

ASK SMITTY

No woodworker (except *SMITTY*, of course) has ALL the answers. From time-to-time, everyone hits a snag, trying to figure out some sort of in-shop problem. Don't worry. *SMITTY* can help. Just use the special e-mail link directly below to send your questions to *SMITTY*. He'll do his best to get back to you soon, with the answers to those questions.

Here are the questions...and *SMITTY*'s answers for this issue...

Added support for ripped bevels on long boards

From Thomas Gump -- e-mail question

What is your best suggestion for an outfeed table for the MARK V Table Saw that will tilt at the same angle as the saw table when making angled cuts along the ripped edge of a long board?

The MARK V Support Table will do exactly what you want, tilting with the Worktable to the precise same angle when making bevel cuts along ripped edges.

When is it best to fell trees for lumber...Summer or Winter ?

From Curt George--e-mail question

Is wood that is cut during the Winter months (when the tree is dormant) better for woodworking than wood that was cut during the Summer when the weather is hot? I am referring to moisture content. I'm asking this because I need more wood but don't have the time to dry it. Would cutting a tree in the colder months be better/quicker for drying purposes?

No, not really. The sapwood will have less "free moisture", but the "bound moisture" in the heartwood will be about the same Winter and Summer. Since us woodworkers are looking for that perfect heartwood, harvesting in the Winter only makes you cold and doesn't save any curing time.

What will save time is to stack the lumber properly under a great deal of weight (1,000 pounds of 20 - 50lb concrete blocks will do nicely. Be sure to seal the ends completely (and I do mean completely) 2" back from the end by painting them or covering them with melted paraffin or candle wax.

Move air through the stack of lumber at a slow rate. This is called forced air drying and will cut the drying time by one third. A 24" box fan on low setting (running continuously — 24 hours, 7 days a week) will probably do the trick. Draw the intake air from the loft of a garage or shop or shed where it is relatively dry. Check the wood weekly.

Look for surface or end cracks or severe warping of the lumber. If you see any of these signs, the wood is drying too fast. Turn off the fan and let it dry naturally.

After eight months of drying like this (assuming 1" thick lumber), pull a clear, knot-free board from the center of the stack. Cross cut it in the center of its length and remove a 1" wide chunk the full width of the board. This piece should stay straight and not feel or look wet in the center. Weigh it as accurately as possible and record the weight. Put it in the oven overnight at 200 degrees to remove any remaining moisture. Weigh it again the next day when it will be completely dry. The ratio between the weight of the piece before and after oven drying is the moisture content. It should be less than 10 percent.

While the board is baking, joint and rip the remaining pieces of the test board. It also should not feel wet inside and should not twist or bind on the blade during any of the cuts. If, during either of the cutting steps the board feels wet on the inside and/or twists or binds on the blade, turn off the fan and wait an other four to six months for the wood to season naturally. You are drying it too fast and will ruin it if you continue to force-air dry the wood.

Good luck

(Thanks to Jim McCann – our resident “wood technologist”, among other things — for his input)

MARK V owner is concerned about noise disturbing his neighbor

From Chris Bagdikian--e-mail question

In preparation for using my new Shopsmith - which is presumably somewhere between here and Dayton - I have decided that I need to soundproof my garage since it has a common wall with a neighbor's living room (and I happen to like the neighbor).

Several people have suggested building a floating wall -studding a new wall one inch inside the existing wall with no direct connection between the two. These friends also agree that some type of membrane will be needed at the top plate (where the studs are wedged to the solid ceiling) and the sill plate on the floor to absorb vibration (the slab is common, too).

But there, unanimity ceases. Membrane material suggestions include the rubberized stuff used on some flat roofs, tufted rubberized carpet padding and Styrofoam.

Any suggestions - or other advice?

You are to be applauded for your consideration! Too few folks these days have any concern whatsoever for their neighbors.

However, if I were you, I'd wait until I had received my MARK V and “made some sawdust”. Alert your neighbor first, if you like and tell him/her that you'd like to run a “test” to see about any problems.

I don't believe you'll have to worry about vibrations. The MARK V runs smoothly. If you get a lot of vibration, you're probably not doing something properly. High-pitched sawing/jointing/planing

noise (if you purchased a jointer or planer), maybe. Other operations should cause no problems.

If the high-pitched noises bother your neighbor, you could try covering the wall with rigid acoustical ceiling tiles (2' x 4' panels). They're fairly inexpensive. Or...weather permitting, you could simply roll your MARK V out into the driveway and do your sawing, there.

Run your "test" first and quiz your neighbor. You may have no problems whatsoever. Again, your neighbor should be "tickled pink" to have YOU as a neighbor.

How to level table legs

From Dave Rosier--e-mail question

I have seen some articles on leveling table legs, but can't seem to remember them or find them now. Perhaps you could give me some good solutions to this problem. I just made a coffee table and am having trouble getting it to level out.

First, you'll need a FLAT surface. Flatness is absolutely necessary. A piece of laminate-covered countertop is ideal. If it's a small table, a piece of glass will work. Stand your table on your flat surface. Place 10# to 15# of weight on the tabletop.

Wobble the table to see which leg (or legs) are short. Place wedges of paper, cardboard or wood under the short leg(s) until it's wobble-free. Get a small, thin piece of scrap wood that's just slightly thicker (1/16" or so) than the space between your flat surface and the gap left by your shortest leg. Lay this piece of scrap wood next to the leg...and using a freshly SHARPENED, HARD pencil...scribe a line all the way around the leg, moving your scrap wood around the leg as you scribe your line. It's important that you hold your pencil at the same angle throughout this process.

Now, without moving your table, RE-SHARPEN your pencil and repeat the process for your next leg. RE-SHARPEN your pencil and repeat the process for your next leg, etc. Once you've marked all of the legs, cut them off to be just slightly longer than your lines.

Using a disc sander (or palm sander), sand each leg down to your line. Replace the table on your flat surface and test for stability. At this point, it's an on-going process of trial-and-error...sanding a little...testing...sanding a bit more, etc. until your table is wobble-free.

Hope this helps. Good luck.

Joining two long boards together, end-to-end

From L.J. Bowman--e-mail question

I need to join two 1" x 12" boards together, end-to-end to make a 14' long board. Any suggestions?

Your best bet would be to cut a half-lap on the joined ends of each board. Set-up a dado blade to make a cut EXACTLY half the thickness of each of your two boards. If you're joining 3/4" thick 1" x 12" boards, set your depth-of-cut to 3/8".

Use your dado blade to crosscut a 6" to 8" long half-lap on the end of each board (make the half-laps about 1/2 the length of your board width...a little longer won't hurt).

Glue your two boards together and clamp tightly for 24 hours. If you want more strength, add about 4 dowels (or 5/8" long screws if visible screws will be acceptable on your project).

This approach is recommended providing this is not to be some sort of structural member that will be required to hold a lot of weight or be under a great deal of pressure. If it IS to be a structural member...or is expected to hold a lot of weight, I would suggest that you start with the procedure above, then glue and screw a 12" x 18" piece of stock to each side of your joint...providing this visible "sandwich" in the middle is not detrimental to your design.