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Saturday Morning Workshop: How To Build A Nelson Platform Bench

This is a classic mid-century modern bench design that you can buy for about \$1,200 or build in one day for \$100. Your call.



Tools Required


1. Belt sander
2. dado stack
3. Drill/driver
4. Miter gauge
5. Miter saw
6. Orbital sander
7. Table saw

Materials Required

1. 1x2x8' Maple (7)
2. 1x3x6' Maple (2)
3. Painter's tape
4. Wood glue

What It Takes

- Time: 1 day
- Cost: \$100
- Skill Level: Advanced

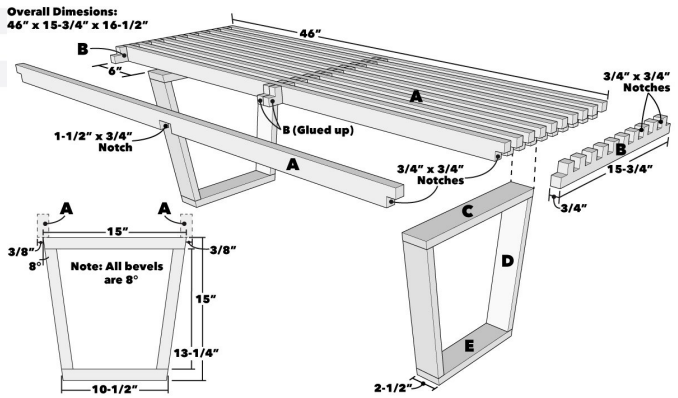
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Cutting List

Key	Qty	Material	Dimensions	Part
A	11	1x2 maple	3/4" x 1-1/2" x 46"	Slats
B	4	1x2 maple	3/4" x 1-1/2" x 15-1/2"	Rails
C	2	1x3 maple	3/4" x 2-1/2" x 15"*	Leg tops
D	4	1x3 maple	3/4" x 2-1/2" x 13-1/4"	Leg sides
E	2	1x3 maple	3/4" x 2-1/2" x 10-1/2"*	Leg bottoms

* Long to long measurement

Project Plans



Project step-by-step (7)

Step 1

Cut the parts to size

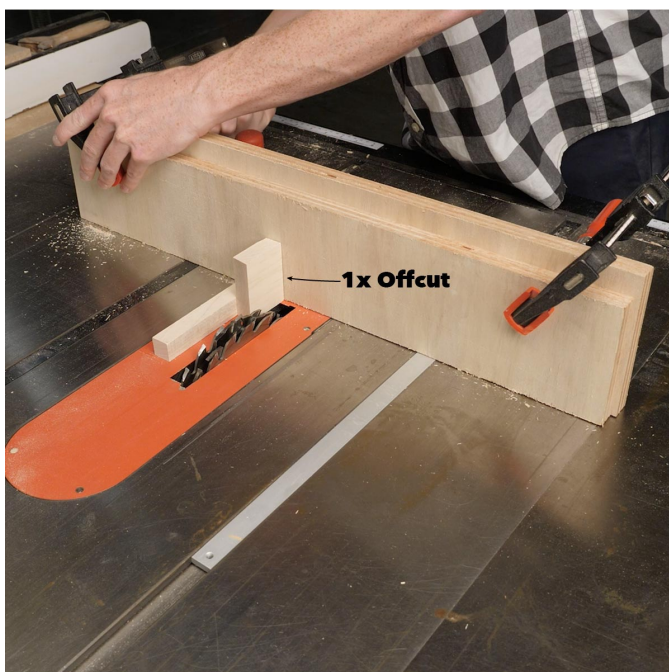




Cut the slats (A) to size. Cut the rails (B) oversize, and then glue two of them together to create the middle rail. Gang up the rails with painter's tape and flush-cut one end. Cut the leg sides (D) oversize and gang them together with painter's tape. Cut the leg sides to finished length with parallel 8-degree bevels at each end. Cut the leg tops and bottoms to finished length. Clamp a stop to the fence for consistent sizes.

Step 2

Create the box-joint jig



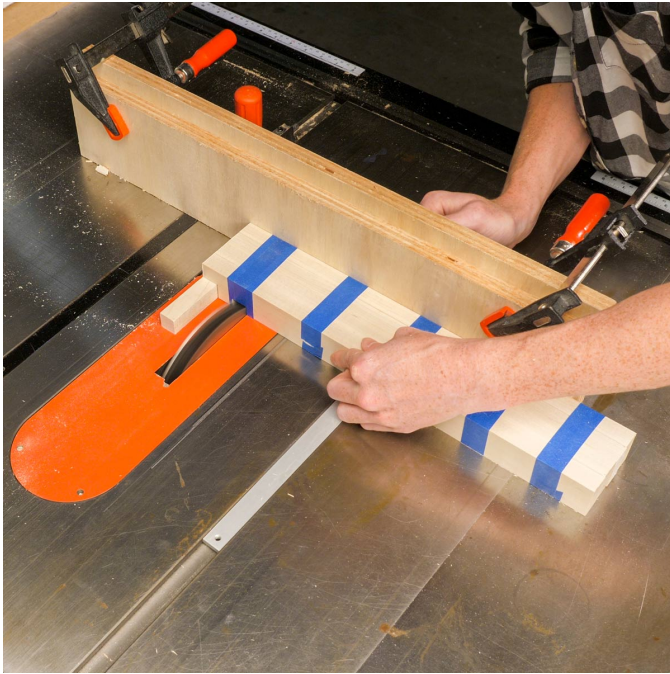
Set up to cut a 3/4-in. x 3/4-in. dado. Square the fence to two miter gauges, and then square it to the blade. Clamp a board to the fence and cut a 3/4-in. x 3/4-in. notch. Cut a square pin to fit the notch precisely, keeping a length of the pin stock for a spacer. Glue and screw the pin into the notch. Position the pin 3/4 in. from the dado blade, using the spacer as a guide. Clamp the jig to the fence.

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Step 3

Cut the rail notches



Align the ganged-up rails with the box-joint jig's notch, and then cut a notch on the rail ends. Fit the first notch over the peg and continue cutting notches until you have 11. Trim the ends to finished length.

Step 4

Cut the slat notches



Remove the box-joint jig. Cut notches into the ends of the slats (A). Cut double-width notches centered on the slats for the center rail. To ensure consistent notch placement, start by marking a centerline on one of the slats. Align the centerline with the left edge of the dado stack. Clamp a block to the saw's fence, slide the fence over so the block just touches the slat's end, and then lock in the fence. The block creates a gap between the fence and the end of the slat, so the slat doesn't get pinched between the dado blades and the fence. Position each slat by butting its end against the block. Cut the first notch, flip the board and cut the second notch.

Step 5

Assemble the bench top

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Spread glue into the notches of the middle rail. Fit the slats into the notches, tapping down the slats with a rubber mallet if necessary. Clamp the slats into place across the rails and use a clamping caul to seat the slats fully into the notches. Repeat this step with the end rails. When the glue is dry, sand the top flat.

Step 6

Assemble the legs



Clamp the leg sides (D) to the leg top (C) with 8-degree beveled offcuts as a positioning block. Predrill at each joint using a No. 8 combination countersink drill bit. Glue and screw the joints together. Repeat for the leg bottoms (E).

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Mark 6 in. from the ends on the underside of the bench assembly. Center the legs along the marks. Pre-drill with a combination countersink drill bit and fasten with 1-3/4-in. screws. [Next, check out our 56 favorite woodworking tips.](https://www.familyhandyman.com/woodworking/woodworking-tips/56-brilliant-woodworking-tips-for-beginners/) (<https://www.familyhandyman.com/woodworking/woodworking-tips/56-brilliant-woodworking-tips-for-beginners/>)

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