



Rocking HorseChair

Here's a project just right for the younger set, which is pretty simple to make and yet will fast become a favourite spot for them to spend many a happy hour. There is no plan for this toy - you'll make your own. All you need is a rough outline drawing of a horse which you or any friend can sketch, but it's a cinch to make! Let me show and tell you how I made this one for my granddaughter Shelby for Christmas '96.

I got the idea from a PBS television show - American Woodshop with Scott Phillips, where he shared this great toy he got from his grandfather.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 - 4' x 8' piece of 3/4" plywood cut in to 2 - 4' x 4' pieces
- 2" x 10" clear pine cut into 2 - 20 3/4" lengths
- 4 - 1" x 4" x 2' lengths of clear pine
- 1 - 1 1/4" dowel 21" long
- 16 - 3" #10 wood screws
- 8 - 1 1/2" #8 wood screws
- stain and lacquer of your choice

MAKING THE DRAWING: Make your drawing in pencil as modifications will probably have to be made as you proceed. I made mine just under 4 feet long and about 35" tall. You can make yours a bit smaller or shorter if you choose. Start with the basic drawing of the horse and then make the leg part of the drawing into what amounts to the connection to the rocking portion of your plan.

Once the "horse part" is drawn, attach a pencil to a long piece of string, and affix the free end to a spot above the horse, on a line about mid way between the head and end of the tail. Now with the pencil, draw a radius curve across the bottom, well below the body of the horse. This will be the bottom of the rocking part of the assembly. Draw another radius about 4 inches above the first. This will be the top of the rocking part. Complete both the outside and the inside of the rocker part freehand, making the junctions of the legs and rocking portion, into nice smooth transitions. Leave the ends flat, for the attachment of the rocking governors you'll install later. NOTE: For a smooth gradual rocker curvature, position the free end of your string higher, and for a greater curve, position it lower.

IMPORTANT Be aware when making your drawing that the seat which is made from 2 x 10's will be hidden from the outside by the body, so the stomach portion of the horse will need to be slightly more than 10" wide.



Now that your drawing is complete, you may wish to do as I did and make a template out of masonite or hardboard. I figured should I want to make another, I wouldn't have to go through the pains of making another drawing. Cut out the template using a jig saw.

Trace the shape of your project using the template, onto 1 of the 4 x 4 pieces of plywood. Place the sheet with the drawing on it, on top of the other piece of 4 x 4 plywood, drawing side up. You will be cutting both horses at the same time and they have got to be exactly the same. In order to do this, the sheets need to be secured to each other. Since we don't want to leave any unnecessary screw holes in the project, decide where your hand rest bar will be located between the 2 heads. Since the bar will be attached by screws from the outside, attach the 2 sheets together at that spot with a 1 1/4" #8 wood screw, making sure the edges of the plywood are even on all sides. Decide also where your seat will be located and use another screw to hold the pieces together there. Plan where your seat will be, so that the hole your are now making to hold the plywood together, can end up being one of the holes which attaches the seat.



CUT OUT THE PLYWOOD HORSE SIDES Using a jig saw with a blade long enough to cut through the 2 - 3/4" pieces of plywood, cut out the 2 horse/rocker sides. When all interior and exterior cuts have been made, remove the 2 screws which have been holding them together.

With your belt sander, sand all cut edges smooth. With your palm sander, sand smooth both sides of both pieces.

Roundover all the edges of the 4 - 1" x 4" pine boards with your router or sander.

FINISHING You may consider staining the sides now, so as to make your finishing job a lot easier. Use the stain of your choice for the sides (horse rockers) and use a waterbased topcoat only for the seat and 1" x 4" pine boards. Once the stained sides are dry, apply at least a couple of coats of the same waterbased topcoat.

ASSEMBLY With a 1 1/4" Forstner or spade bit, remove 1/8" from the inside side of the 2 horses, where the hand rail will go. Drill a pilot hole into the centre of both ends of the 1 1/4" dowel. By screwing from the outside of the horse side pieces, insert 1 - 3" #10 screw and drive home. Being very carefull not to cause any undue stress to the piece, the unit should now stand alone. If help is available for this function, accept it willingly!



Attach the seat assembly together using 2 - # 10, 3" screws. The back will be screwed to the back edge of the bottom piece using these 2 screws.

With carefull positioning, drill pilot holes for the seat assembly through the sides and into the ends of the seat. Using #10, 3" screws, attach the seat. It may be easier to accomplish this by attaching only 1 screw on each side first, and then drilling the remaining pilot holes and completing the task. Four #10, 3" screws are used on each side - 2 in the back and 2 in the bottom on each side.

Place 2 of the 1" x 4" just behind the front legs of the horse, to be used as the child's foot rest. Attach them to the insides of the rocker using 2 of the #8 wood screws at each end with the ends protruding equally on both sides.

After positioning appropriately, drill pilot holes through the ends of the remaining 2 pine boards and into the ends of the rockers, 1 at the front and 1 at the rear. Using the remaining #10 screws, affix them to the ends of the rockers. These will serve as governors, inhibiting extra rambunctious rocking.

It's RIDE 'EM COWBOY/COWGIRL time now, so let the fun begin! Just wait till you see the twinkle in their eyes when they mount their steed! Even the smallest child can safely ride this rocking horse and can't fall off because they're sitting in it instead of on it. Shelby loved hers as did Sydney, a couple of years later.