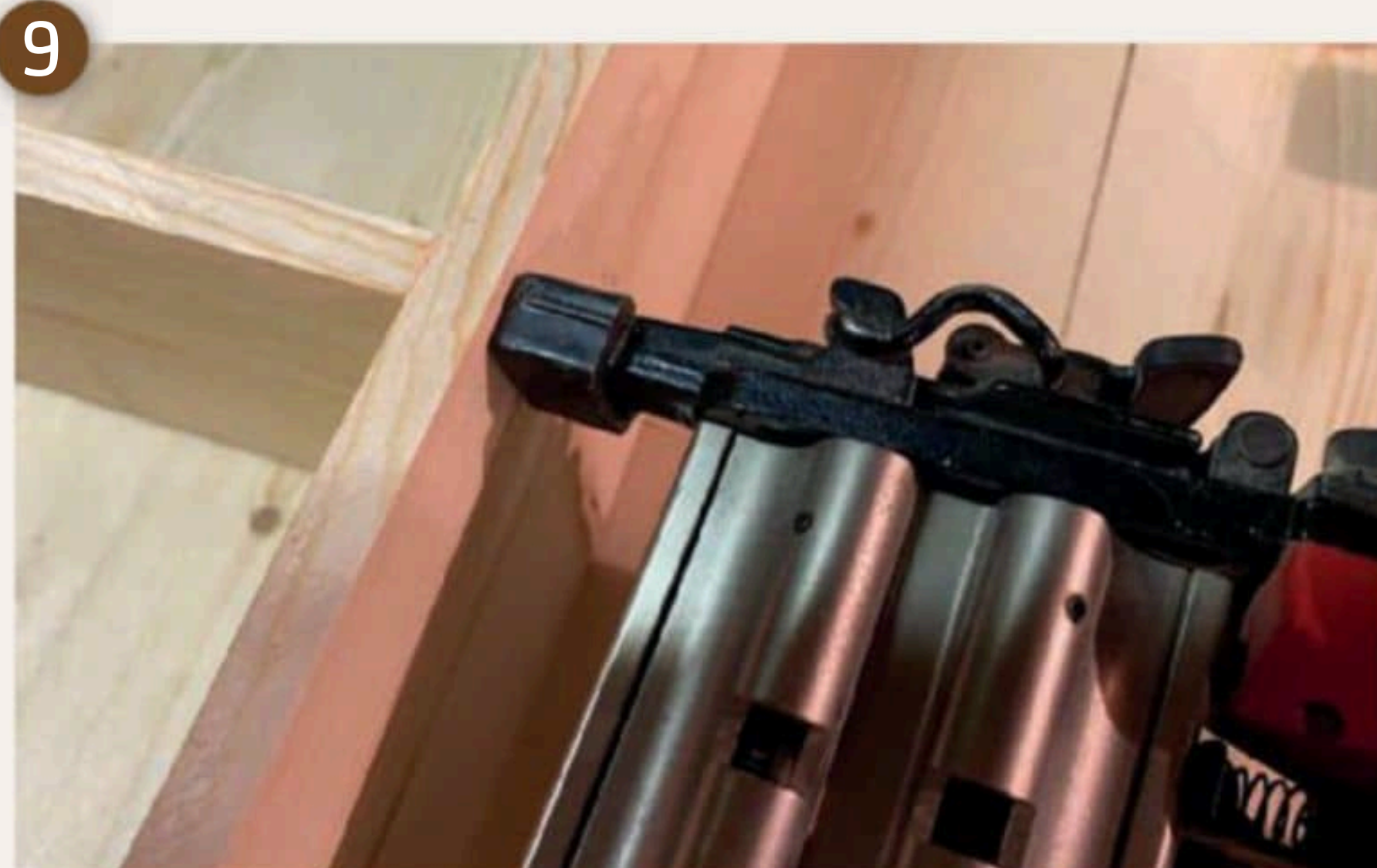
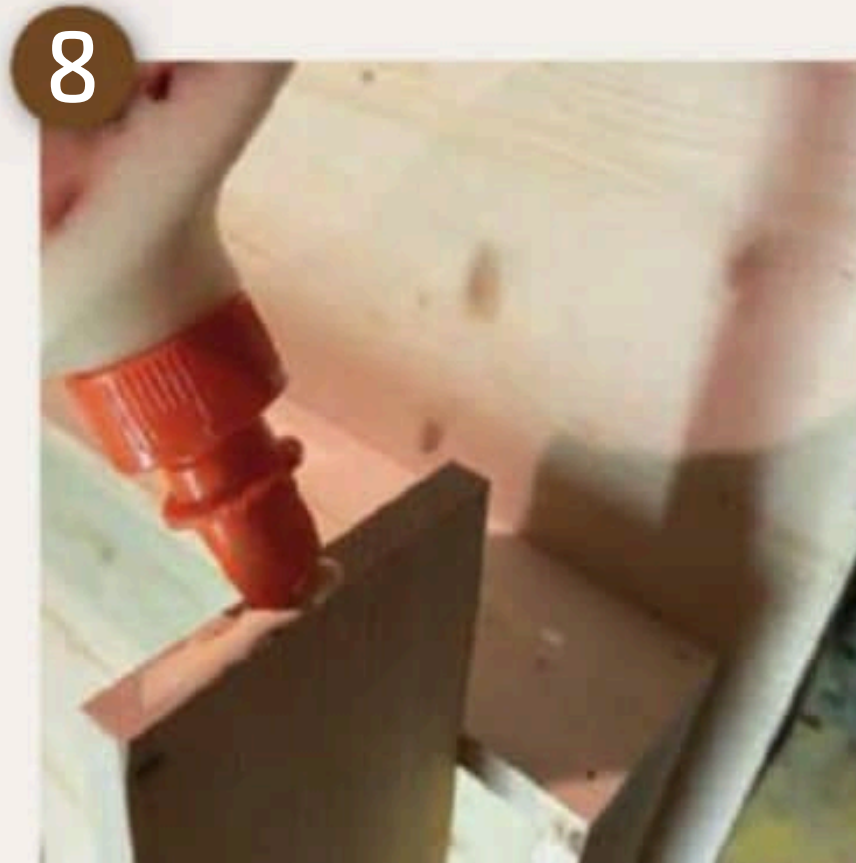
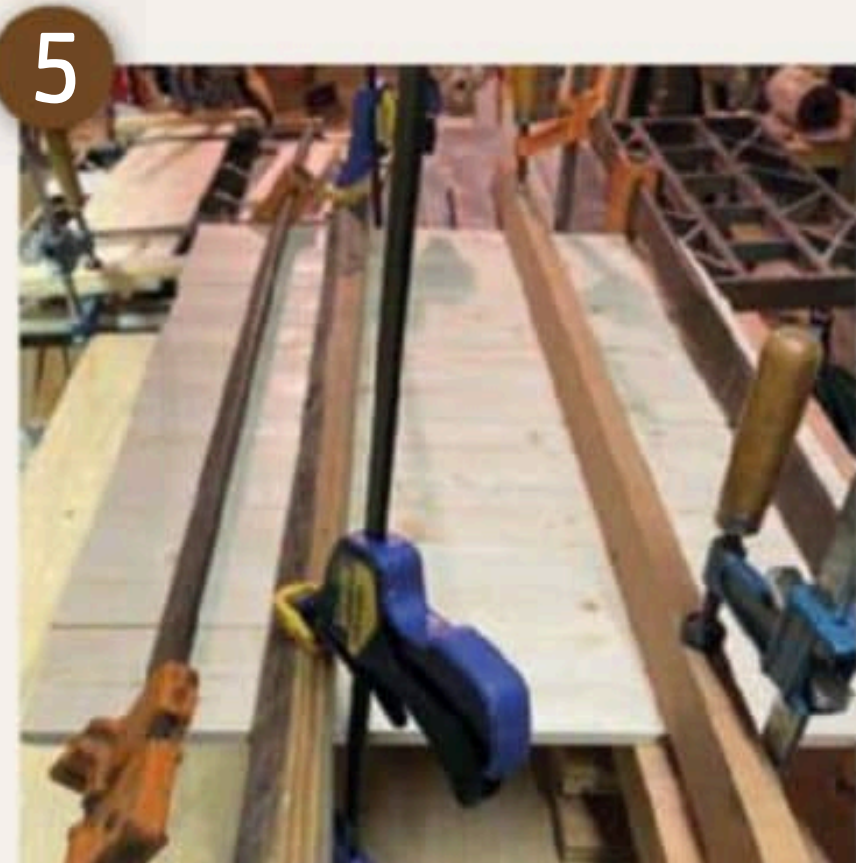
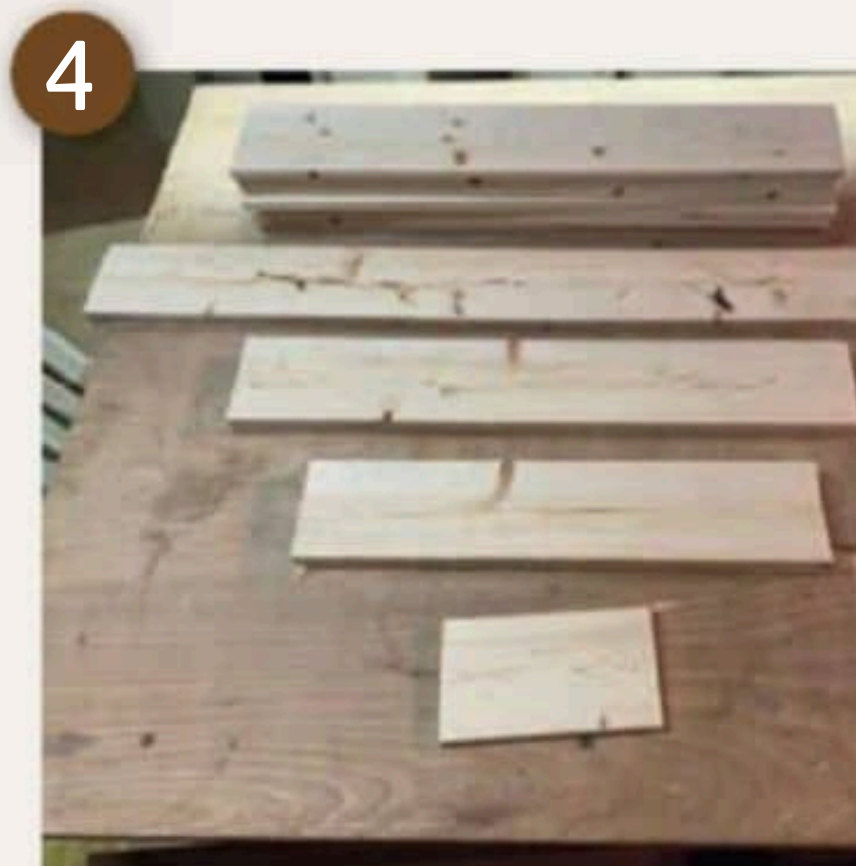
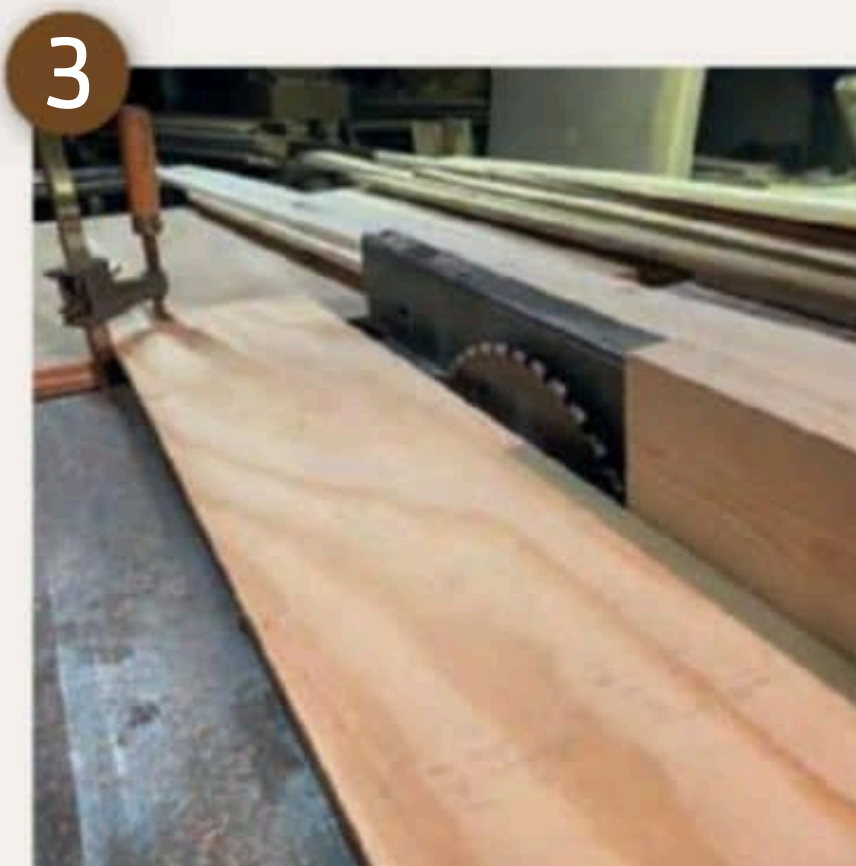
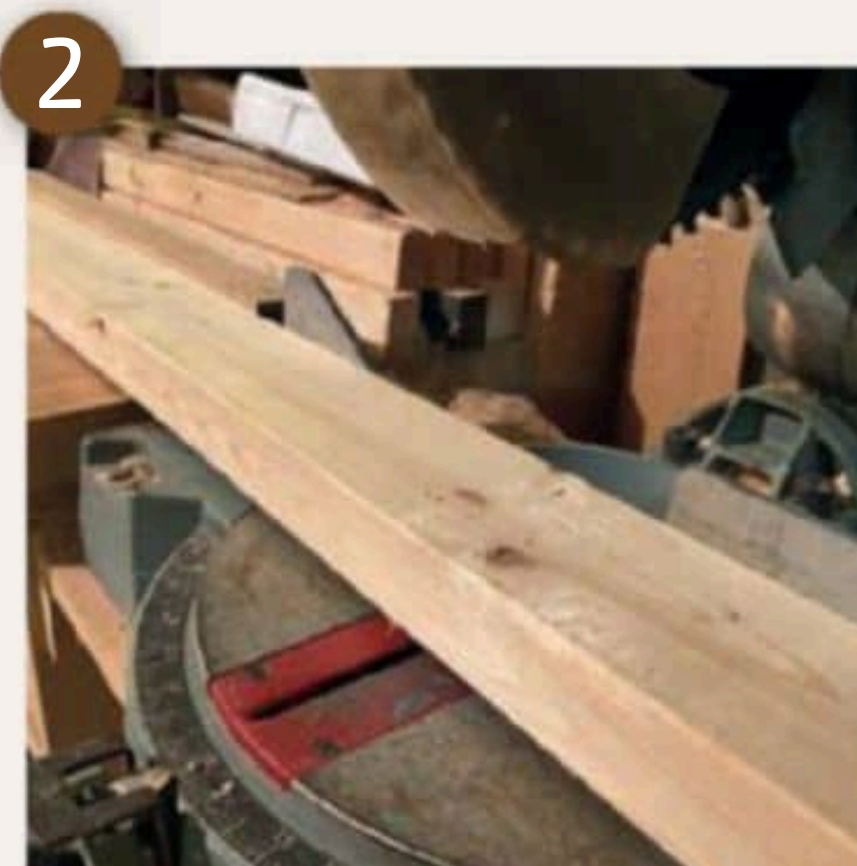
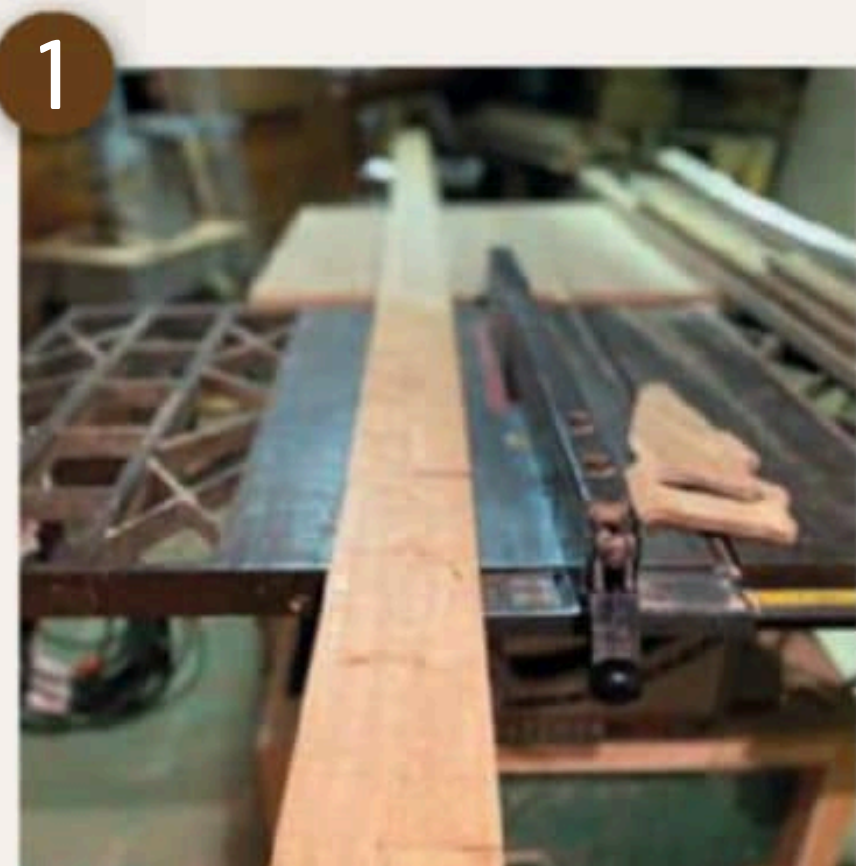
Step 5: Mounting the shelf

To mount the shelf, use 50mm screws

and finish washers. Secure it to wall studs for the sturdiest installation. If studs aren't available, opt for heavy-duty wall anchors. While the shelf itself is lightweight, keep in mind the weight of the items it will hold.

Finished project

That's it! You've transformed a humble piece of leftover wood into a functional and stylish coat rack-organiser. Show it off – no one will guess it started as an unremarkable piece of scrap wood!



1. To maximise the wood, I decided to rip the board into slats measuring 10mm thick 2. I crosscut the wood into shorter, straighter sections that were easier to handle and trimmed off the milled edges using a table saw 3. To ensure stability while ripping, I clamped a guide to the table saw fence 4. All the wood cut to size and ready to go 5. Using wood glue and clamps, I assembled the parts and let them dry for several 6. After drying, I found some burn marks and ridges left over from milling, which I smoothed out with hand planing and sanding 7. For a smooth finish, sand with increasingly fine-grit paper 8. Using wood glue... 9. ...and 25mm brad nails, I assembled the box shelf 10. Initially, I had planned for the top to be 150mm wide but decided it looked too large and trimmed it down to 125mm

Build your own free-standing shelves.

SHELF-INDULGENCE

Free-standing shelves are a versatile solution for tidying up almost any space. Whether it's your desk, kitchen, workshop, craft room, children's room, or even a spot for plants, these shelves can help you organise and declutter.

They are highly adaptable and can be used in different orientations. You can customise their length or height to fit your needs, whether to stand them in a corner or flat against a wall.

These shelves are simple to build and require minimal tools and time. Let's get started!



What you will need

To build these shelves, you'll need the following:

- A cluttered corner that needs organisation (most of us have at least one!).

- **Wood:** The type of wood depends on your preference and what you have available. For example, leftover planks of plywood. See step one for size details.
- Table saw (optional, only necessary if your wood needs resizing).
- Mitre saw (or have your wood pre-cut at a hardware store).
- Planer (optional).
- Sandpaper: 220-grit and 320-grit.
- Measuring tape.
- Drill with a countersink or small drill bit.
- Screws: 25mm screws will work well.
- Spirit level (or use a levelling app on your phone).

For finishing:

- Stain or paint in a colour of your choice.
- Paintbrush or soft cloth (for applying stain).
- Varnish (I recommend a water-based, semi-gloss finish).

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Determining the size

Customising your shelves allows you to tailor them to your needs. Consider what you'll use them for. For a desk, you'll want a smaller size. For organising a child's reading nook or a workshop, you may prefer larger dimensions.

Here's an example of the wood sizes used for two shelf designs, but feel free to adjust these measurements to suit your project:

Large shelf:

- 2 pieces, 600mm long (uprights).
- 3 pieces, 350mm long (horizontal supports).
- 1 piece, 445mm long (top crosspiece).
- 1 piece, 165mm long (bottom crosspiece).

Small shelf:

- 2 pieces, 300mm long (uprights).
- 3 pieces, 280mm long (horizontal supports).
- 1 piece, 190mm long (top crosspiece).
- 1 piece, 100mm long (bottom crosspiece).

For the large shelf, I used 18mm thick wood trimmed to 180mm wide. The small shelf used 12mm thick wood planed to 140mm wide. Plywood is also a good choice if you want to avoid bulkiness.

Step 2: Preparing the wood

If your wood is warped or uneven, you may need to use a planer to flatten it, but this step is optional.

Using the sizes determined in step one, cut your wood pieces with a mitre saw. Once cut, sand all six sides of each piece with 220-grit sandpaper. It's easier to do this before assembly to achieve a smooth finish.

Step 3: Assembling the first shelf

Take the following pieces:

- 1 upright (600mm).
- 1 horizontal support (350mm).
- 1 bottom crosspiece (165mm).

Mark a line across the bottom of the upright where the bottom crosspiece will attach. Position the horizontal support so its top edge aligns with this line. Drill pilot holes with a countersink bit, then secure the pieces with screws.

Attach the bottom crosspiece to the end of the horizontal support to form an L-shape. Use a spirit level or levelling app to check alignment.



Step 4: Assembling the second shelf

To stack the second shelf on the first, take another upright (600mm) and use the completed first shelf as a guide. Mark the position of the bottom horizontal support and attach it the same way as before.

For the middle shelf, measure the desired distance from the top of the second upright. I chose 150mm for symmetry, but you can adjust as needed. Attach the middle support and then secure the 445mm crosspiece at the top.

Finally, measure the gap between the top and bottom shelves (this was 270mm in my design) and attach the 445mm crosspiece to close the back.

Step 5: Finishing touches

Choose a finish that suits your style. I used a walnut-coloured stain for a classic look. Stir the stain thoroughly before applying it with a soft cloth. Wipe

off any excess and allow it to dry for at least six hours before adding a second coat.

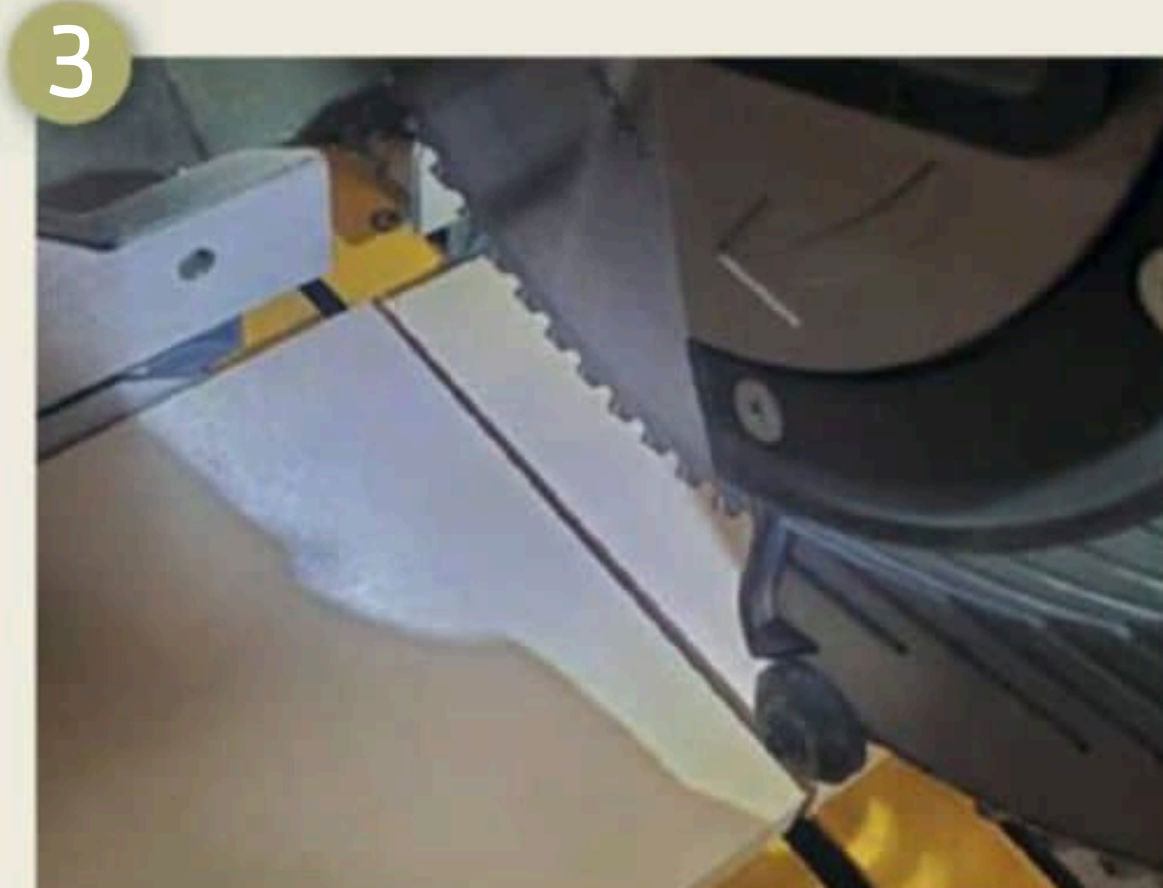
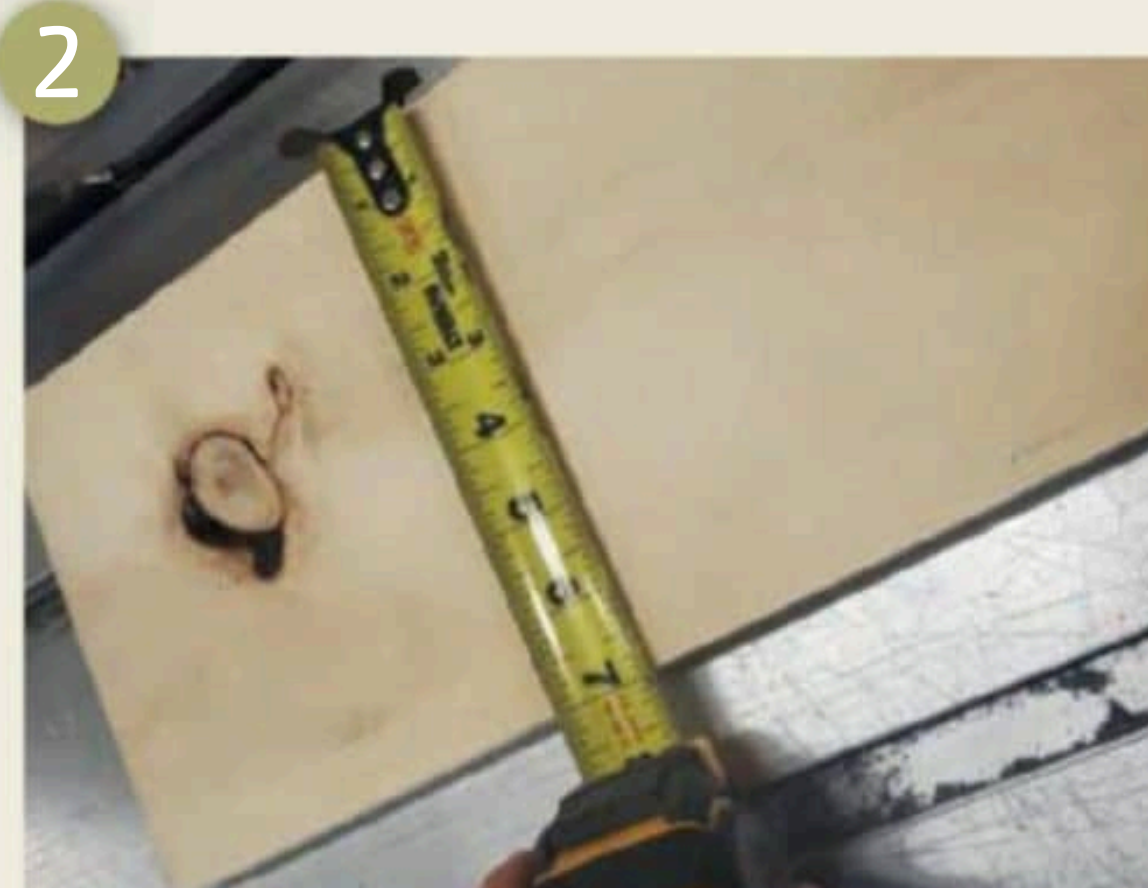
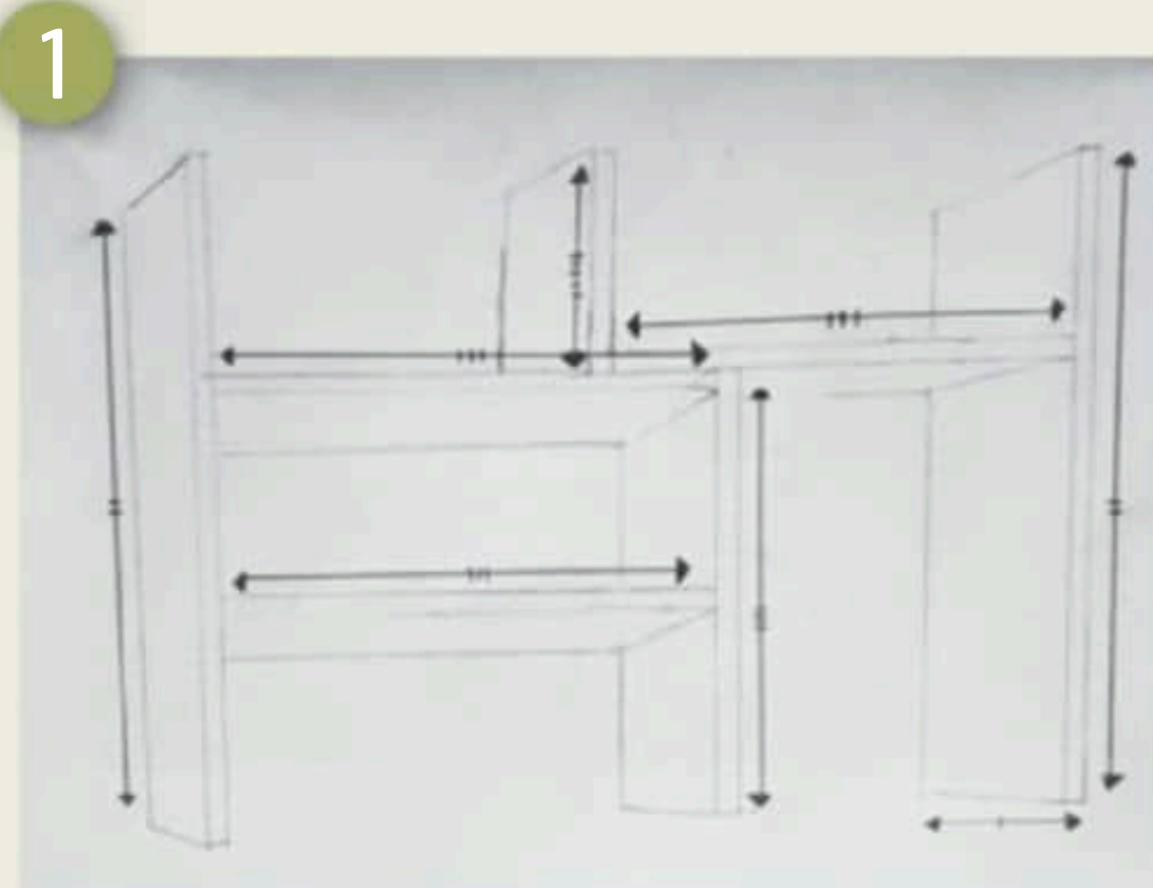
Once dry, apply two coats of water-based varnish, sanding lightly with 320-grit sandpaper between coats. Use smooth, even strokes to avoid drips and ensure a professional finish.

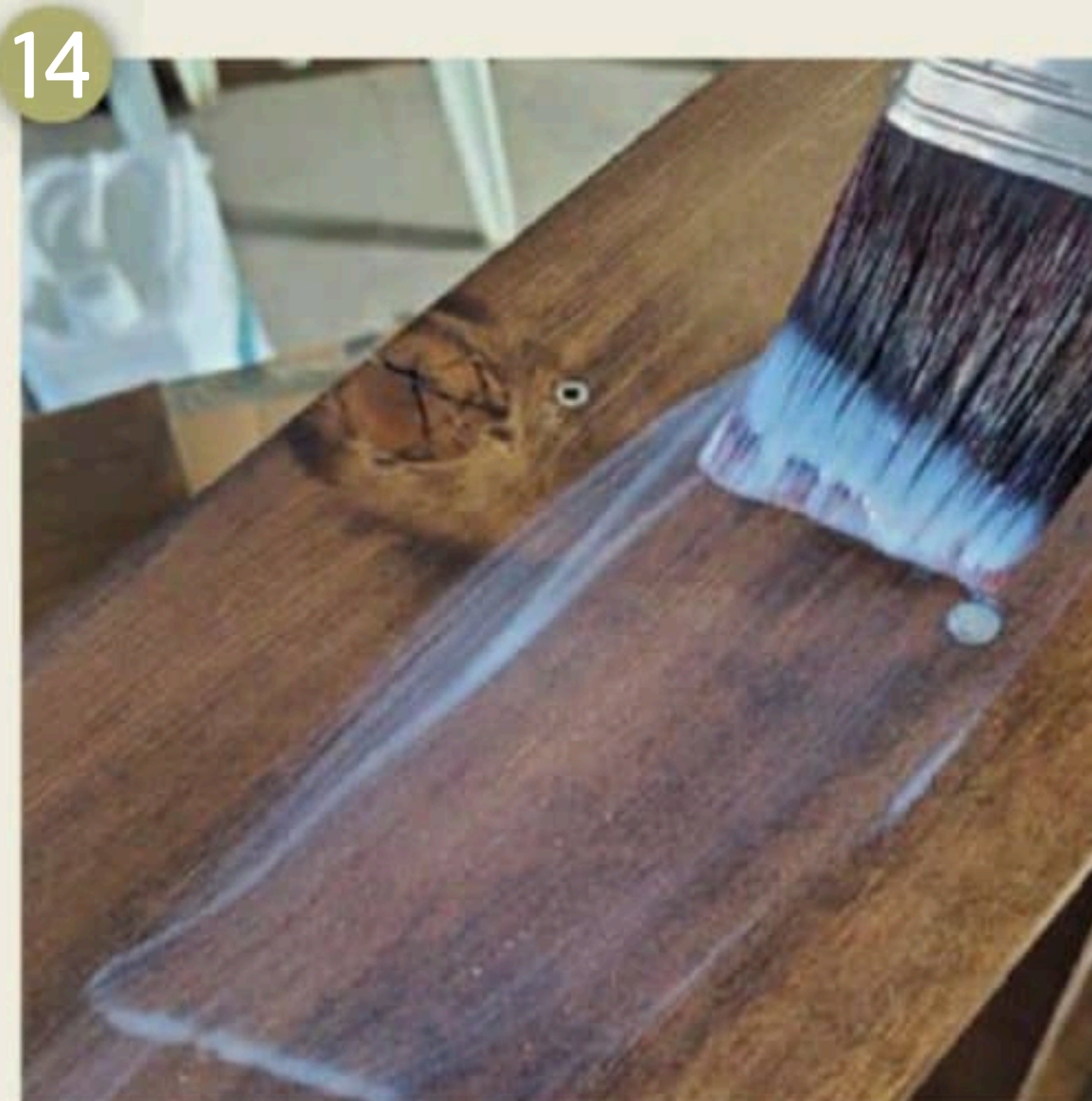
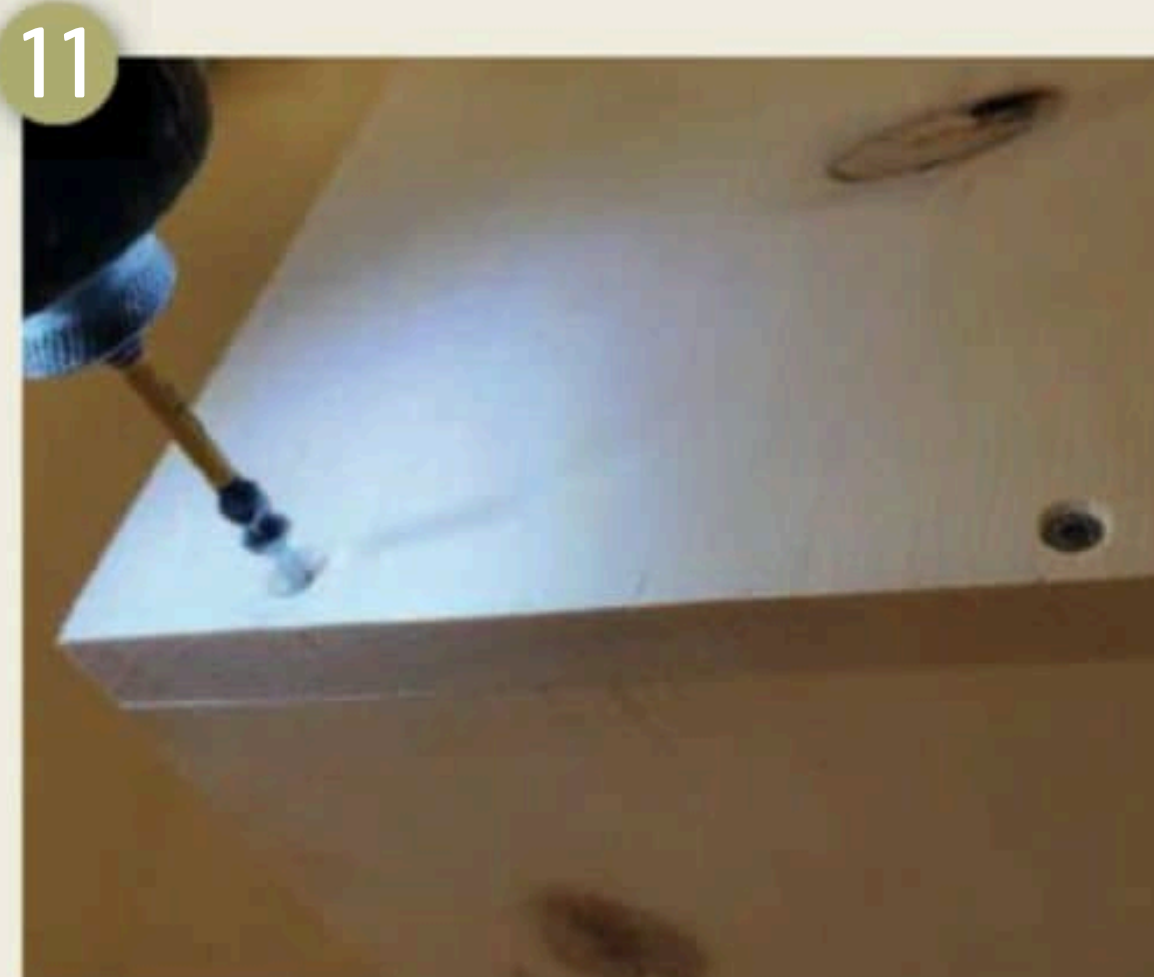
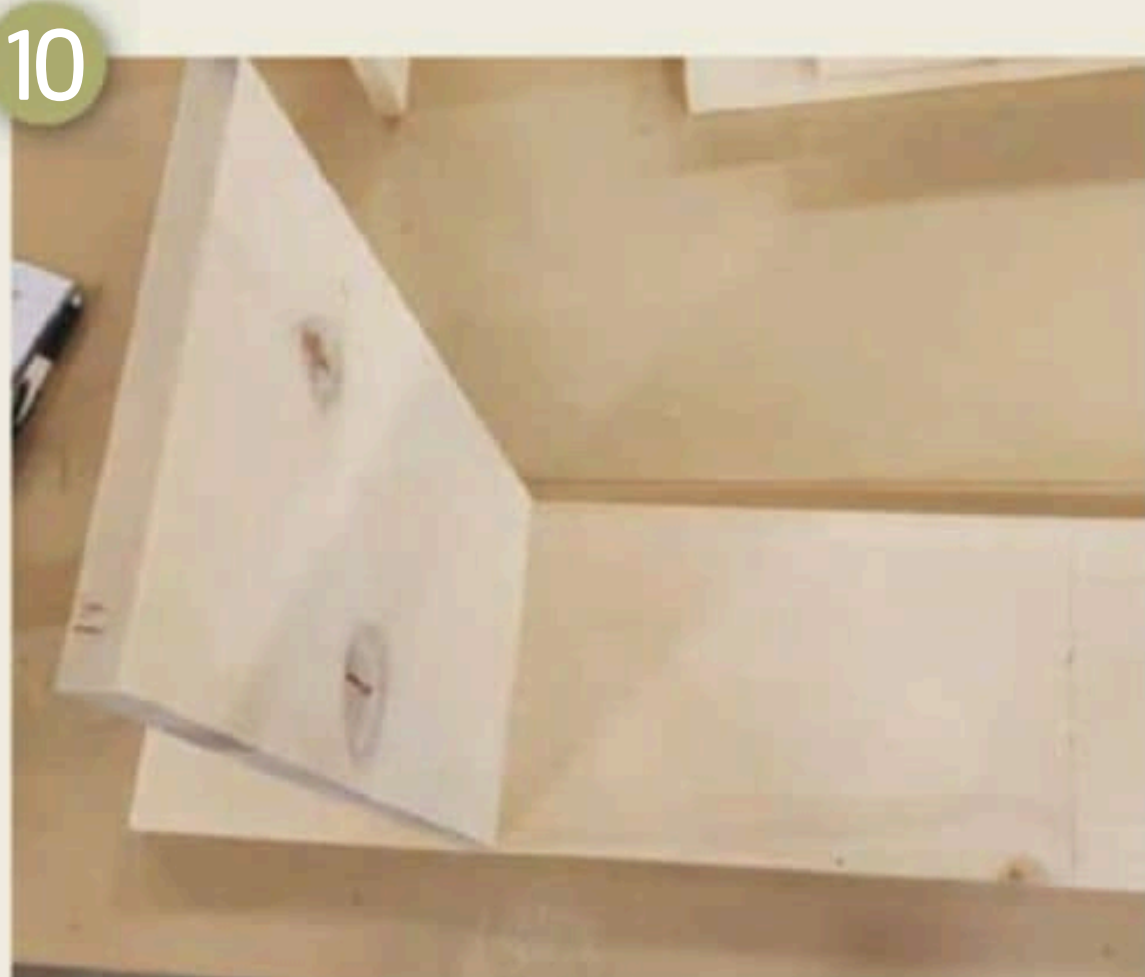
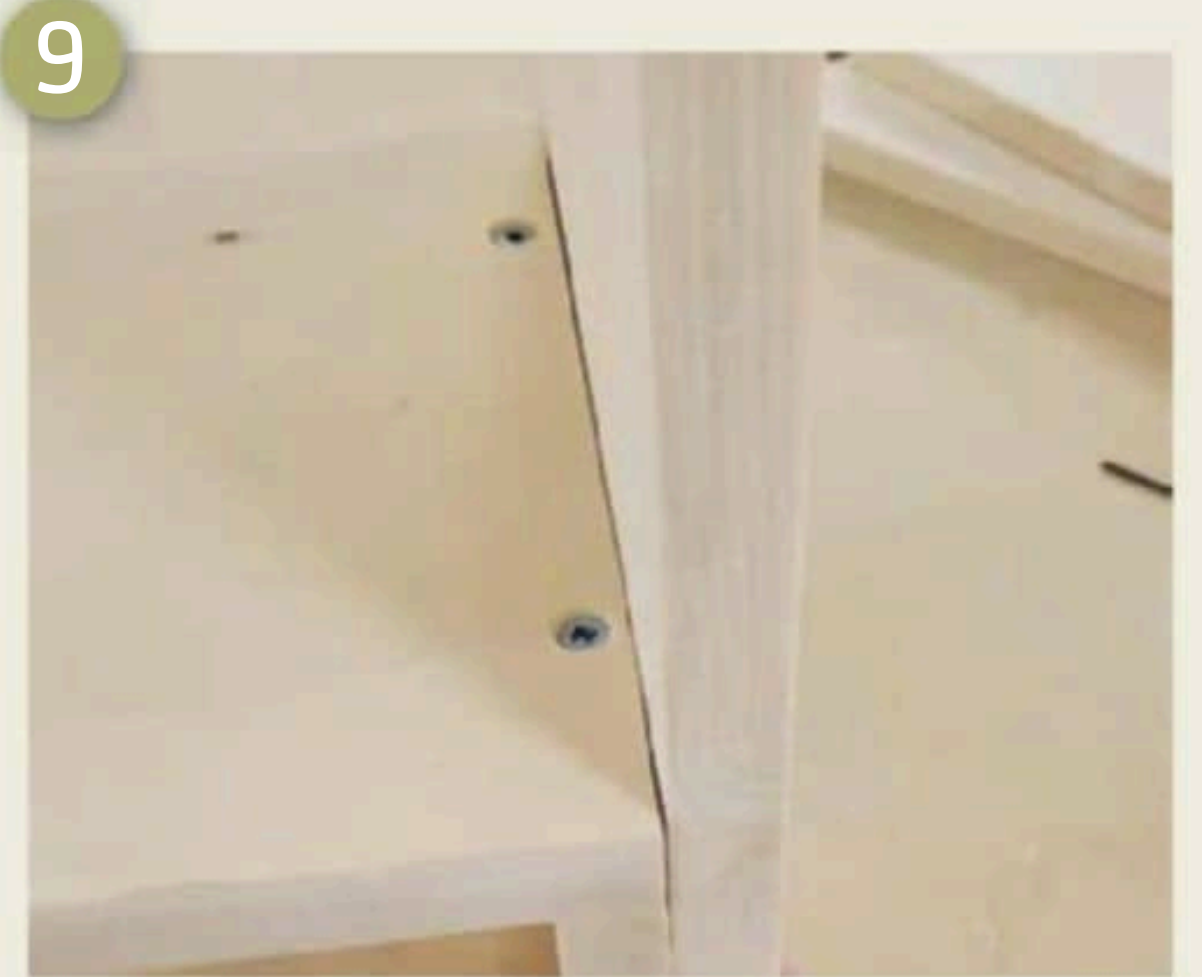
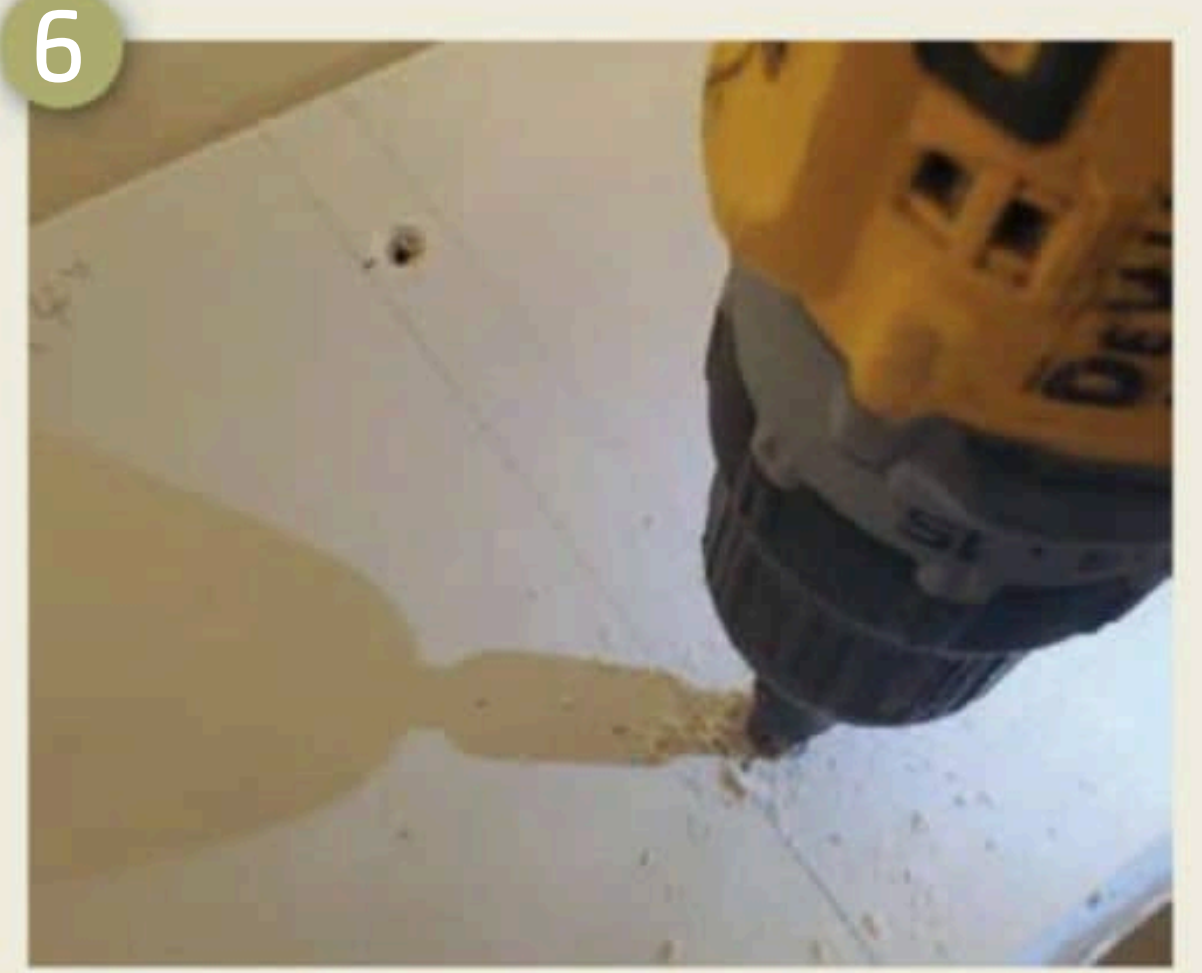
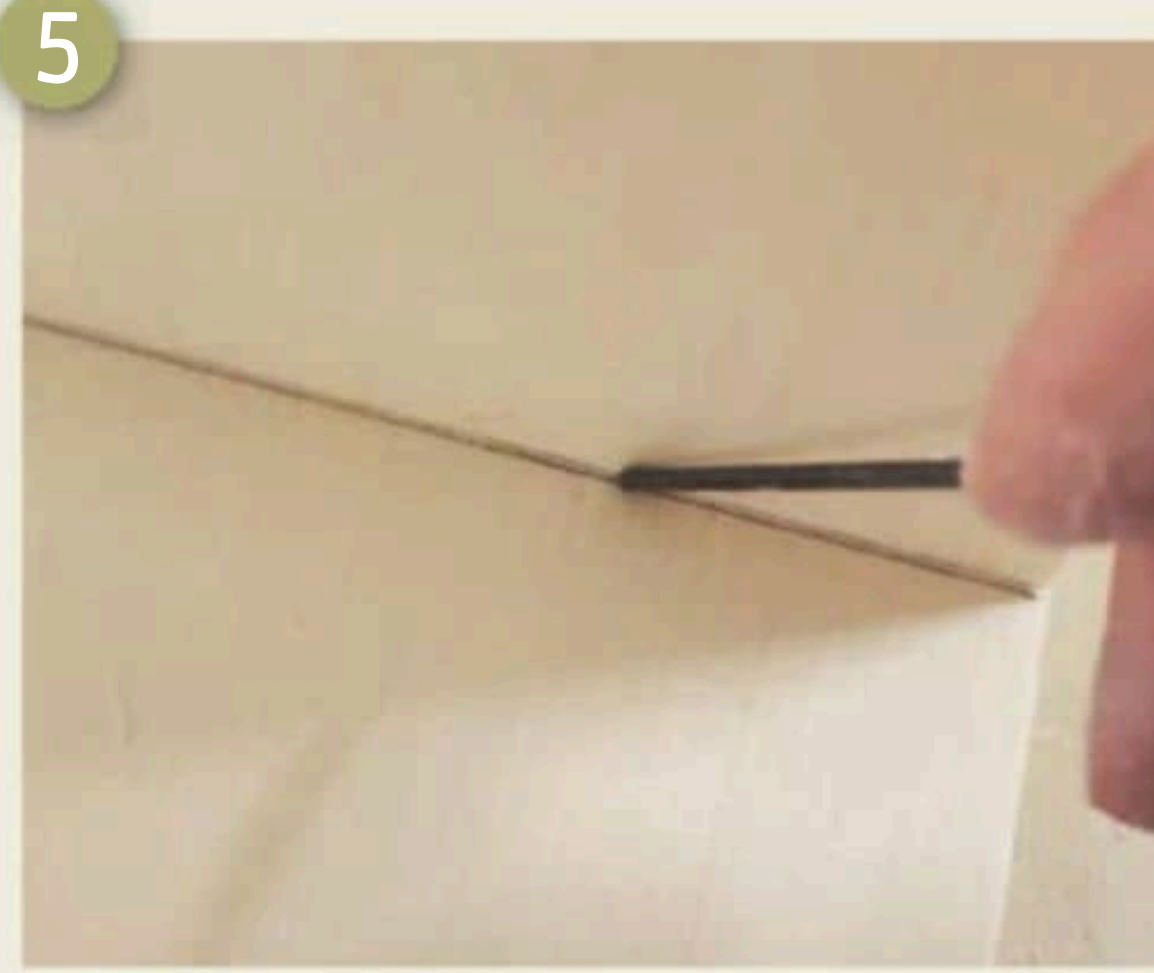
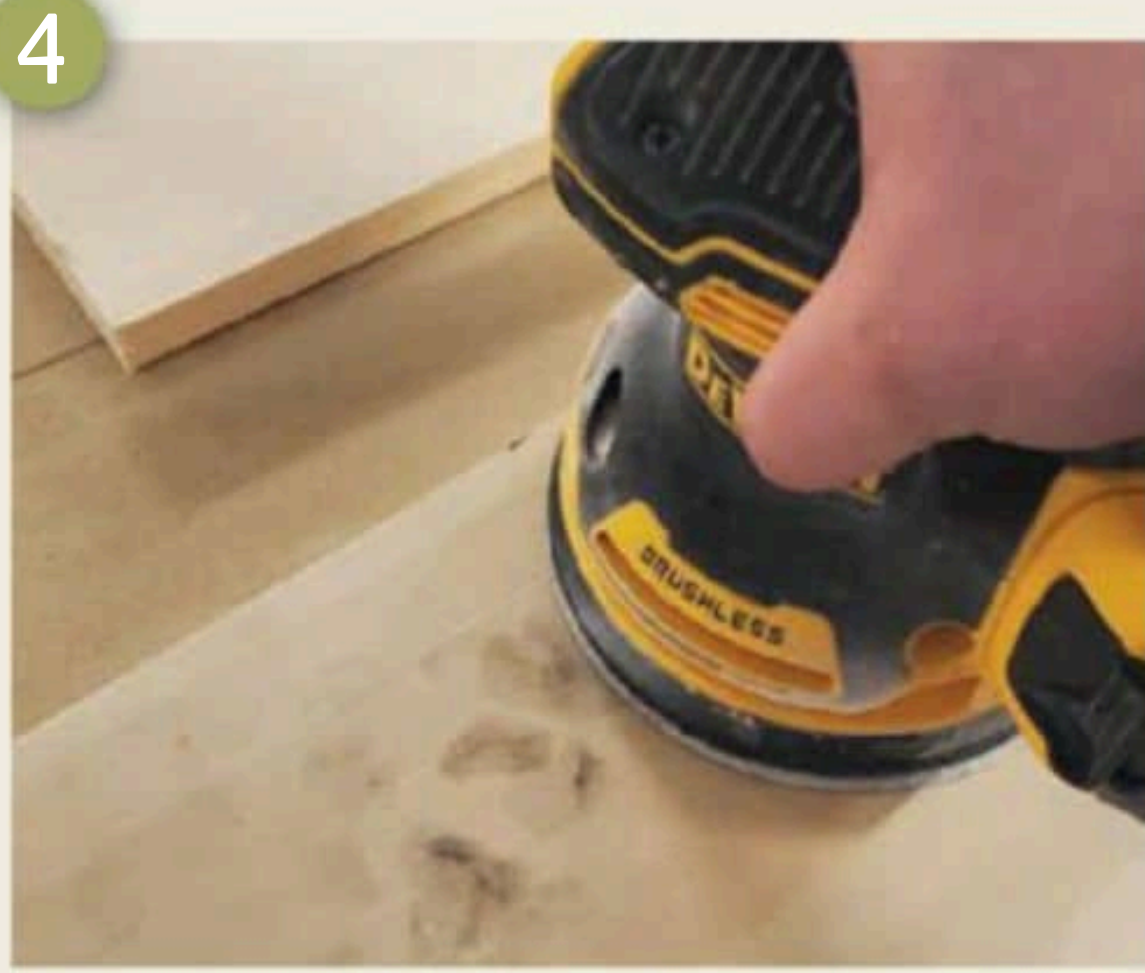
Step 6: Enjoy your new shelves

Your free-standing shelves are now ready to bring order to any space. These sturdy and adaptable shelves can hold books, plants, tools, or anything you need to organise.

Experiment with layouts and placements to find the perfect arrangement. For added stability, consider fastening the shelves together or securing them to the wall, especially if they'll be in a child's room.

Enjoy your project and the satisfaction of creating something functional and stylish!





1. My original plan 2. Measure and mark your wood 3. Cut your pieces to size 4. Now is a good time to sand all your wood 5. Mark a straight line across the bottom of the 600mm piece 6. Use the countersink bit to pre-drill the holes 7. Join the shelf with the screws 8. Starting to take shape 9. Assembling the second shelf 10. You can decide how big you want the centre of your shelves to be 11. Attach the 445mm crosspiece to close the back 12. All pieces joined together 13. Choose a finish that suits your style. I used a walnut-coloured stain for a classic look 14. Once dry, apply two coats of water-based varnish



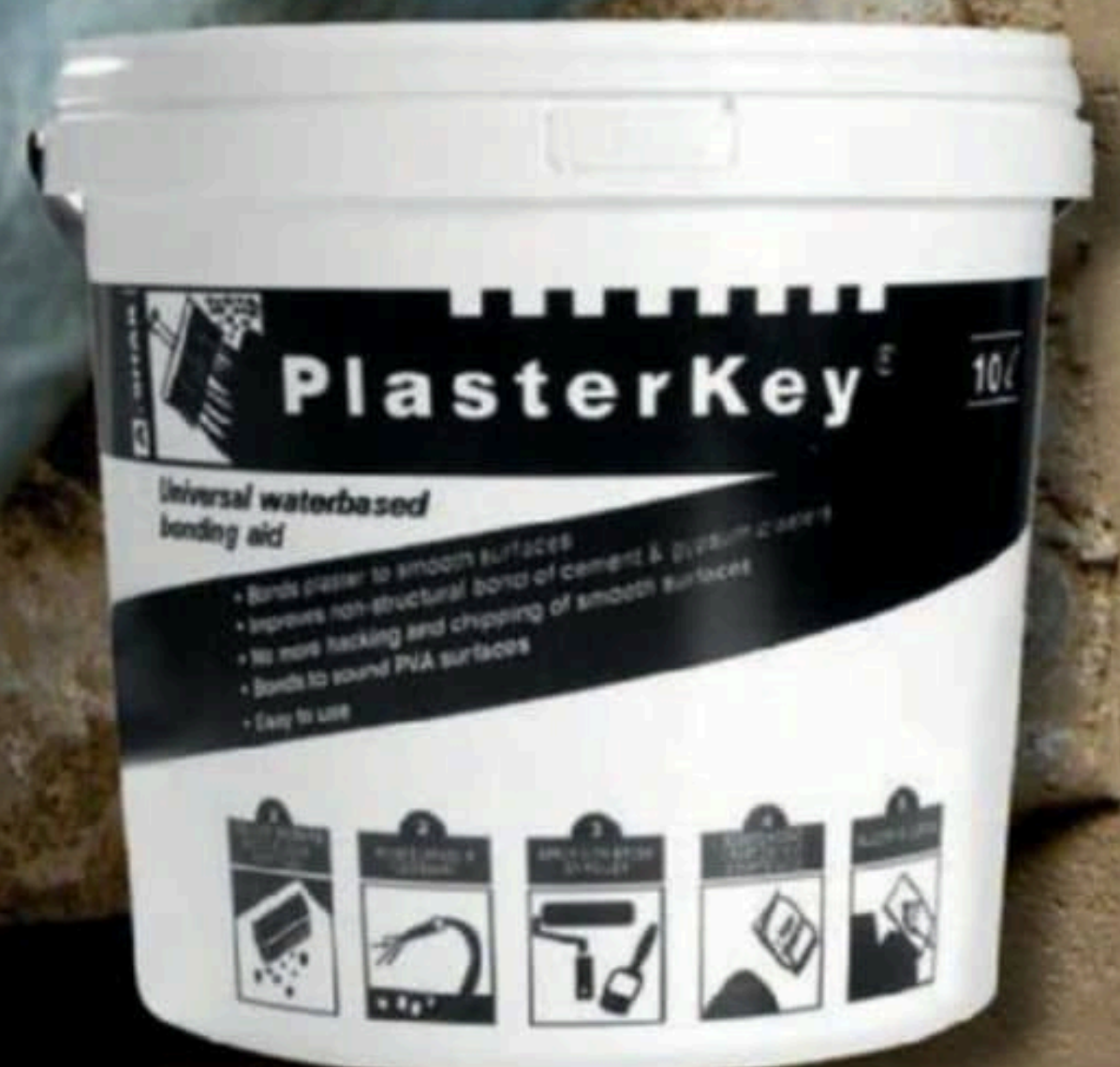
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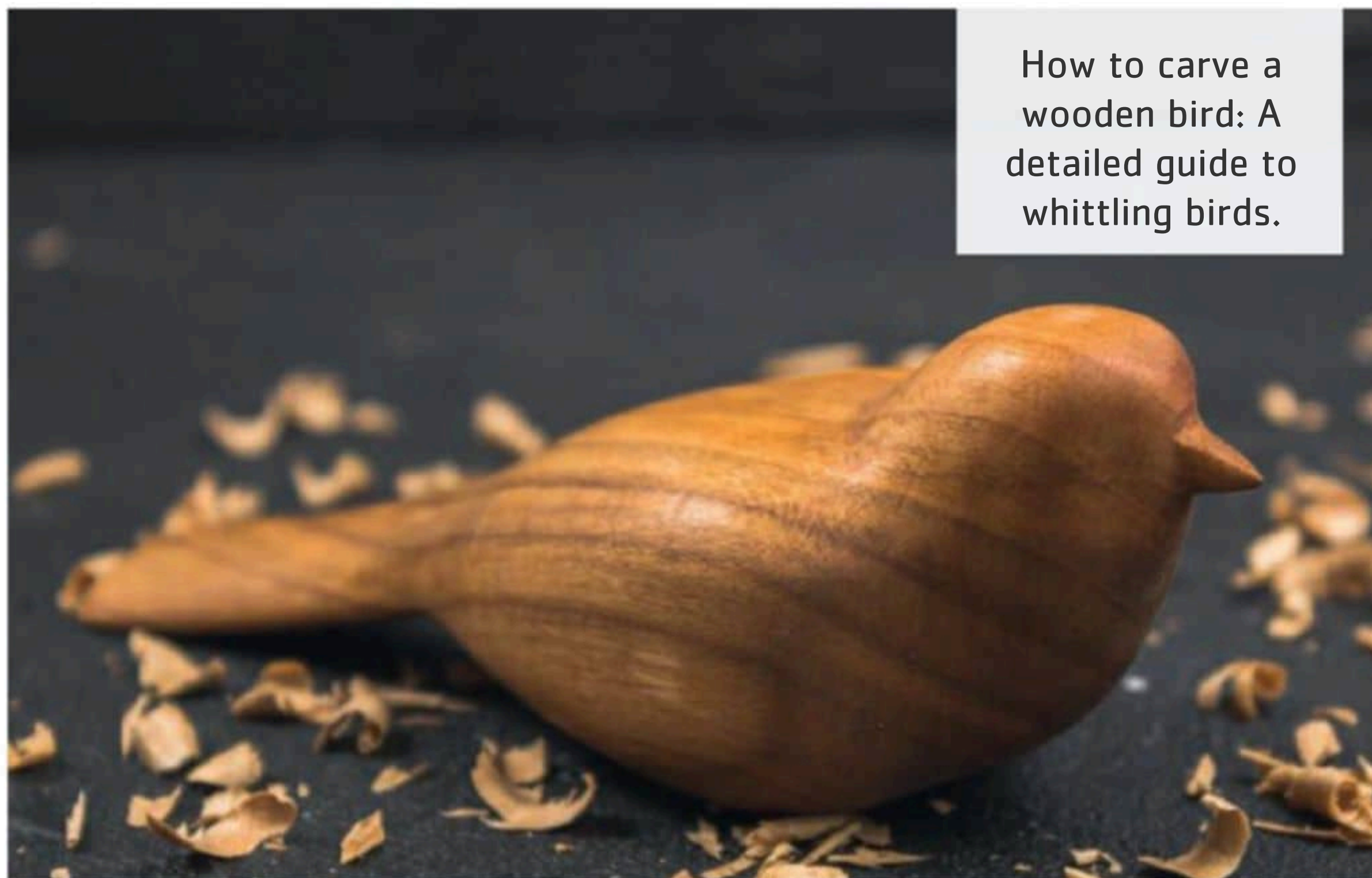
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How to carve a wooden bird: A detailed guide to whittling birds.

HOW TO CARVE A WOODEN BIRD

Do you love nature and its beautiful creatures? Are you passionate about wood carving and want to combine the two? If so, you're in the right place! In this article, we'll show you how to carve a wooden bird that captures the beauty of nature and provides a satisfying creative outlet.

Whether you're an experienced woodcarver or just starting out, carving a wooden bird is a rewarding and enjoyable hobby. This guide takes you through the process, from choosing the right materials and tools to finishing your project with care. With these steps, you'll have a handcrafted bird you'll be proud to display.



What you will need

Before you start, gather the tools and materials for this project. The most important items include carving tools and a block of soft wood. Basswood and pine are excellent choices for beginners because they are easy to carve and have a smooth grain.

If you're new to carving, consider using pre-cut bird blanks. These roughly shaped pieces save you time and help you focus on refining details. You'll also need:

- **Carving knives:** A whittling knife for shaping the bird's body and a detail knife for intricate cuts.
- **Wood chisels and gouges:** For removing excess wood and creating smooth, rounded shapes.
- **A V-tool:** Perfect for adding texture and narrow cuts.
- **Sharpeners:** Maintain the edges of your tools with a leather strop and polishing compound.
- **Sandpaper:** To smooth out the bird's surface, use progressively finer grits.
- **Templates and patterns:** Use printed or hand-drawn designs for accuracy.
- **Paint or wax:** Decide whether to add colour or leave the natural wood finish.

Don't forget safety gear: gloves or safety tape to protect your hands, a dust mask to avoid inhaling particles, and goggles to shield your eyes.

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Choose the right wood

Start by selecting wood that's free from knots or defects. Identify local woods that are ideal for their softness and ease of carving, making them perfect for detailed work. For beginners in South Africa, yellowwood, pearwood, and South African sapele are top choices because of their ease of carving and fine grain textures. Local woods like African Wild Olive and Black Stinkwood offer unique grains and are beginner-friendly, providing both ease of carving and beautiful finishes. Ensure the piece of wood is appropriately sized for your project.

Step 2: Use templates or patterns

Transfer your bird design onto the wood using a template or pattern. These can be drawn by hand or printed and traced. Patterns guide your carving and ensure symmetry. You'll find free bird carving templates online or you can design your own to add a personal touch.

Step 3: Remove excess wood

With your pattern in place, begin carving away excess wood. Use chisels or a carving knife to roughly outline the bird's shape. Work carefully along the edges and avoid cutting too deep, as this can affect the proportions.

Step 4: Shape the bird

Once the outline is complete, refine the bird's shape. Use a whittling knife to sculpt the body, beak, and tail. Pay attention to proportions and carve small sections at a time. Step back frequently to view your work from different angles, ensuring the shape aligns with your pattern.

Step 5: Smooth the surface

After carving, sand the bird to achieve a smooth finish. Begin with coarse sandpaper to remove rough patches,

then move to finer grits for a polished look. This step is essential for preparing the wood for painting or waxing.

Step 6: Add the finishing touch

Decide whether to paint or wax your bird. Paint allows for vibrant, lifelike details, while wax enhances the natural grain of the wood. If you choose wax, apply a layer of beeswax with a soft cloth, let it dry, and then buff it to a shine. This not only protects the wood

but also highlights its natural beauty.

Step 7: Admire your creation

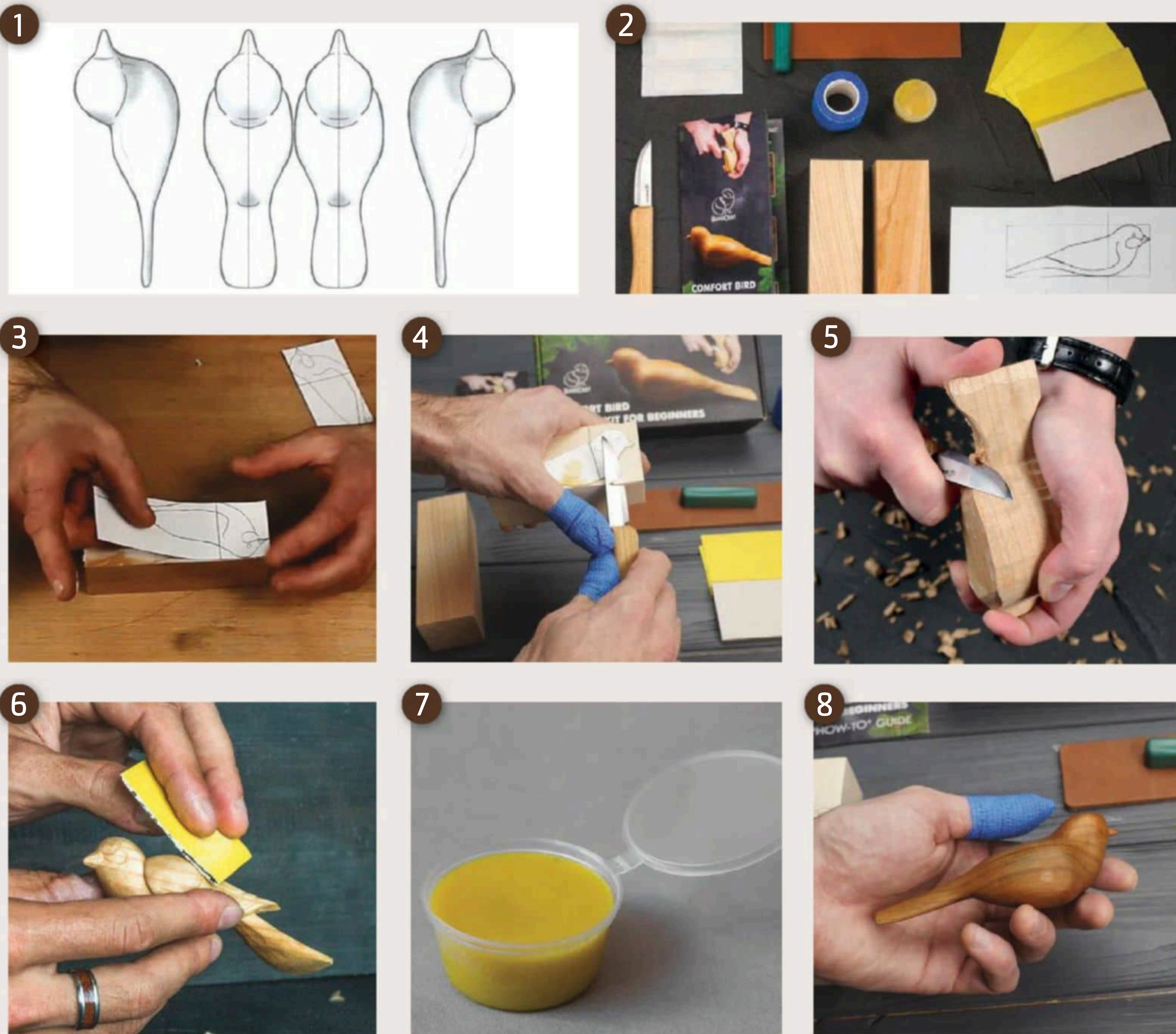
Your wooden bird is complete! Take pride in your work and consider displaying it in your home or giving it as a meaningful gift. Each carving is a testament to your creativity and patience.

Looking back

Carving a wooden bird is a fantastic way to combine your love for nature with

your passion for crafting. With the right tools, materials, and techniques, you can create a unique piece of art that reflects your personal style.

Take your time, enjoy the process, and don't be afraid to make mistakes – they're part of learning. Whether it's your first bird or one of many, each carving will bring joy and satisfaction as you hone your skills and create something truly special.



1. Before you start carving, you need to gather the right materials and tools 2. One of the best ways to start carving a bird is by using a template or pattern as a guide 3. Bird carving begins with attaching a printed pattern to your wood, providing a clear guide for shaping 4. Once you have traced the pattern onto the wood, it's time to start carving 5. With the excess wood removed, it's time to start shaping the bird 6. After shaping the bird, it's time to sand it 7. Beeswax not only provides a protective coating but also brings out the natural colours and patterns of the wood 8. Enjoy the outcome of your efforts and share it with your loved ones



What you really need to know about going solar.

SOLAR MYTHS DEBUNKED

Solar power is steadily gaining popularity as a sustainable and cost-effective energy source. However, several misconceptions about solar energy still deter many homeowners from embracing it. These myths often stem from outdated information or a lack of understanding about modern solar technology.

In this comprehensive guide, we'll explore and debunk some of the most common myths about solar power, backed by research and real-world examples. By the end, you'll have a clearer picture of what going solar entails and why it could be a great choice for your home.

Myth 1: Solar panels are too expensive

One of the most persistent myths about solar energy is that installing a solar power system is prohibitively expensive. While it's true that solar panels used to come with a hefty price tag, the cost of solar installations has dropped significantly over the past decade.

The truth about costs

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the cost of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems has fallen by more than 80% since 2010. This decline is due to technological advancements, increased manufacturing efficiency, and government incentives. In many regions, homeowners can now install a solar system for a fraction of what it once cost.

Incentives and financing options

Many governments offer subsidies, tax credits, or rebates to make solar installations more affordable. For example, in South Africa, the government has introduced tax incentives for solar energy systems, allowing homeowners to claim back a percentage of their installation costs.

Additionally, financing options like solar loans or leasing arrangements make it possible for homeowners to go solar with little or no upfront cost. These options allow you to spread the investment over several years while benefiting from reduced electricity bills immediately.

Real-world example

A homeowner in Johannesburg installed a 5 kW solar system with a battery backup at a cost of R130,000. After claiming the government rebate and accounting for monthly electricity savings, their net cost dropped significantly, and they expect to break even within seven years.

Myth 2: Solar panels don't work in cloudy or cold weather

Many people believe that solar panels only work in sunny, hot climates, leading to doubts about their efficiency in areas with variable weather.

The truth about solar efficiency

Solar panels generate electricity from sunlight, not heat. This means they can work efficiently even in cooler temperatures or on cloudy days. In fact, solar panels often perform better in cooler climates because excessive heat can reduce their efficiency.

While direct sunlight produces the most energy, diffused light on overcast days still allows solar panels to generate electricity. High-quality solar panels are designed to be efficient in a range of weather conditions, ensuring consistent performance year-round.

Real-world performance

Countries like Germany and the United Kingdom, which experience frequent cloudy weather, are among the global

leaders in solar energy adoption. Germany alone generates over 40% of its electricity from renewable sources, with a significant portion coming from solar power.

Myth 3: Solar panels require constant maintenance

Another common misconception is that solar panels are high-maintenance and require frequent repairs or cleaning.

The truth about maintenance

Solar panels are incredibly durable and designed to withstand harsh weather conditions, including hail, rain, and snow. Most systems come with warranties lasting 20-25 years, reflecting their long-term reliability.

Maintenance primarily involves keeping the panels clean to ensure maximum efficiency. In many cases, natural rainfall is enough to remove dust and debris. In drier areas, occasional cleaning with water and a soft brush is sufficient.

Monitoring and repairs

Modern solar systems often include monitoring apps that allow homeowners to track energy production and detect potential issues early. Inverters, which convert solar energy into usable electricity, may need replacement every 10-15 years, but this is a straightforward and relatively low-cost process.

Myth 4: Solar energy can't power a home at night

A common question about solar energy is how it works at night when there is no sunlight.

The truth about energy storage

While solar panels don't produce electricity at night, this doesn't mean your home will be without power. During the day, excess energy generated by your solar panels can be stored in a battery system for use after sunset. Batteries like the Tesla Powerwall or locally manufactured options are becoming more affordable and efficient, allowing for seamless energy storage.

Grid-tied systems

Homes with grid-tied solar systems can still draw power from the electricity grid at night. In many cases, net metering allows homeowners to sell excess daytime energy back to the grid, offsetting their nighttime electricity usage.

Real-world example

A Cape Town homeowner with a hybrid solar system reports that their battery storage covers 80% of their nighttime energy needs, and any shortfall is met with grid power. As a result, their monthly electricity bill has been reduced by over 70%.

Myth 5: Solar panels will damage my roof

Some homeowners worry that installing solar panels will cause leaks or structural damage to their roofs.

The truth about installation

When installed correctly by certified professionals, solar panels will not damage your roof. In fact, they can help protect the roof by shielding it from direct sunlight and weather exposure, potentially extending its lifespan.

Mounting systems are designed to ensure minimal impact, with brackets securely anchored to the roof. Proper sealing prevents leaks, and panels can even be removed and reinstalled if roofing repairs are needed in the future.

Flat vs pitched roofs

Solar panels can be installed on various roof types, including flat and pitched roofs. For flat roofs, mounting systems are angled to maximise sun exposure without compromising structural integrity.

Myth 6: Solar power isn't reliable

The perception that solar energy is unreliable stems from concerns about weather variability and grid independence.

The truth about reliability

Modern solar systems are more reliable than ever, thanks to advancements in technology. High-quality panels and inverters are built to last for decades, and energy storage solutions provide backup power during outages or at night. Hybrid systems combine solar energy with grid power, ensuring a constant energy supply.

Myth 7: Solar panels are bad for the environment

Some critics argue that the manufacturing and disposal of solar panels have a negative environmental impact.

The truth about sustainability

While manufacturing solar panels involves energy and resources, their lifetime environmental benefits far outweigh these initial costs.



Solar panels produce clean energy, reducing carbon emissions and dependence on fossil fuels. Additionally, the industry is moving towards more sustainable practices, including recycling old panels to recover valuable materials.

Myth 8: Solar panels will make my house look unattractive

Some homeowners hesitate to install solar panels because they believe the panels will negatively affect their home’s appearance or curb appeal.

The truth about aesthetics

Modern solar panels are sleeker and more visually appealing than older models. Black-on-black panels with a frameless design are particularly popular for their minimalist look. Installers can position panels strategically to blend with rooflines or even opt for building-integrated photovoltaics (BIPV), such as solar shingles, which mimic traditional roofing materials.

Real-world adaptation

Homeowners associations or heritage sites that restrict visible installations often permit creative solutions like ground-mounted systems or panels on less-visible parts of the roof. With customised installations, solar panels can complement rather than detract from your home’s appearance.

Myth 9: Solar power isn’t suitable for urban areas

Many believe solar power is only effective in rural or suburban areas with ample space and minimal shading, leaving urban dwellers to think it’s not a viable option.

The truth about urban solar potential

Urban environments can benefit greatly from solar power. Rooftop solar panels on buildings, garages, or even balconies can generate substantial electricity. Moreover, shared solar systems in urban areas, like community solar farms, allow individuals without adequate roof space to benefit from solar energy.

Solar panel technology is also advancing to handle partial shading efficiently, making urban installations more practical than ever.

Real-world solutions

Cities worldwide are embracing urban solar projects. For example, apartment blocks in New York City are installing shared rooftop systems that allow tenants to access renewable energy without individual installations.

Myth 10: Solar panels will completely eliminate my electricity bill

While solar panels significantly reduce electricity costs,

some people mistakenly believe they’ll never have an electricity bill again.

The truth about energy independence

Most homeowners with grid-tied solar systems still receive an electricity bill, albeit much smaller. This bill may cover:

- **Minimal grid usage:** For nighttime power if you lack battery storage.
- **Service fees:** Costs to remain connected to the grid, even if you don’t use grid electricity often.

Net-zero possibility

Reaching a “net-zero” electricity bill is possible if your system generates more energy than you consume and local regulations allow you to sell the excess back to the grid. However, achieving this often depends on having a larger system or advanced energy storage.

Real-world example

A Pretoria homeowner with a 6 kW solar system sees monthly bills reduced by 90%, but the small remaining cost is due to grid service fees. The system will fully pay for itself in under 8 years while providing substantial savings.

Encouraging homeowners to go solar

By debunking these myths, it’s clear that solar energy is a viable, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly option for homeowners. Investing in solar power not only reduces electricity bills but also contributes to a sustainable future.

Solar energy is a long-term investment that pays dividends in energy savings and environmental benefits. For homeowners looking to embrace renewable energy, the time to go solar is now.

**The components of a solar system:
what you will need**

1. Solar panels

Solar panels are the heart of any solar system. Made up of photovoltaic (PV) cells, they capture sunlight and convert it into direct current (DC) electricity. Panels come in various types, with monocrystalline panels offering higher efficiency and a sleeker look, while polycrystalline panels are more budget-friendly.

2. Inverter

The electricity generated by solar panels is in DC, but most household appliances run on alternating current (AC). An inverter converts DC electricity into usable AC power for your home. There are different types of inverters, including string inverters for multiple panels and microinverters that optimise the performance of each panel individually.

3. Battery storage

While not essential for grid-tied systems, batteries are crucial for storing excess energy to use during the night or during power outages. Lithium-ion batteries are the most popular due to their efficiency, longer lifespan, and compact size. Batteries like the Tesla Powerwall or locally manufactured options provide seamless backup power.

4. Charge controller

In systems with battery storage, a charge controller regulates the flow of electricity between the solar panels and the batteries. It ensures that batteries are charged efficiently without overcharging, which can damage them.

5. Mounting system

Solar panels need a secure mounting system to fix them to your roof or ground. Roof-mounted systems are the most common, with options for pitched or flat roofs. Ground-mounted systems work well for properties with ample outdoor space. Adjustable mounts can help optimise the angle for maximum sun exposure.

6. Monitoring system

A monitoring system lets you track the performance of your solar setup in real-time. Many inverters come with built-in



monitoring features accessible via apps, helping you detect any inefficiencies or issues early on.

7. Connection to the grid (for grid-tied systems)

If you're not going completely off-grid, your solar system will need to be connected to the local electricity grid. This allows you to draw power during low-production periods and sell excess energy back to the grid through net metering.

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Cement is one of the most versatile and durable materials for DIY enthusiasts. Whether you're crafting planters, making stepping stones, or building furniture, cement offers endless possibilities for creative projects.

CONCRETE CREATIONS:

A guide to working with cement

With the right tools, techniques, and a little know-how, working with cement can be straightforward and incredibly rewarding. This guide will walk you through everything you need to know to get started with cement in your DIY creations.

Choosing the right cement for your project

Understanding the type of cement that suits your project is the first step in ensuring success. Cement comes in several forms, each suited to specific uses.

General-purpose cement is the most commonly used and is perfect for everyday projects like planters, coasters, and small decorative items. It provides a good balance of strength and ease of use, making it ideal for beginners.

Quick-setting cement is excellent for projects where time is a constraint, such as repairs or small crafts. This type of cement sets much faster than traditional options, often within minutes. However, its quick curing time means you need to work efficiently and prepare everything in advance.

Coloured cement can add a creative flair to your work. With pigments blended into the mix, it's possible to achieve vibrant or subtle hues to match your style. This type of cement is particularly effective for decorative items like tiles, stepping stones, or garden ornaments.

It's always a good idea to read the packaging carefully, as it will provide important information on the cement's working time, strength, and recommended uses. Selecting the right type for your project will save you time and frustration later.

Tools and materials you'll need

Having the right tools and materials on hand can make your cement project smoother and more enjoyable. A mixing container, such as a sturdy plastic bucket, is essential for combining your materials. Avoid using containers that you might need for food, as cement can be difficult to clean off completely.

A trowel or mixing stick is crucial for blending the cement thoroughly. A sturdy wooden stick can work for smaller batches, while a proper trowel is better suited to larger projects. Measuring cups or a scale ensure that you get the correct ratios of cement, sand, and aggregate. Precision is important because too much or too little of any component can compromise the final product's durability.

If your project involves shaping cement, moulds are a must-have. Silicone moulds are flexible and easy to demould, making them perfect for intricate shapes. Plastic or wooden moulds are better for larger items like stepping stones or furniture bases.

Safety should always be a priority when working with cement. Wear gloves to protect your skin, as cement can cause irritation or burns. A dust mask and safety goggles are also essential to protect yourself from inhaling cement dust or getting particles in your eyes.

Mixing cement

Properly mixing cement is a critical step in ensuring a successful outcome for your project. The standard ratio for most projects is 1:2:3 – one part cement, two parts sand, and three parts aggregate. However, for smaller decorative items like planters, you might not need aggregate at all, simplifying the mix to just cement and sand.

Start by measuring your dry ingredients and combining them in your mixing container. Stir thoroughly to ensure an even distribution. Slowly add water to the mixture, stirring continuously. Be cautious with the amount of water you add – a thick, paste-like consistency is ideal. Too much water will weaken the mix, while too little can make it difficult to work with.

It's worth noting that you should only mix as much cement as you can use within 30-45 minutes, depending on the type. Cement begins to harden once water is added, so working in smaller batches can prevent wastage.

Using moulds

Moulds are a fantastic way to shape cement into beautiful, functional pieces. Preparing your moulds beforehand is crucial to ensure a smooth process. Applying a release agent, such as cooking oil, petroleum jelly, or specialised mould release spray, will prevent the cement from sticking, making it much easier to demould your finished product.

When pouring the cement into the mould, take your time to avoid introducing air bubbles. Tapping the mould gently on a surface can help release trapped air, creating a smoother finish. For intricate designs, you can use a stick or a spatula to push the cement into smaller areas of the mould.

Once poured, level the surface with a trowel to achieve a clean, even finish. Allow the cement to cure in the mould for at least 24 to 48 hours. Keep in mind that larger or thicker projects may require more curing time.

Finishing touches

After the cement has cured, carefully remove it from the mould. For rigid moulds, gently tap the sides to loosen the cement before pulling it out. Inspect your creation for any rough edges or imperfections. Sanding these areas with fine-grit sandpaper or a concrete sanding pad will give your project a smooth, professional appearance.

Adding a sealant is highly recommended, particularly for items exposed to water or outdoor elements. A concrete sealant will protect your creation from moisture, stains,

and cracking, extending its lifespan. You can also add decorative finishes, such as paint, metallic leaf, or engraving, to personalise your work further.

Inspiring project ideas

The versatility of cement makes it suitable for a wide variety of DIY projects. Here are some ideas to get you inspired:

Mini planters are one of the most popular beginner projects. They are perfect for succulents or small herbs and can be made in a variety of shapes and sizes. Try using silicone cupcake moulds or plastic containers as your moulds.

Stepping stones allow for creativity and personalisation. You can embed colourful tiles, pebbles, or even handprints to make each stone unique. These make a wonderful addition to gardens or pathways.

Concrete trays are a stylish and functional way to organise your space. Use them to hold keys, candles, or desk supplies. Experiment with adding patterns using tape or stencils before the cement sets.

For those feeling more ambitious, try crafting larger furniture pieces, such as side tables or stools. Combining cement bases with wooden or glass tops can create striking, modern designs.

Final thoughts

Working with cement is an accessible and rewarding way to explore your creativity. With a little preparation and practice, you can create durable, beautiful items that are as functional as they are stylish. Whether you're a seasoned DIY enthusiast or just starting out, cement offers endless possibilities for projects of all sizes.

So, grab your gloves, mix up some cement, and let your imagination take shape. The only limit is what you can dream up.



For those feeling ambitious, try crafting larger furniture pieces



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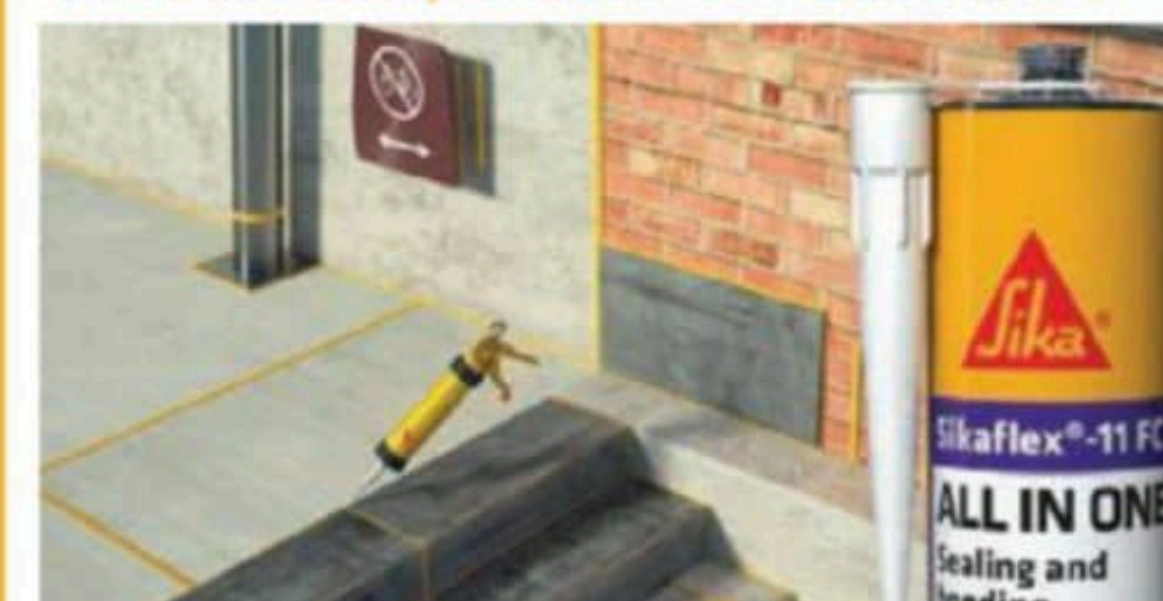
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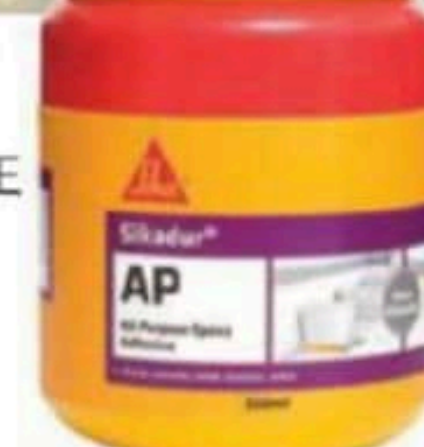
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Metalworking is an ancient craft that has evolved into a sophisticated art and science. From decorative jewellery to robust home furnishings and intricate machinery components, working with metal allows creators to bring precision and functionality to their projects.

METALWORKING MARVELS: Essential tools and techniques

If you're curious about exploring this fascinating world, this guide will introduce you to essential tools and techniques to get started, while also sharing tips for achieving professional results.

Tips for beginners

1. **Start small:** Choose simple projects like keychains, plant stands, or tool organisers to build your skills and confidence.
2. **Use scrap metal:** Practising on offcuts or discarded materials is a cost-effective way to refine your techniques without pressure.
3. **Invest wisely:** Begin with basic tools and upgrade as you take on more advanced projects.
4. **Practice patience:** Metalworking requires precision, and rushing can lead to mistakes or injuries. Take your time to ensure accuracy.
5. **Learn from others:** Join workshops, watch tutorials, or connect with local metalworking groups to gain insights and inspiration.

Project inspiration

If you're wondering where to start, here are some beginner-friendly metalworking projects:

- **Custom metal signs:** Create decorative nameplates or house numbers using sheet metal and stencils.

- **Tool rack:** Build a wall-mounted rack for your tools to keep your workspace organised.
- **Metal lanterns:** Design unique lanterns by cutting patterns into sheet metal and adding a light source.
- **Planter stands:** Weld or rivet rods and plates into stylish plant stands for indoor or outdoor use.
- **Jewellery:** Experiment with soldering and shaping to make bracelets, earrings, or necklaces.

Why metalworking?

The appeal of metalworking lies in its versatility. Unlike other materials, metal offers strength, durability, and a clean aesthetic that suits a range of styles. Whether you're crafting functional items like brackets and hinges or decorative pieces like sculptures and ornaments, metalworking allows for limitless creativity. With a few essential tools and an understanding of basic techniques, you can turn raw metal into works of art or practical solutions for everyday life.



ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR METALWORKING

Before diving into techniques, equipping yourself with the right tools is essential for successful metalworking. The tools you choose will depend on your project's complexity and scale, but certain items are universally useful. A good set of basic tools ensures precision, efficiency, and safety while working with metal. Here's a deeper look at the tools you'll need:

Cutting tools

Cutting is one of the most fundamental aspects of metalworking, and having the right tools ensures clean, precise results.

- **Hacksaw:** A hacksaw is a classic manual cutting tool that every metalworker should have. It's affordable, portable, and versatile. Hacksaws work well for cutting small pipes, rods, or flat sheets of metal, especially when precision and control are important. Always use a blade suited for metal, and keep spare blades on hand since they can wear out over time.
- **Angle grinder:** This power tool is a must for larger or more demanding cutting tasks. With the appropriate cutting disc, an angle grinder can easily slice through thick metal sheets, bars, and pipes. It's also great for more intricate jobs, such as cutting curves or bevels. Make sure to use it with proper safety gear, as sparks and debris are common.
- **Metal shears:** For those working primarily with sheet metal, shears are indispensable. Manual shears resemble heavy-duty scissors, while electric shears allow for quicker, fatigue-free cutting. Both are ideal for clean, straight cuts and are a safer option than power saws for beginners.
- **Plasma cutter:** If you're tackling advanced or large-scale projects, a plasma cutter can make precise cuts in thick metals. It uses electrically conductive gas to cut through metal effortlessly, but it's an investment best suited for experienced metalworkers or those planning extensive projects.

Measuring and marking tools

Accuracy is key in metalworking, so having reliable measuring and marking tools is critical to achieving precise results.

- **Steel ruler and tape measure:** These are the backbone of any metalworking project. A steel ruler provides accurate measurements and can double as a straight edge for marking lines. Tape measures are better for longer measurements or when working on large pieces.
- **Centre punch:** A centre punch is a pointed tool used to create small indentations at drilling points. These indentations guide the drill bit, preventing it from slipping and ensuring accuracy. Some centre punches are spring-loaded, making them easier to use.

- **Scriber:** A scriber is used to mark precise lines on metal surfaces. Unlike pencils or markers, the scriber creates permanent marks that won't smudge or fade during cutting or shaping.

Drilling and fastening tools

Many metalworking projects involve joining pieces together, and having the right tools ensures strong, durable connections.

- **Electric drill and drill bits:** Drills are essential for creating holes in metal for bolts, screws, or decorative purposes. Look for drill bits made specifically for metal, such as cobalt or titanium-coated bits, as they are durable and designed to handle hard surfaces. Cordless drills offer flexibility, while bench drills provide stability and precision for detailed work.
- **Pop rivet gun:** Riveting is an effective way to join two pieces of thin metal. A pop rivet gun is a simple tool that pulls rivets through pre-drilled holes, creating a secure bond. It's perfect for projects like sheet metal work, where welding isn't practical.
- **Threading tools:** Taps and dies are used to create internal and external threads for screws and bolts. They are essential for projects requiring assembly, such as furniture or mechanical components. Always use cutting fluid with these tools to ensure smooth operation and prolong their life.

Shaping and bending tools

Metalworking often requires shaping and bending metal into the desired form. The right tools make this process more precise and less labour-intensive.

- **Vice and clamps:** A sturdy bench vice holds your material securely while you work, freeing your hands and allowing for greater control. Clamps are also essential for securing metal to your workspace during cutting, drilling, or bending.
- **Bench anvil:** An anvil provides a solid surface for hammering and shaping metal. Small bench anvils are sufficient for most DIY projects, but larger anvils are available for more extensive work.
- **Metal bender:** A metal bender is a specialised tool for creating precise bends in rods, tubes, or sheets. Some benders are manual and rely on physical force, while others are hydraulic, making them suitable for heavier or thicker metals.



An anvil provides a solid surface for hammering and shaping metal. Small bench anvils are sufficient for most DIY projects, but larger anvils are available for more extensive work

Finishing tools

Finishing tools are essential for refining your work, removing imperfections, and adding the final touches to make your project stand out.

- **Files:** Metal files are used to smooth rough edges and remove burrs left from cutting or drilling. They come in various shapes and sizes, such as flat, round, and triangular, allowing you to tackle a range of surfaces and corners.
- **Sandpaper and sanding blocks:** Sandpaper is essential for achieving a smooth finish. Start with coarse grits to remove significant imperfections and progress to finer grits for a polished surface. Sanding blocks make it easier to maintain even pressure while sanding.
- **Polishing tools:** For a professional finish, rotary polishers or buffing wheels can bring a shine to your metalwork. These tools are particularly useful for decorative items like jewellery or sculptures. Use polishing compounds to enhance the shine further and protect the surface from tarnish.

Safety tools

While not directly involved in the crafting process, safety tools are just as important as any other tool in your kit.

- **Safety goggles:** Protect your eyes from flying debris, sparks, and metal fragments.
- **Gloves:** Heavy-duty gloves shield your hands from sharp edges, heat, and abrasions. Look for gloves specifically designed for metalworking, as they balance protection with dexterity.
- **Dust mask or respirator:** Cutting, grinding, and sanding can produce fine metal particles that are harmful if inhaled. A dust mask or respirator prevents exposure to these particles.
- **Hearing protection:** Power tools like angle grinders and drills can be loud, so earplugs or earmuffs are essential for prolonged use.



Building your toolkit

Starting with the basics and gradually expanding your toolkit as you gain experience is the best approach.

While some tools, like hammers and files, are relatively inexpensive, others, like power drills and angle grinders, can represent a significant investment. Prioritise tools based on the type of projects you plan to undertake, and consider renting specialised equipment for one-off tasks.

By understanding the purpose and use of each tool, you'll be better equipped to tackle metalworking projects with confidence and precision.

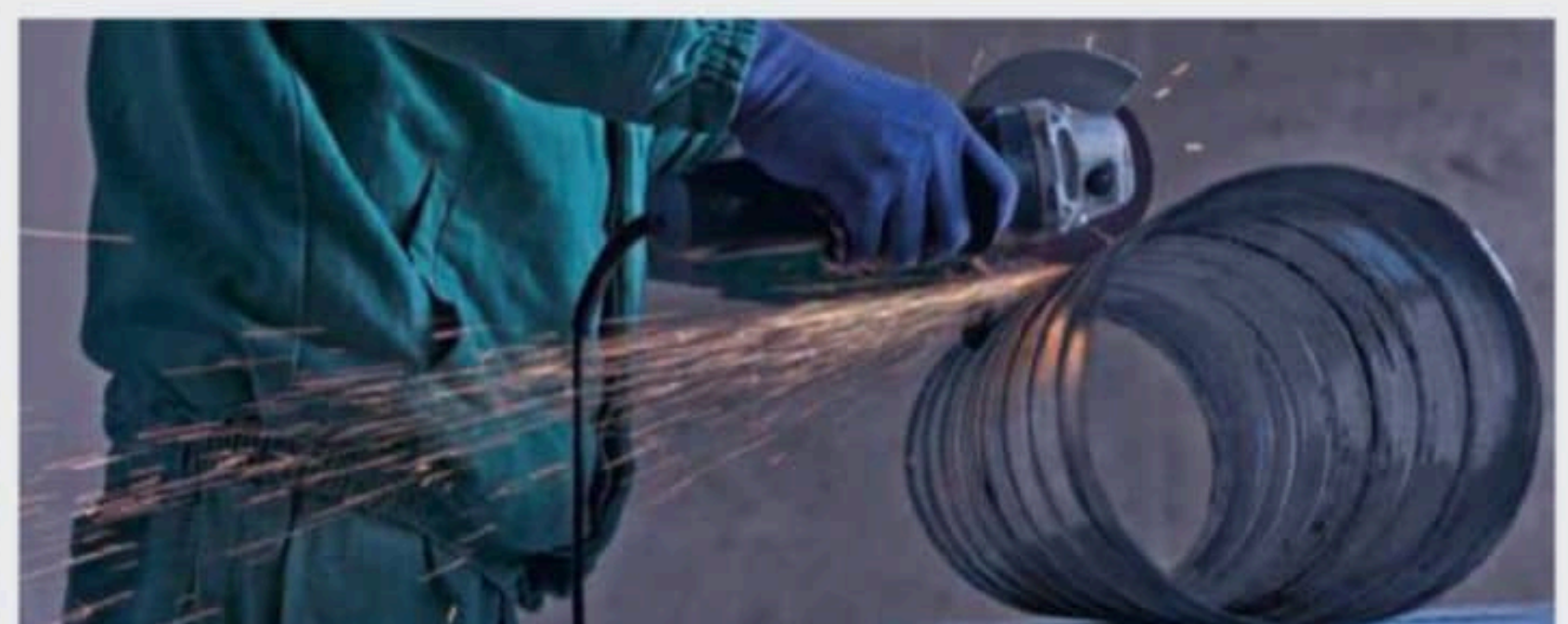
Key techniques in metalworking

Metalworking involves a variety of techniques to cut, join, shape, and finish metals. Mastering these basics will set you on the path to success.

Cutting and sawing

Cutting is often the first step in any metalworking project. For thin sheet metal, use shears for clean, straight cuts.

For thicker or more complex shapes, an angle grinder or hacksaw works best. Always clamp your material securely before cutting to prevent movement.



For intricate designs, consider using a jigsaw with metal-cutting blades. This tool is perfect for creating detailed patterns or curves.

Drilling and punching

Drilling is essential for creating holes in metal, whether for assembly or decorative purposes. Start by marking the drilling point with a centre punch to ensure the drill bit doesn't slip. Use a slow speed setting on your drill for precise, clean holes.

For repetitive tasks or large-scale projects, consider a bench drill or a hydraulic hole punch. These tools offer greater precision and reduce physical strain.

Joining metal

There are several methods to join metal, each suited to different projects:

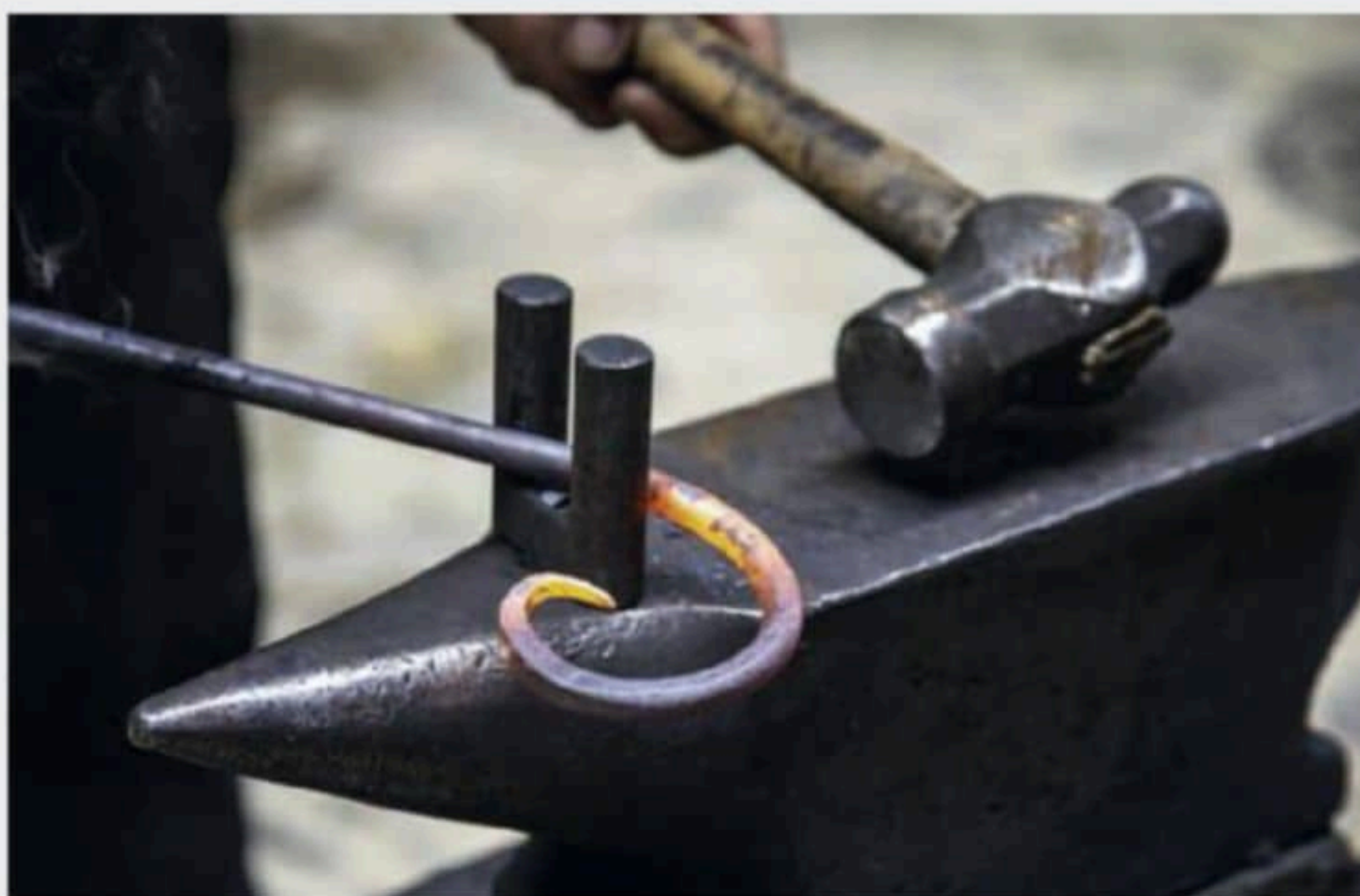
- **Riveting:** Perfect for creating permanent joins in thin sheets of metal. Pop rivets are quick and easy to use.
- **Soldering:** Ideal for smaller pieces or delicate work like jewellery making. A soldering iron melts filler metal to bond two pieces together.
- **Welding:** For heavy-duty joins, welding provides exceptional strength. Options include MIG, TIG, and arc welding, depending on the metal type and project requirements.



Shaping and bending

Shaping metal involves bending, folding, or hammering it into the desired form. A bench vice and clamps will secure your material while you work. For small bends, a hammer and anvil are often sufficient, but for precise angles or curves, use a dedicated metal bender.

If you're working with sheet metal, score the surface lightly along the bend line to create a cleaner fold. Heat can also make thicker metals more pliable, but always exercise caution when working with high temperatures.



Finishing and polishing

Finishing is where your project transforms from raw material to a polished product. Begin by filing down sharp edges left from cutting or drilling. Use sandpaper in progressively finer grits to achieve a smooth surface.

For decorative projects, consider using a buffing wheel to add shine. If your project is functional, like a tool or furniture piece, a protective coating such as paint, lacquer, or powder coating will prevent rust and wear.



Safety first

Metalworking involves tools and techniques that can pose safety risks, so taking precautions is essential. Always wear safety goggles to protect your eyes from flying debris and a dust mask when sanding or grinding. Heavy-duty gloves will shield your hands from sharp edges and hot surfaces.

Ensure your workspace is well-ventilated, particularly when soldering, welding, or using chemical treatments. Keep a fire extinguisher nearby, especially if you're working with heat or flammable materials.

Wrapping it all up

Metalworking is a rewarding craft that combines creativity with precision. By understanding the essential tools and mastering key techniques, you can bring your ideas to life, whether they're decorative, functional, or both.

As with any skill, practice is key. Start with simple projects and work your way up to more complex designs. Over time, you'll gain the confidence to tackle ambitious ideas and explore the full potential of this incredible craft. So, gather your tools, ignite your creativity, and let the world of metalworking inspire you!



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 DIY window upgrades
and repairs.

WINDOW WONDERLAND

Windows are more than just functional parts of a home – they’re key design elements that influence your comfort, security, and energy efficiency. From letting in natural light to framing the view outdoors, windows are central to any living space. However, like any feature of a home, they require upkeep and sometimes an upgrade. By investing time and effort into improving or repairing your windows, you can achieve significant enhancements in both their appearance and performance.

This guide explores practical ways to upgrade and repair your windows, turning them into standout features while improving your home’s efficiency and value.

The anatomy of a window

Before tackling any upgrades or repairs, it’s essential to understand how windows function. Each component plays a critical role in their performance:

- **Frame:** The outer structure that provides stability and support. It’s typically made from wood, aluminium, or vinyl, each offering different advantages.
- **Sash:** The movable section that holds the glass, allowing the window to open and close.
- **Glazing:** The glass itself. Modern windows often use double or triple glazing to improve insulation and reduce noise.
- **Weatherstripping:** The seal around the edges of the window, preventing drafts and moisture from entering.
- **Hardware:** Includes locks, hinges, and handles that ensure smooth operation and security.

Understanding these elements helps in diagnosing issues and planning upgrades more effectively.

Boosting energy efficiency

Energy-efficient windows can make a noticeable difference in reducing utility bills and maintaining a comfortable indoor temperature. One of the simplest upgrades is adding or replacing weatherstripping. Over time, seals can wear out, leading to drafts and higher energy costs. Replacing old weatherstripping is straightforward: remove the damaged material, clean the area, and apply new foam tape, rubber, or V-strip to create a tight seal.

Window films are another affordable way to improve energy efficiency. These films block harmful UV rays, reduce heat gain during summer, and help retain warmth in winter. Applying them involves cleaning the glass, spraying it with soapy water, and carefully smoothing the film in place to avoid bubbles.

For homeowners seeking a long-term solution, upgrading to double or triple glazing is highly effective. These options provide excellent insulation and significantly reduce noise pollution, though they require professional installation.

Enhancing window aesthetics

Windows play a crucial role in your home’s design, and upgrading their appearance can elevate the overall look of your living space. Repainting window frames is a simple yet impactful way to refresh their appearance. Start by scraping away old paint and sanding the surface smooth. Fill any cracks with wood filler, then apply a primer before finishing with a durable, weather-resistant paint.

For a more dramatic transformation, consider adding decorative mouldings or trims. These can be installed around the frame to create a polished, custom look. Lightweight materials like MDF

or polystyrene are easy to cut and attach with adhesive or nails, making this an accessible project for DIY enthusiasts.

Window treatments, such as curtains, blinds, or shutters, can further enhance aesthetics while adding functionality. Opt for designs that maximise natural light while offering privacy and insulation.

Functional upgrades for convenience and security

Functionality and security are vital aspects of window upgrades. Replacing outdated hardware, such as locks, handles, and hinges, not only improves usability but also enhances safety. Look for modern options with added security features, such as key-operated locks or tamper-proof designs.

Installing window restrictors is particularly useful for homes with children. These devices limit how far a window can open, preventing accidents while maintaining ventilation.

If you want to increase convenience, consider upgrading to tilt-and-turn windows. These versatile designs allow you to tilt the window inward for controlled airflow or open it fully for easy cleaning. While retrofitting tilt-and-turn mechanisms can be complex, the added functionality is well worth the effort.

Tackling common repairs

Windows can develop a range of issues over time, from sticking to broken glass or leaks. Addressing these problems promptly ensures they remain functional and efficient.

Fixing a stuck window is often straightforward. Sticking is usually caused by paint buildup, debris in the tracks, or swollen wood. For painted windows, carefully cut through the paint seal with a utility knife. Sliding windows may just need the tracks cleaned and lubricated, while swollen wooden frames can be sanded down and resealed.

Replacing broken glass is another common repair. Start by carefully removing the sash and any remaining shards of glass. Measure the opening accurately and order a replacement pane. Apply glazing putty to the frame, press the new glass into place, and secure it with glazing points before smoothing the putty around the edges for a clean finish.

Sealing leaks around windows is crucial to prevent water damage. Inspect the edges for gaps and fill them with silicone. For larger openings, expanding foam offers a durable solution.

Creative ways to enhance your windows

Beyond repairs and upgrades, windows provide an opportunity to get creative with your living space. Building a window seat can transform a sunny corner into a cosy reading nook. Use plywood for the structure, foam cushions for comfort, and fabric that matches your décor for a polished look.

Adding a window box is another way to bring charm to your home. Choose materials like rot-resistant wood or metal for durability, and fill the box with vibrant flowers, herbs, or succulents. Securely install brackets to ensure the box remains stable.

For added privacy without sacrificing light, frosted glass effects are a great DIY project. Use frosted spray paint or adhesive film to create an elegant, opaque finish on bathroom or street-facing windows.

Maintaining your windows

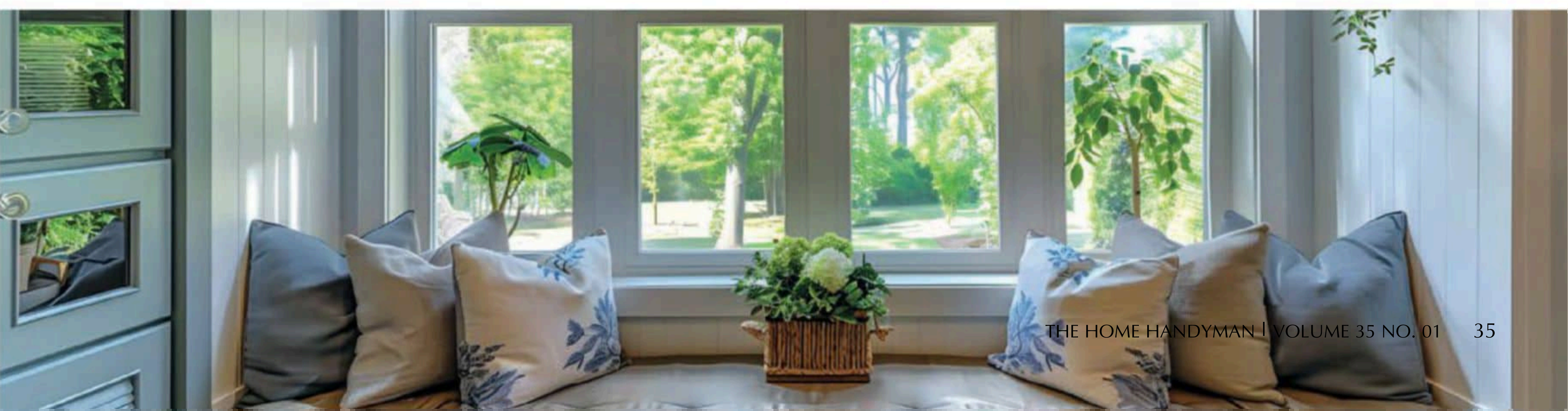
Keeping your windows in good condition requires regular maintenance. Start by cleaning the glass and frames with a mild detergent to remove dirt and grime. Inspect seals and weatherstripping for signs of wear and replace them if necessary. Lubricate hinges, locks, and tracks with silicone spray to ensure smooth operation.

Exterior windows may need repainting every few years to protect against weather damage. Sand and clean the frames before applying a fresh coat of paint designed for outdoor use. Establishing a consistent maintenance routine will prolong the life of your windows and keep them looking their best.

The impact of upgrading your windows

Upgrading and repairing your windows is a worthwhile investment, both in terms of functionality and aesthetics. Simple projects like adding weatherstripping, repainting frames, or replacing hardware can make a big difference in energy efficiency and overall appearance. Tackling repairs such as broken glass or leaks prevents further damage and keeps your home secure.

Creative enhancements like window seats, decorative trims, or frosted glass allow you to personalise your space while adding value to your home. Whether your goal is to improve energy efficiency, enhance security, or elevate your home's design, your windows offer endless opportunities for transformation. With the right approach and a bit of effort, you can turn your windows into true focal points of your living space.



Tips and techniques
for perfect walls.



PAINT LIKE A PRO

Painting a room is one of the most cost-effective and transformative DIY projects you can undertake. Whether you're refreshing your space with a new colour or preparing walls for a flawless finish, achieving professional results requires more than just slapping on a coat of paint.

With the right tools, preparation, and techniques, you can create a polished look that rivals a pro's work. In this guide, we'll cover everything you need to know to paint walls like an expert.

Advanced tips for a professional finish

1. Use colour strategically

Choose colours that complement your room's size and lighting. Light colours can make small spaces feel bigger, while bold shades create a dramatic effect in larger rooms.

2. Create an accent wall

For added visual interest, paint one wall a contrasting colour. Use painter's tape to create crisp lines and consider adding patterns like stripes or geometric designs.

3. Paint ceilings and trim

Don't forget the ceiling and trim—they're essential to achieving a cohesive look. Use flat paint for ceilings to

minimise glare and semi-gloss or gloss paint for trim to enhance durability and contrast.

4. Experiment with finishes

Different paint finishes create unique effects. Matte finishes hide imperfections, eggshell offers subtle sheen, and satin or gloss adds a polished look. Choose the finish that suits the purpose of your room.

5. Temperature and humidity matters

Avoid painting in extreme temperatures or high humidity, as these conditions can affect drying time and paint adhesion. Ideally, work in a well-ventilated space with moderate conditions.

Common mistakes to avoid

- **Skipping primer:** Primer evens out the surface and enhances paint adhesion—don't skip this step.
- **Overloading the brush or roller:** Too much paint can lead to drips and uneven coverage.
- **Painting over wet areas:** Let each coat dry completely to avoid smudging or peeling.
- **Ignoring the ceiling:** A freshly painted wall can highlight an old or discoloured ceiling.

Step 1: Preparation is key

A professional-quality paint job starts long before the paintbrush meets the wall. Proper preparation ensures the paint adheres well and lasts longer.

Assess the surface

Inspect your walls for imperfections, such as cracks, holes, or peeling paint. Patch small holes with filler, sand them smooth, and repair cracks with appropriate sealants. For peeling or flaking paint, scrape off the loose material and sand the area until it's smooth.

Clean the walls

Dust and grease can prevent paint from sticking properly. Wash your walls with a mild detergent or sugar soap solution to remove dirt and grime, then rinse with clean water. Allow the surface to dry completely before proceeding.

Protect surrounding areas

Professional painters know that neatness counts. Use painter's tape to mask off edges, baseboards, and trim. Lay down drop cloths to protect floors and furniture from drips and splatters.



Step 2: Choose the right tools and materials

Investing in quality tools and materials will make your painting process smoother and deliver better results.

Brushes and rollers

- **Brushes:** Use angled brushes for cutting in around edges and straight brushes for detailed work.
- **Rollers:** Choose rollers with the appropriate nap for your wall texture—short naps for smooth walls and longer naps for textured surfaces.

Paint quality

Opt for high-quality paint, even if it costs more. Premium paints provide better coverage, are easier to apply, and last longer than cheaper options.

Primer

Primer helps paint adhere better and enhances the finish, especially on new drywall, dark-coloured walls, or surfaces with stains. Choose a primer suitable for your wall type, such as stain-blocking or multi-purpose primer.

Step 3: Master the technique

Applying paint properly is just as important as choosing the right products.

Cutting in

Cutting in refers to painting the edges of walls where rollers can't reach, such as corners, ceilings, and trim. Use an angled brush and steady your hand for clean lines. A trick is to cut in one wall at a time and immediately follow with a roller to blend the edges seamlessly.



Rolling like a pro

- **Load the roller properly:** Dip it into the tray and roll off excess paint to avoid drips.
- **Start with a "W" pattern:** Roll the paint in a "W" shape, then fill in the gaps without lifting the roller.
- **Work in sections:** Divide the wall into small sections and complete one area before moving to the next to avoid visible lap marks.

Apply thin coats

It's better to apply two or three thin coats than one thick one. Thin layers dry evenly and are less likely to streak or drip. Allow each coat to dry completely before applying the next.

Step 4: Tackle common challenges

Dealing with uneven textures

If your walls have rough or uneven textures, use a thicker nap roller to reach into crevices. For an ultra-smooth finish, consider sanding the walls lightly between coats.

Avoiding brush marks

Minimise visible brush strokes by using a high-quality brush and applying paint with long, even strokes. Keep the brush slightly damp for a smoother application.

Handling paint drips

Catch drips immediately by smoothing them out with a roller or brush. Once dried, drips can be sanded down and repainted.

Step 5: Finishing touches

After the paint dries, add the final details to complete your project.

Remove tape carefully

Peel off painter's tape at a 45-degree angle while the paint is still slightly wet to prevent it from pulling off dried paint.

Clean your tools

Clean brushes and rollers thoroughly with water for water-based paints or with a suitable solvent for oil-based paints. Proper cleaning prolongs the life of your tools.

Inspect your work

Look for missed spots or uneven areas in natural light. Touch up imperfections with a small brush to achieve a consistent finish.

Understanding paint types and finishes

Choosing the right type of paint and finish is crucial to achieving a professional and long-lasting result. From latex and oil-based options to finishes like matte and gloss, each type serves a specific purpose and works best in certain areas. This guide will help you understand the differences and select the best combination for your project.

Types of paint

Latex paint (water-based)

Latex paint, often called water-based paint, is the most popular choice for both DIYers and professionals. It's versatile, easy to work with, and available in a wide range of colours and finishes.

Key features:

- **Quick drying:** Dries faster than oil-based paint, allowing for quicker project completion.
- **Low odour and low VOCs:** Better for indoor air quality, making it a safer option for living spaces.
- **Easy clean-up:** Can be cleaned with soap and water, no need for harsh chemicals.
- **Durability:** Modern latex paints are highly durable and resist cracking and fading over time.

Best used for:

- Interior walls and ceilings.
- Exterior walls when paired with weather-resistant formulas.
- Areas where low odour is important, such as bedrooms and nurseries.

Oil-based paint

Oil-based paint is known for its smooth finish and durability but is less commonly used today due to environmental concerns and a longer drying time.

Key features:

- **High durability:** Excellent for areas that need to withstand wear and tear.
- **Rich finish:** Provides a smooth, even coating with superior coverage.

- **Stain resistance:** Handles heavy scrubbing and cleaning better than latex paint.

Best used for:

- High-traffic areas like skirting boards, doors, and trim.
- Metal surfaces, as it adheres well and resists rust.
- Furniture or cabinetry where a hard, smooth finish is desired.

Drawbacks:

- Strong odour and higher levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
- Requires mineral spirits or turpentine for clean-up.
- Longer drying and curing times.

Specialty paints

For unique needs, specialty paints are designed to tackle specific challenges.

- **Chalk paint:** Ideal for furniture makeovers, offering a matte, vintage-style finish.
- **Masonry paint:** Formulated for brick, concrete, and stone surfaces.
- **Anti-mould paint:** Prevents mould growth in damp areas like bathrooms.

Paint finishes explained

The finish refers to the level of sheen a paint has once dried. The choice of finish affects not only the appearance but also the durability and cleanability of the surface.

Matte (flat) finish

Matte finishes have little to no sheen, giving a soft and velvety appearance. They are excellent at hiding imperfections but are less durable than other finishes.

Best used for:

- Low-traffic areas like bedrooms, formal living rooms, and ceilings.
- Walls with surface flaws, as the lack of reflection masks imperfections

Drawbacks:

- Difficult to clean, making it unsuitable for high-traffic or messy areas.

Eggshell finish

Eggshell has a subtle sheen, sitting between matte and satin. It's more durable than matte while still offering a sophisticated, soft look.

Best used for:

- Living rooms, dining rooms, and hallways.
- Areas where a bit more durability is needed without the shine of gloss.

Advantages:

- Easy to clean compared to matte finishes.
- Slight sheen enhances colour depth without being overpowering.

Satin finish

Satin is a versatile finish that balances a soft sheen with good durability. It's often a go-to for high-traffic areas in homes.

Best used for:

- Kitchens, bathrooms, and children's rooms.
- Trim and moulding, for a subtle shine that complements walls.

Advantages:

- Easy to clean, with better moisture resistance than eggshell.
- Reflects light subtly, adding a touch of elegance.

Semi-gloss finish

Semi-gloss finishes have a noticeable shine and are highly durable and moisture-resistant.

Best used for:

- High-humidity areas like kitchens and bathrooms.
- Trim, doors, and cabinets for a polished and hard-wearing finish.

Advantages:

- Resistant to stains, making it easy to clean.
- Reflects light, creating a brighter, more spacious appearance

Drawbacks:

- Highlights imperfections on walls, so surface preparation is crucial.

Gloss (high-gloss) finish

Gloss finishes are the shiniest and most reflective option, offering unmatched durability.

Best used for:

- Furniture, doors, and cabinets where a striking, high-shine look is desired.
- Trim and accents for a luxurious contrast against matte or eggshell walls.

Advantages:

- Extremely durable and easy to clean.
- Creates a dramatic, high-end effect.

Drawbacks:

- Amplifies surface imperfections, requiring meticulous preparation.

Choosing the right paint type and finish for your space

When selecting the type and finish of paint, consider the function and aesthetics of the room:

1. **Bedrooms and living rooms:** Opt for a matte or eggshell finish for a calm and inviting atmosphere.
2. **Kitchens and bathrooms:** Satin or semi-gloss finishes handle moisture and grease well, making them ideal for these spaces.
3. **Children's rooms and hallways:** Satin or eggshell finishes are perfect for withstanding scuffs and regular cleaning.
4. **Trim and woodwork:** Semi-gloss or gloss finishes add a striking contrast and protect surfaces prone to wear.

Tips for painting tricky areas

Painting a room comes with its share of challenges, especially when dealing with tight spaces, awkward angles, and uneven surfaces. Mastering these tricky areas is key to achieving a professional finish. From corners and ceilings to textured walls and fixtures, here's a comprehensive guide to help you tackle those challenging spots with ease and confidence.

Painting corners

Corners are one of the most frustrating areas for painters,

often leaving streaks or uneven coverage. The key to success lies in the right tools and technique.

Tools you'll need:

- An angled or sash brush for precision.
- A small roller for smooth blending.

Tips for success:

- **Cut in carefully:** Use an angled brush to apply paint directly into the corner, ensuring it reaches the edges. Work slowly to avoid overlapping on the adjacent wall.
- **Blend with a roller:** Immediately follow with a small roller to smooth out brush marks and create an even finish.
- **Use painter's tape for sharp edges:** If you're painting two different colours on adjoining walls, apply painter's tape along the edge of one wall for a clean, crisp line.



When it comes to home security, doors, locks, and handles are your first line of defence.

UPGRADING home security

Doors, locks, and handles not only protect your home but also contribute to its overall aesthetic. Investing in the right door hardware can elevate both safety and style, offering peace of mind without compromising on visual appeal. In this guide, we'll explore how to choose, install, and maintain door hardware to enhance your home security while keeping design in focus.

Understanding door hardware basics

Before diving into upgrades, it's essential to understand the components of door hardware. Each element plays a role in securing your home:

- **Locks:** The primary mechanism for preventing unauthorised entry. These include deadbolts, mortice locks, and smart locks.
- **Handles:** The functional and decorative feature used to operate doors. Options range from lever handles to doorknobs.
- **Hinges:** Often overlooked, hinges support the door and can impact its security if they're easily accessible from outside.
- **Strike plates:** Reinforce the lock by anchoring it to the door frame, preventing forced entry.

Upgrading these components strategically can significantly improve your home's security and style.

Choosing the right locks for maximum security

Deadbolts: A security essential

Deadbolts are a must-have for exterior doors, offering superior protection against forced entry.

Types of deadbolts:

- **Single-cylinder:** Operated with a key on the outside and a thumb turn on the inside.
- **Double-cylinder:** Requires a key on both sides, providing extra security but potentially posing a safety risk during emergencies.

Tips for selecting deadbolts:

- Look for locks rated by security standards, such as ANSI (American National Standards Institute). Grade 1 locks offer the highest level of security.
- Choose deadbolts with a reinforced strike plate and screws that penetrate deeply into the door frame.

Smart locks: Convenience meets security

Smart locks are gaining popularity for their advanced features, allowing homeowners to control access via smartphone apps, keypads, or biometrics.

Advantages:

- Keyless entry eliminates the risk of lost or stolen keys.
- Features like temporary codes or remote access are ideal for guests or service personnel.
- Integration with home automation systems adds convenience.



Considerations:

- Ensure the lock has a manual override in case of power outages or technical issues.
- Look for models with strong encryption to prevent hacking attempts.

Multipoint locks: Enhanced protection

Multipoint locking systems secure the door at multiple points along its frame, making it harder to force open. These locks are commonly used on uPVC and composite doors but can also be added to wooden doors.

Upgrading door handles for safety and style

Door handles serve as the bridge between functionality and aesthetics. While they may seem like a minor detail, the right handle can elevate a room's design and complement your security measures.

Lever handles vs. doorknobs

- **Lever handles:** Easier to operate, especially for children and older adults. Available in a variety of modern and classic designs.
- **Doorknobs:** Timeless and compact, offering a subtle design feature for doors.

When upgrading, ensure the handle aligns with the locking mechanism and door material.

Keyed handles for added security

For external doors, consider handles that include an integrated locking system. These provide an additional layer of security when combined with a deadbolt or smart lock.

Materials and finishes

Door handles come in a variety of materials and finishes, each offering unique benefits:

- **Stainless steel:** Durable, rust-resistant, and ideal for high-traffic areas.
- **Brass:** Classic and elegant, though it may require regular polishing.
- **Matte black or chrome:** Popular for contemporary designs, offering a sleek and modern look.

Securing door frames and hinges

Even the best locks and handles won't offer full protection if the door frame and hinges are weak. Strengthening these elements is a crucial part of any security upgrade.

1. Reinforce door frames

Install a metal reinforcement plate or strike plate in the frame to prevent it from splitting during an attempted

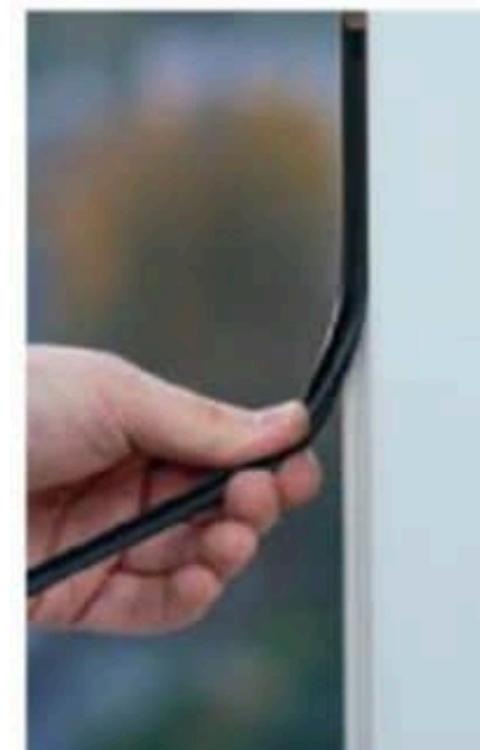
break-in. Opt for screws that are at least 7.5 cm long to anchor the plate securely into the wall studs.

2. Install hinge bolts

For outward-opening doors, hinge bolts prevent intruders from removing the door by taking out the hinge pins. These small but effective devices secure the hinge side of the door when it's closed.

3. Weatherproofing considerations

Weatherstripping not only keeps drafts out but also adds an extra layer of protection by making the door harder to prise open. Choose durable materials like rubber or vinyl for long-lasting performance.



Enhancing aesthetics while upgrading security

Home security upgrades don't have to compromise on style. By selecting door hardware that complements your home's design, you can achieve both functionality and beauty.

1. Matching finishes

Create a cohesive look by choosing door hardware finishes that match other elements in your home, such as light fixtures, cabinet handles, or faucets.

2. Consistency in design

For a polished appearance, opt for door handles, locks, and hinges in a similar style across your home. For instance, a contemporary home might feature sleek, minimalist hardware, while a traditional home could benefit from ornate, vintage designs.

3. Decorative elements

Consider adding features like door knockers or decorative escutcheons to enhance the visual appeal of your entryways.

Maintenance tips for long-lasting performance

Regular maintenance is essential to ensure your upgraded hardware remains secure and functional over time.

- **Clean handles and locks:** Wipe down handles and locks with a damp cloth and mild detergent to prevent dirt buildup and maintain their finish. Avoid abrasive cleaners that can damage surfaces.
- **Lubricate locks:** Apply a graphite or silicone-based lubricant to locks every six months to keep them operating smoothly.
- **Check alignment:** Ensure doors, locks, and strike plates are properly aligned to prevent wear and tear.
- **Inspect screws and bolts:** Tighten any loose screws or bolts on hinges, handles, and strike plates.

All you need to know about cornices and crown moulding.

CEILING ELEGANCE

Cornices and crown mouldings are more than decorative features; they are a testament to the art of blending function and beauty. These elegant architectural details can dramatically enhance the character of your home, adding sophistication and a polished finish to your interiors. Whether you live in a classic or contemporary space, incorporating cornices and mouldings can elevate your ceilings and transform any room.

This article will take you through the essentials of installing and upgrading cornices and crown mouldings, providing the knowledge and confidence to undertake this rewarding DIY project.

Understanding cornices and crown mouldings

Cornices and crown mouldings are designed to cover the seam where walls meet ceilings, but their purpose extends beyond hiding imperfections. They provide a decorative transition that can make ceilings appear higher, rooms more spacious, and interiors more refined.

Cornices typically feature more intricate designs and are often associated with traditional styles, while crown mouldings can

be simpler and better suited to modern spaces. They come in various materials, such as plaster, polystyrene, polyurethane, or wood, each offering distinct advantages in terms of durability, cost, and ease of installation.

Choosing the right style

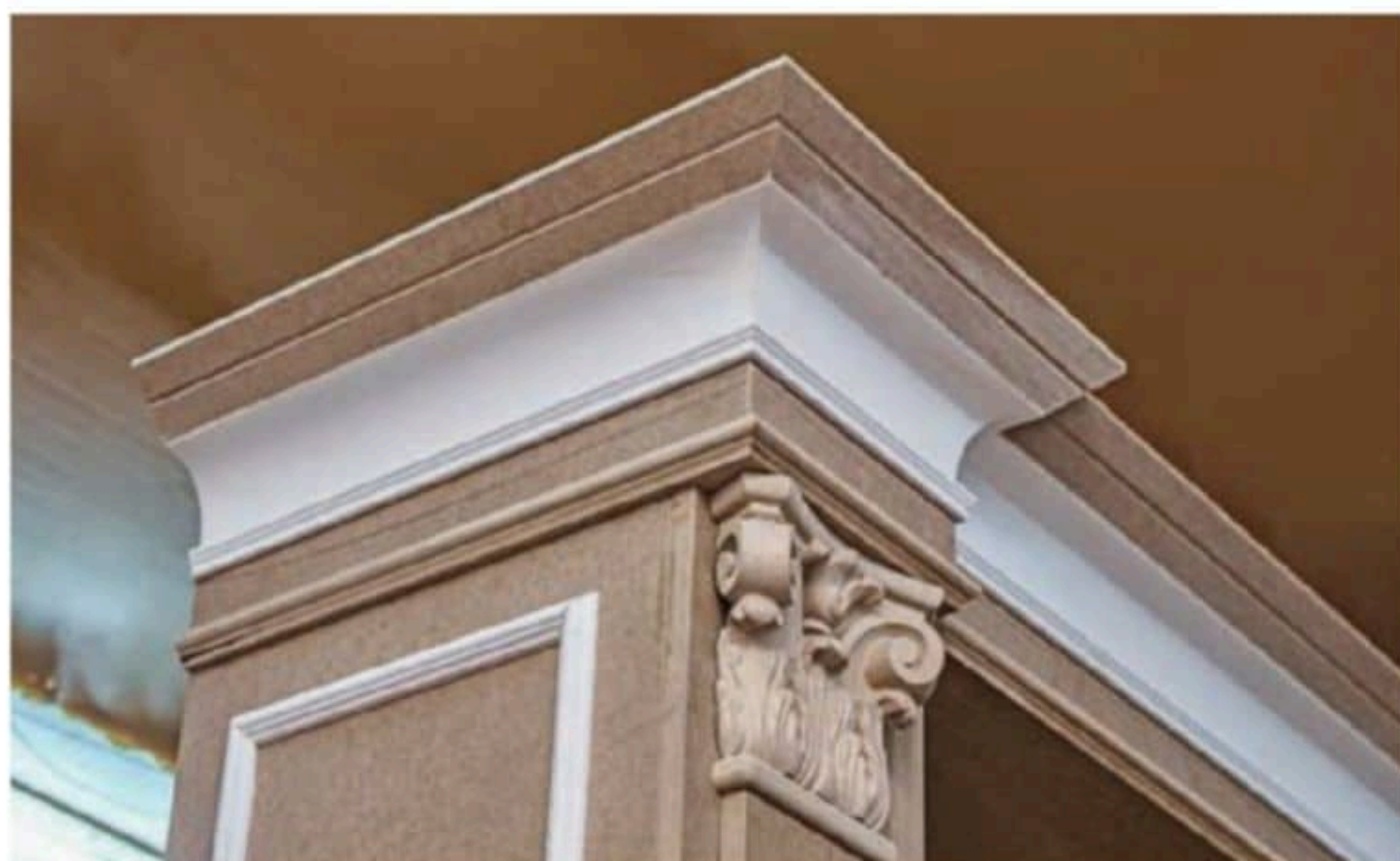
The key to achieving ceiling elegance lies in choosing a style that complements your home's architecture and décor. Traditional homes often benefit from ornate designs with floral or scroll patterns, while minimalist or modern spaces may call for clean lines and understated profiles.

The size of the moulding also matters. High ceilings can handle larger, more dramatic designs, while lower ceilings are better suited to thinner, simpler mouldings that won't overwhelm the space.

Materials and tools

Before you start, gather the necessary tools and materials for your project. Here's a quick list to keep on hand:

- **Cornices or crown mouldings:** Choose the style and material that suits your space.
- **Measuring tape:** Ensure precise measurements to avoid cutting errors.
- **Mitre saw or mitre box and handsaw:** For cutting accurate angles.
- **Adhesive:** Typically, a construction adhesive or cornice adhesive works well for lightweight materials.
- **Nails or screws:** Use these to secure heavier mouldings.
- **Silicone gun and silicone:** For filling gaps and seams.
- **Sandpaper and primer:** Prepare mouldings before installation.
- **Paint and brushes:** Add the finishing touch with paint that matches or contrasts with your walls and ceiling.



Installation: step-by-step

Installing cornices and crown mouldings requires patience and precision, but it's a highly rewarding DIY project. Follow these steps to achieve a professional finish:

1. Measure and plan

Begin by measuring the perimeter of the room where you plan to install the moulding. Sketch a layout, noting corners and any irregularities. Purchase a little extra material to account for cutting mistakes or miscalculations.

2. Cut the moulding

Use a mitre saw or a mitre box and handsaw to cut the mouldings at the correct angles. Inside corners require opposing 45-degree cuts to fit snugly together. For outside corners, cut the ends at opposite 45-degree angles to create a clean join.

3. Prep the moulding and surface

Sand the edges of the moulding for a smooth finish and apply

primer if necessary. Ensure that the wall and ceiling surfaces are clean, dry, and free of dust or grease.

4. Apply adhesive and position

Apply a generous bead of adhesive to the back of the moulding, focusing on the areas that will contact the wall and ceiling. Press the moulding firmly into place, starting at a corner and working your way around the room. For heavier mouldings, use nails or screws for additional support.

5. Fill gaps and seams

Once the moulding is installed, use silicone to fill any gaps or seams. This step ensures a seamless finish and hides any imperfections in your cuts or installation.

6. Paint and finish

After the adhesive and caulk have dried, paint the moulding to match your walls, ceiling, or trim. This final step ties the moulding into the overall design of the room and completes the transformation.

Creative applications

While cornices and crown mouldings are most commonly used in living rooms and dining rooms, they can be just as effective in other spaces. Installing mouldings in bedrooms adds a touch of luxury, while using them in bathrooms can create a spa-like retreat.

For a unique twist, consider layering mouldings by combining different profiles to create a custom look. Alternatively, paint the mouldings in a contrasting colour to make them stand out as a bold design feature.

Repairing and upgrading existing mouldings

If your home already has cornices or crown mouldings, they may need some care to restore their original beauty.

Cracks, chips, or peeling paint can detract from their elegance, but these issues are relatively easy to fix.

Use a filler to repair cracks or chips in plaster or wood mouldings. Sand the area smooth and repaint to match the rest of the moulding. For peeling paint, sand down the damaged area and apply a fresh coat of primer and paint.

Benefits of cornices and crown mouldings

Adding cornices or crown mouldings to your home offers more than aesthetic appeal. These features can:

- Increase your home's value by adding architectural detail.
- Enhance the illusion of higher ceilings and larger rooms.
- Provide a polished, cohesive look that ties together walls and ceilings.
- Protect the seam between walls and ceilings from wear and tear.

Conclusion

Cornices and crown mouldings are timeless additions that can transform any space, giving it a sense of sophistication and completeness. Whether you're installing them for the first time or upgrading existing ones, these features can elevate your interiors and showcase your personal style.

With careful planning, the right materials, and some patience, you can achieve professional-looking results that will leave a lasting impression on anyone who steps into your home. So, grab your tools, channel your inner craftsman, and let your ceilings become a canvas for elegance and creativity.



NEWS

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Celebrating heritage through design

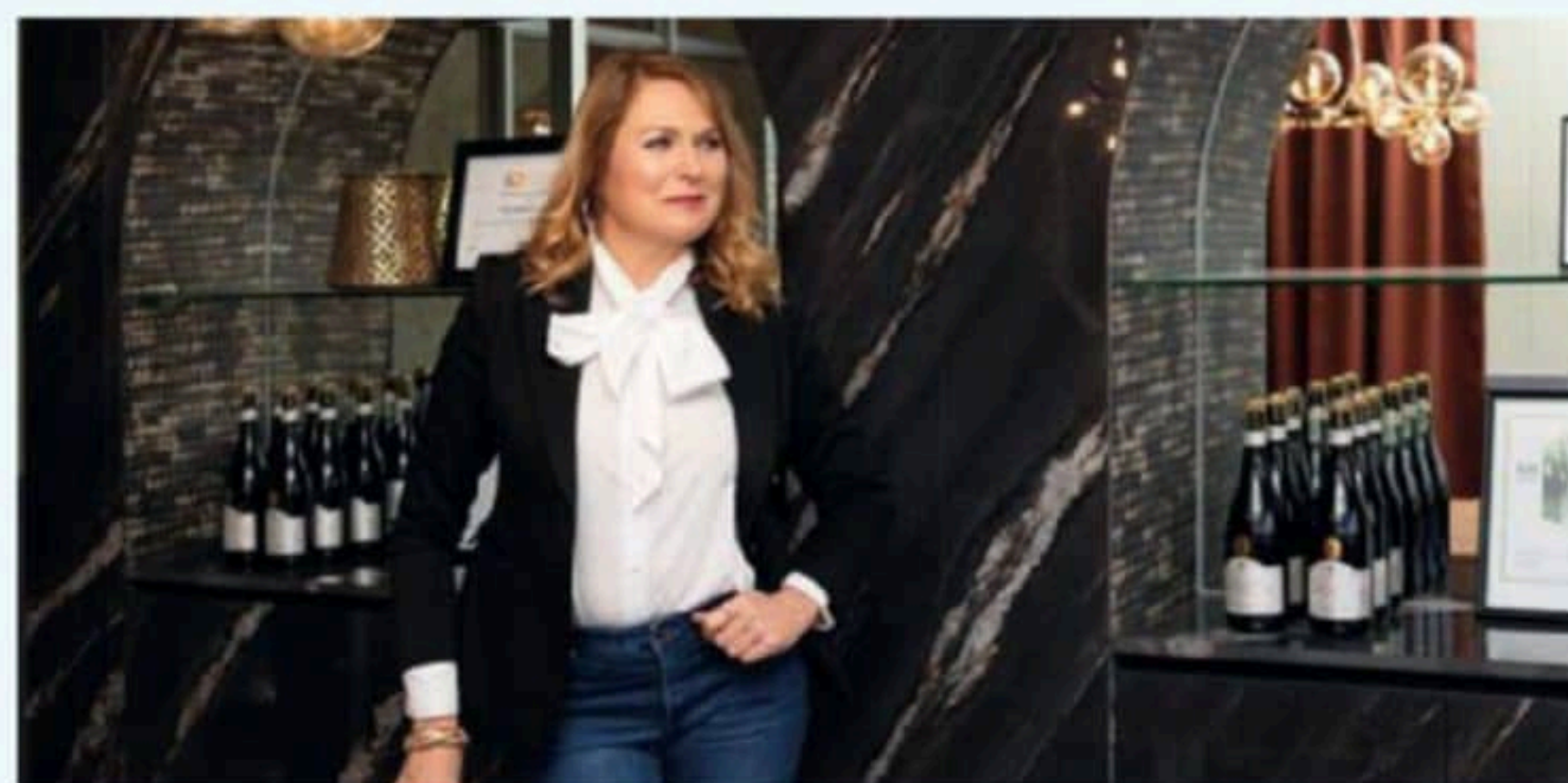
The Rakgadi African Toile Interior Range is a striking celebration of South Africa's heritage, blending cultural symbolism with contemporary design. This unique collection, launched at Decorex Cape Town 2024, marks a collaboration between renowned interior designer Kim Williams and acclaimed fashion designer Jessica Jane Molebatsi.

The range draws inspiration from the deep sense of togetherness that defines South African communities and honours the pivotal role of women in shaping society. Central to the collection are items like disposable placemats, luxurious cushions, and beautifully crafted rugs made in partnership with Airloom. A forthcoming wallpaper range, designed with Robin Sprong, promises to further enhance the collection, bringing artful, heritage-inspired designs into homes.

Complementing the launch is the opening of the Kim Williams Design showroom in Tygervally, Cape Town.

This carefully curated space allows customers to immerse themselves in the brand's vision, experiencing the tactile and visual harmony of furniture, lighting, and interior décor. The showroom, featuring collaborations with brands such as Woodbender and Studio Mason, is open Monday to Saturday and offers private consultations for tailored design advice.

For more information, visit www.kimwilliams.co.za



Timber care essentials

Proper timber care is crucial for ensuring longevity and maintaining its natural appeal. Whether used indoors or outdoors, wood requires preparation, the right products, and attentive maintenance to retain its beauty and functionality.

The first and most critical step is preparing the timber substrate. Sanding or stripping old coatings is essential to allow new treatments to bind effectively. Without this preparation, products like Woodoc Sealers cannot penetrate the wood properly, potentially leading to peeling or delamination over time. A smooth, clean, and dry surface ensures the best results.

When applying sealers, it's vital to follow product instructions carefully. Woodoc Sealers, for instance, are designed to penetrate the wood on the first application. This initial coat should be applied until the wood is fully saturated. Subsequent coats build up a protective surface layer, enhancing both durability and aesthetics. Diluting these products is not recommended, as it can compromise their effectiveness.

Choosing the right sealer for the intended application is equally important. Interior sealers are formulated for quick drying and hard finishes, while exterior sealers contain UV absorbers and other additives to withstand outdoor conditions. Using the wrong product, such as an exterior sealer indoors, can lead to unexpected issues like slow drying times or suboptimal finishes.

For those uncertain about which product to use, Woodoc offers a user-friendly tool called the Woodoc Wizard, available online. This tool helps homeowners identify the perfect sealer for their specific needs in just three simple steps.

By following these best practices – thorough preparation, careful application, and product suitability – timber can be preserved for years, enhancing its natural charm while protecting it from wear and environmental factors.

For more information, visit www.woodoc.com



Celebrating the winners of Brights Women in DIY Awards

The Brights Women in DIY Excellence Awards shine a spotlight on the transformative power of creativity, skill, and passion in the world of DIY. This year's winners, Sheri Omoh and Matshidisho "Tshidi" Monethi, exemplify how determination and imagination can bring new life to old items and spaces.

Sheri Omoh, winner in the Outstanding DIY Home Décor and Artistic Projects category, has turned her love for woodworking into a thriving creative enterprise. As a wife, mother, and grandmother, Sheri balances family life with her passion for crafting bespoke furniture and artistic home décor. Her work demonstrates a deep understanding of how to blend beauty and functionality, with every project reflecting her meticulous attention to detail and artistic vision.

From rustic dining tables made of reclaimed wood to custom wall pieces that transform living spaces, Sheri's creations resonate with anyone who appreciates the art of turning ordinary materials into extraordinary masterpieces. Her followers on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok regularly praise her work, drawing inspiration from her innovative ideas.

Sheri credits her success to her unwavering passion for making meaningful contributions to her family and community through her craft. "When I started woodworking, I didn't realise how impactful it would become. Every project allows me to create something special, not only for myself but also for others," she shared.

In the Best Eco-Friendly Sustainability, Upcycling & Restoration category, Matshidisho "Tshidi" Monethi captivated judges with her creative approach to repurposing discarded items. Based in Kimberley, Tshidi has been passionate about restoration and upcycling since childhood. Her portfolio showcases her ability to transform unwanted furniture into beautiful and practical pieces that tell a story.

One of her standout projects involves restoring her grandmother's sewing machine table, a cherished family heirloom, into a stunning and functional piece. Another example is her transformation of an unappealing dark cabinet into a bright and

stylish storage unit. Tshidi's creativity and commitment to sustainability shine through in her use of materials, often repurposing items others might overlook.

"I find immense joy in restoring and reimagining old pieces," Tshidi explained. "Every project is an opportunity to create something unique and eco-friendly."

Both winners received R5 000 vouchers and product hampers to support their future projects. Beyond the prizes, their achievements serve as inspiration for the wider DIY community.

For more information, visit www.brights.co.za



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DIY can seem intimidating, especially if you're new to it or have heard some of the common myths that discourage people from trying their hand at it. But don't let these misconceptions hold you back! Here are 8 DIY myths you should stop believing – and the truth behind them.

8 DIY MYTHS YOU SHOULD STOP BELIEVING

1. You need a huge budget to do DIY

One of the most common myths about DIY is that it's expensive. While some projects can cost a lot, many don't require a big investment. Simple changes, like repainting a room or upcycling old furniture, can make a huge difference without emptying your wallet. The key is to plan carefully, reuse materials where possible, and focus on projects that suit your budget.

2. Only experts can build furniture

Building furniture may sound daunting, but with the right tools and guidance, it's completely achievable for beginners. Start with simple projects like a wooden stool or a bookshelf, and work your way up to more complex builds. There are countless tutorials, videos, and step-by-step guides available online to help you every step of the way.

3. You have to own all the tools

DIY doesn't mean you need a workshop full of expensive tools. In fact, most projects only require a basic toolkit – think hammer, screwdriver, and measuring tape. For more

specialised equipment, you can often borrow from friends or hire tools at an affordable rate. Start small and build your collection over time as your skills grow.

4. You need professional skills to get good results

No one starts as a pro, and mistakes are part of the learning process. Practice makes perfect, and even professionals had to start somewhere. Begin with beginner-friendly projects, take your time, and don't be afraid to make mistakes – they're all part of the DIY journey.

5. DIY projects never look as good as store-bought items

This couldn't be further from the truth. A well-done DIY project can be just as beautiful – if not more so – than something mass-produced. The key is attention to detail, choosing the right materials, and taking pride in your work. Plus, DIY projects have the added bonus of being completely unique.

6. DIY takes too much time

While some projects can be time-intensive, many can be completed in a

single afternoon or weekend. The trick is to break projects into manageable steps and work at your own pace. Small, consistent efforts add up to big results over time.

7. You need a lot of space to do DIY

Not every DIY project needs a spacious workshop. A small desk or even a corner of your kitchen table can serve as your workspace. For larger projects, outdoor areas like your garden or driveway can work just as well.

8. If it's DIY, it won't last

With proper planning and quality materials, DIY projects can be just as durable as anything store-bought. In fact, because you're in control of the process, you can ensure every step is done to a high standard, creating something that lasts for years to come.

Don't let these myths discourage you from diving into the wonderful world of DIY. The best way to dispel these misconceptions is to try for yourself, learn as you go, and enjoy the journey. With the right mindset, tools, and guidance, anyone can create something amazing.

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