



## Ready, Willing & Table

'Antiqued' beauty to hand down to your descendents.

### Materials:

Clear Pine:

- Table top: Four 6' pieces of 1" x 10"
- Legs: About 30' of 1" x 3"
- Apron: Three 6' pieces of 1" x 6"
- Fastening strips: About 18' of 2" x 2" pine

Plus:

- Carpenter's glue
- Screws and washers
- [Eight 1/4" x 3" hanger bolts with washer and wing-nut](#)
- [Aniline stain](#)
- Shellac

### Tools

- Handsaw or trim-saw
- Drill and bits
- Pipe clamps (you'll need at least 5)
- Orbital or belt sander
- Spray bottles
- Wet rag

### Cut List:

- Top: 4 - 1" x 10" x 6'
- Legs: 12 - 1" x 3" x 29"
- Apron: 1" x 6" cut to length as necessary
- Fastening strips: 2" x 2" cut to length as necessary

## Steps:

Figure out how big you want your table to be, allowing 24" per place setting for sufficient elbowroom. (My table is six feet long, and just over three feet wide.)

At the lumberyard, choose boards for the tabletop by matching grain patterns in the boards. Inspect the boards carefully, rejecting any that are warped or twisted. The straighter and cleaner the board, the easier it will be to work with.

## Tip:

Boards bought from a lumberyard are usually 'green' and damp (unless you buy 'kiln-dried' lumber, which is nice and dry, but more expensive). So, after buying green boards from the lumberyard, put some small wooden spacers between them and clamp them all together over the spacers on both edges of the boards every two feet or so. Then stand the boards on edge and let them dry out for a month or two. The clamps and spacers will keep your boards flat while they shrink as much as they're going to **BEFORE** you make a table out of them!



Place the four boards in pipe clamps



Find the best fit before gluing



Apply glue on all the edges that touch



Spread the glue with your finger

## Top Cuts

Next, cut your tabletop boards to length. Place three pipe clamps on your work surface and adjust their span to loosely fit the width of your tabletop boards. (Note: Pipe clamps are the strongest kind of clamps used in woodworking, but you have to make them yourself. Buy threaded steel pipes, and then attach the clamping heads, bought separately.) Set the boards in place on top of the clamps, remembering to match the grain to best advantage. Apply glue along the edges. Work as quickly as you can because the glue will start to skim over.



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Even up the ends



Adjust the boards as you tighten each clamp

Once you have glue on all the edges that touch, gently squeeze the boards together starting with the center clamp. As you do so, adjust the boards up or down to keep the surface level. The tabletop will have to be sanded so don't get crazy about the boards being dead level. It's better to keep moving, tightening the other clamps. Snug the other clamps down in the same way you did the centre one. Don't over-tighten; just make them snug.

Lay two or three additional pipe clamps on top of the boards and snug them down as well. Check all the clamps and snug them down evenly. There should be a bit of glue squeezing out all along each joint. (Believe it or not, once the glued joint is dry, it will be stronger than the actual wood itself.) Let the glue set for a minimum of 20 minutes, preferably an hour. Then take the top out of the clamps and trim the ends.



Make a 'test' board to experiment with finishes



First stain applied after distressing

## Antiquing

Now, you've got this virginal white tabletop. Time to age that baby so you get the glorious patina they charge so much for in the antique shops. I made up my own process for antiquing. You could probably think up something more efficient. But here's how I did it.

- Place boards on a gravel surface and then walk on them, rock 'em, drag 'em, ride 'em and otherwise bother the lumber. You're applying a hundred years of stress to those boards instantly, so have a little fun.
- Using a wire brush, remove impacted gravel from the boards.
- In a spray bottle, mix a dark oak or walnut shade of water-based aniline dye (available at Lee Valley Tools). Mist all surfaces. The aniline penetrates wherever there are dings, scratches, dents and scrapes.



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First sanding



Second stain



Second sanding

- Sand the boards, blunting their edges so they look 'soft', but leaving the dark pits and dings. Also sand the tabletop flat if the boards didn't go together perfectly.
- Now mix up a lighter shade of aniline stain (try Golden Antique Pine) and stain all surfaces again.
- Sand lightly to give the surfaces some wear spots.

### Tip:

For the best results, make a test board with various distressing and staining options to experiment with the colours and textures you want. Remember that you really can't make a mistake, especially with aniline dyes. The dyes can be applied thinly or heavily and can be wiped down with a damp cloth to diminish their intensity.



Two types of shellac - clear and amber



Clear shellac in flake form before mixing

### Finishing

Finally, apply three to five coats of shellac finish. There are many grades of shellac. I like the blonde 'de-waxed' kind that comes in dry form and then you mix it up with shellac thinner. There are also 'orange' versions of shellac which give the wood a deeper colour, but only use this stuff as one of the first coats, because it develops ugly white water stains every time you set a glass down on the surface - highly impractical for a tabletop!

Also, shellac has only a six-month shelf life after it has been mixed. However, the dry form can be mixed in small batches and therefore there's less waste. Shellac is wonderful because it can be used over any other finish and almost any finish can be used on top of it. Plus if your pine is pitchy or oozing sap, the shellac will seal it forever.





Glue three lengths of 1x3 together for the legs (or two pieces of 2x4) and then finish

### **Getting a Leg Up**

The legs are made of three pieces of 1"x3"x29" clear pine glued together to form a roughly square leg. The distressing and finish is much the same as the top with the exception that I chamfered (cut off the corner at a 45 degree angle) two of the four sharp corners. Adding any kind of detail to the leg helps add design value, or you can buy fancy turned legs from the lumberyard. If you buy pre-made legs, you'll have to adjust the colours to match the top.



Glue the 2x2 strips to the apron

### **Put on Your Apron**

The 1"x 6" apron pieces are finished just like the legs and top. To figure out what length to cut the pieces, turn the tabletop upside down and set the legs in place at the corners, inset 3" in from the ends and sides. Mark the location for each of the legs and then measure the distance between the marks; Cut the apron pieces to that length, which should be roughly 62" for the sides, and 26" for the ends, depending on your materials.

Cut the 2"x 2" material approximately 10" shorter than the length of each of the apron pieces. Drill 3/8" holes every 6" along the length of each 2"x 2" strip starting about 3" in from each end. Centre each 2"x 2" strips on the inside edge of each 1"x6" apron piece where it contacts the tabletop. Glue the strips to the apron pieces.



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Screw the 2x2 strip (now attached to apron piece) to the underside of the table

Now attach the apron pieces to the tabletop by screwing through the 2" x 2" strips into the underside of the tabletop. Use zinc wood screws and place two zinc washers under each screw head. The washers will slide on each other and the screw can move freely in the oversized hole, allowing the tabletop to expand and contract with changes in humidity or heat. (If these parts were fastened rigidly together they could split the tabletop over time.) Choose the correct length of screw by placing the apron with the 2"x2" glued to it next to the edge of the table. Put the screw and washer assembly in place in the 2"x2" and check for length against the side of the tabletop. Choose one that enters the top to a depth of about half an inch. (Add a washer if necessary to adjust the screw length.) Screw all the apron pieces in place.

**Tip:**

Be sure to inset the apron by about a quarter of an inch from the front plane of the leg so it looks pretty.



Cut four corner braces with mitered ends



Corner brace detail

**Bracket Ho!**

Make four 6" long corner brackets out of 1"x6" pine. Miter the ends at a 45 degree angle. Drill two holes in the centre large enough to allow the hanger bolts to slip through. Drill one countersunk hole in each of the four corners of the bracket. Attach each corner bracket to the apron with four screws.



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Pass the hanger bolt through the drilled hole, jabbing it into the leg to mark its position



Pre-drill for the hanger bolts



Then use the drill to drive the bolt into the leg



Tongue-in-groove pliers will also work to drive in the hanger bolts

Set the leg in place and mark the location for the hanger bolts. Pre-drill the legs for the hanger bolts and drive them in using some tongue-in-groove pliers or put the hanger bolt in the drill chuck and drive it in.



Set the leg in place with the hanger bolts passing through the corner brace



Attach with a washer and wing nut



Leg, corner bracket and apron in place



Framework under the table top

Slide the legs into position, passing the bolts through the brackets. Fasten using a washer and wing nut.





Install a centre support for longer tables

### **Brace for Impact**

Make and install a centre brace for the tabletop to prevent it from sagging under a heavy holiday meal. Use a piece of 1"x 3", notched it to fit over the 2"x 2" strips glued to the apron, drill oversized holes and install with a screw and two washers.



Completed table

Finally, use a beeswax furniture polish to finish.

Don't forget to sign and date your table, so your future descendants will always remember their carpenter aunt.



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