



Aesop's Tables

This is one of the easiest projects I've ever thought up, so rev up that new jigsaw you got for Christmas and have a go at this ergonomic Children's Art Station.

Materials:

- One 4' x 8' sheet of oak veneer plywood
- 40" of 1" x 2" pine
- Carpenter's glue
- 16 - #8 1-1/4" wood screws
- Sand paper
- Milk paint and/or urethane

Tools

- Jigsaw with scrolling blade
- Clamps

Cut List:

- Top - 38" square
- Legs - Two pieces 38" x 24"
- Slots - Eight pieces - 1" x 2" x 5" pine

Steps:



Mark out a 38 inch square



Use a pail lid to round the corners

Jigs Up

Cut the sheet of plywood in half to make two 4' x 4' pieces. On one piece, mark a 38" square and cut it out.

Using a large pail lid, trace a radius that rounds off each of the four corners of the square.



Cut along the lines with a jigsaw



Table top after cut-outs



Detail

Next, sketch out a curvy 'tummy-indent' (roughly 4" deep, depending on the physique of your little artist) on one of the four edges. Jigsaw along this line until the piece drops to the floor. Then use that piece as a template to mark and cut the other three tummy-indent.



Mark out two 38 inch by 24 inch rectangles



Detail of the table legs

Cut the remaining 4' x 4' piece of plywood (parallel to the grain) at 38", leaving you with a piece that measures 38" x 48". Cut this piece in half (perpendicular to the grain) so you have two identical 38" x 24" leg pieces. Now we have to turn those rectangles into tree-trunks.





Draw the leg outlines free-hand, going for a tree-ish effect



Mark out a centre slot three quarter inches wide and half way from top to bottom



Cut out two identical pieces

Find and lightly mark a guideline through the center of each leg piece (at 19") to help your eye as you sketch the outline of a tree trunk. Make the outline asymmetrical and knobby, like a gnarly old oak.

Jigsaw along the lines you've drawn. Now, using the finished leg piece as a template, trace its outline onto the remaining piece of plywood. When both pairs of legs are cut out, lay them on top of each other so they match. You're about to cut a slot joint, and if that doesn't sound exciting you must be jaded.



Cut out the slot



Mark and cut out the second slot

Playing the Slots

Locate the center guideline (that you made earlier) and use a ruler to draw a parallel line on each side of center, 3/8" away from the guideline. Repeat the same process on the second leg piece.

Now the tricky part; Mark the approximate vertical center of the parallel lines on one leg piece (roughly 12" up). This is the line that will tell you where to stop sawing at the top of your slot. Let's call it the Top o' the Slot Spot, just to be cocky.

Clamp the first leg piece and cut out that 3/4" wide slot.

Now, lay the piece with the brand new slot on top of the second leg piece. Mark the bottom piece right at the Top o' the Slot Spot. Then, on that second leg piece, cut the OTHER half of the slot.





If the legs wobble on a flat surface, file one of the slots a bit



Slide the two pieces together

Reality Check

Okay, when you're finished, each leg should have a 3/4" wide slot, but one is from the top down, and the other is from the bottom up, so that they fit together.

Slide the two pairs of legs together, slot into slot, and check for stability. The 'feet' should sit evenly on the floor. If they don't, try filing the Top o' the Slot 'til all four feet are securely touching the floor.



Attach guides for the table legs



Painted and sealed table top with installed guides

Center the tabletop on the legs and mark lines on the underside of the table along the edges of the legs. Glue and screw eight pieces of 1" x 2" pine along the marks to create grooves for the leg pieces to slide into. Add hook-and-eye latches to lock 'em.



Finished Table



Finished Table detail

Sand and paint the trunk and top. Now mix up some paint and paste and call the little ones.

(To prevent spillage, I was tempted to jigsaw circular cup holders into each corner for paint. But perhaps that just teaches children to be overconfident. It's your call.)



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