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Square Coffee Table

After looking through several decorating magazine and furniture store flyers, I decided that I simply could not live without a new square coffee table in my living room. Unfortunately, the prices were too far out of reach and, obviously, the only solution was to build one myself. The finished table looks impressive, but never feat! The construction is simple, and it takes advantage of pre-made wood products that you can find at any large building-supply store.



Materials List

Lumber:

- 2 pieces Laminated pine (or oak), each 48" x 24"*
- 49 linear feet 1 x 4 pine (or oak)*
- 15 linear feet decorative molding, at least 3-1/2" wide
- 3 linear feet 2 x 6 pine
- 4 table legs, each 14-1/2" long x 3-1/2" square at top?

Hardware:

- Approx. 100 #6 x 1-1/4" flathead wood screws
- Approx. 100 #6 x 2" flathead wood screws
- Approx. 50 #10 x 3" flathead wood screws

Special Tools and Techniques

- 2 or 3 large bar clamps
- saber saw or large chisel
- miters

Cutting List

Code	Description	Qty.	Material	Dimensions
A	Table Top	1	Laminated pine (or oak)	46" square
B	Table Top Trim	4	1 x 4 pine or oak, ripped	50" long
C	Leg	4	3-1/2" sq. newel post	14-1/2" long
D	Side Rail	4	1 x 4 pine	45-1/2" long
E	Corner Support	4	2 x 6 pine	5-1/2" x 5-1/2" x 7-3/4" (approx.)
F	Top Trim	4	1 x 4 pine	50" long
G	Side Trim	4	3-1/2" decorative molding	42" long

Notes on the Materials

The coffee table shown here is constructed from laminated 1 x 4 oak boards, but you can also use pine. Most building-supply stores sell sections of wood that have already been laminated. Of course, you can laminate the boards yourself, but I don't recommend it unless you are a very experienced woodworker and possess heavy-duty tools. Due to the number of boards and overall size, it is a bigger job than it looks. If you do laminate the boards yourself, the finished size of each of the two sections should be 23 x 46 inches.

For the legs, we can again circumvent the need for experienced woodworking skills. If you do not have a lathe (or don't want to turn your own legs), simply purchase four newel posts and cut them to length. Turned upside down, they make extremely attractive legs—and who will guess?

Constructing the Table Top

1. If you purchased wood already laminated, trim all four sides of each of the two laminated sections to a finished size of 23 x 46 inches. This step ensures that the edges are square and provide a good bonding surface.
2. Place the two trimmed laminated sections 46" sides together, on a level surface. Wipe glue on the meeting edges, and clamp them together securely with two or three bar clamps for at least 24 hours. The result is a table top (A) that now measures 46" square.
3. Cut four table top trim pieces (B) from 1 x 4 pine, each 50" long.
4. Rip each trim piece (B) to 2" in width. For assistance with ripping a piece of wood, refer to the Tips and Techniques" section.
5. The next step is to frame the table top (A) with the 2"-wide trim pieces (B), as shown in *Figure 1*. First, setting each piece on its face, miter both ends of all four trim pieces (B) at a 45-degree angle. Then wipe glue on the mitered ends and meeting edges, and clamp the trim pieces (B) to the table top (A) using bar clamps. Leave the assembly undisturbed for at least 24 hours. The framed top now measures 50" square.

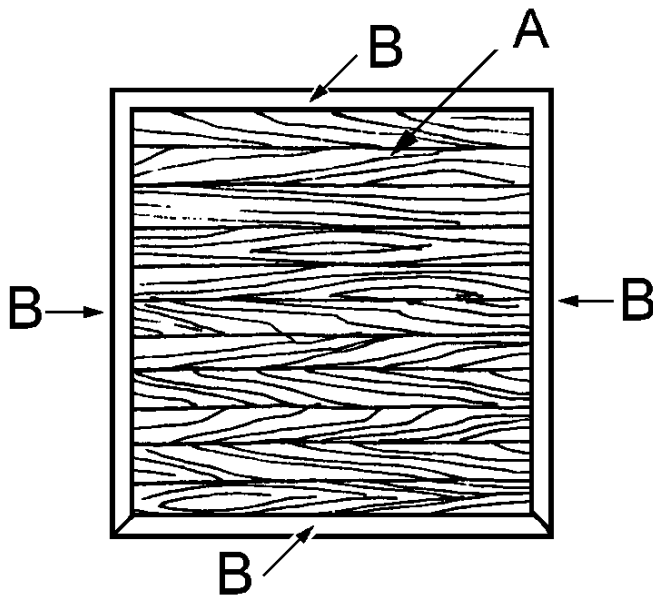


Figure 1

rectangle of wood measuring 1-3/4 x 1-3/4 x 3-1/2 inches from the inside corner of each leg top as shown in *Figure 3*.

Constructing the Base

1. Cut each of the four newel posts to 14-1/2" long. These will be the legs (C). In order to support the side rails of the coffee table, we have to remove a corner section of the wood from the square top of each of the four legs. (C). This maneuver is designed to eliminate the need for making blind dados.
2. Set the depth of your saber saw to 1-3/4 inches. Make three cuts in the order shown in *Figure 2*. The blade edges in the drawing indicate the direction of the cuts. If you use a chisel instead, use the illustration to guide your cuts. Cut and remove a

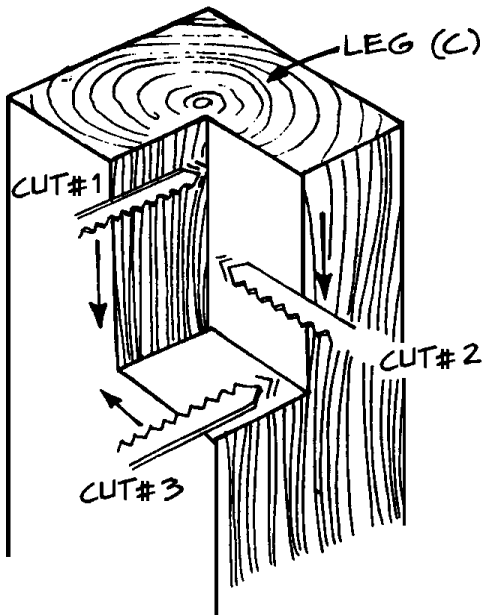


Figure 2

3. Cut four side rails (D) from 1 x 4 pine, each 45-1/2" long. Setting each piece on its edge, miter both ends of each side rail (D) at a 45-degree angle, as shown in *Figure 4*.
4. This next step probably requires the assistance of a willing helper (or an unwilling helper and a baseball bat), and it should be performed on a level surface. Each of the legs (C) must be connected to the side rails (D), and the entire assembly must be perfectly level. It is easier to make certain that you have everything level if you perform the assembly with the legs upside down.
5. Carefully fit two of the side rails (D) inside the opening that you previously cut in the legs (C), matching the mitered ends. (Refer to *Figure 4*.) Glue and screw them in place using three 2"-long screws in each of the side rails (D). Repeat the process with the remaining three legs (C) and the remaining side rails (D).

6. Cut four triangular corner supports (E) from the 2 x 6 pine. These should measure 5-1/2" on the two short sides. Glue and screw them in each of the four corners, as shown in *Figure 4*, using four 3"-long screws in each corner support (E).
7. Cut four top trim pieces (F) from 1 x 4 pine, each 50" long. Setting each piece on its face, miter both ends of each trim piece (F) at a 45-degree angle as shown in *Figure 4*. Fasten the top trim pieces (F) to the legs (C) and to the side rails (D) using glue and screws. Use two 3"-long screws to connect each end of each top trim piece (F) to the legs (C). Use 2"-long screws spaced about 6" apart to connect the top trim piece (F) to the side rails (D). The top trim pieces (F) should overhang the legs by 1/2" on the edges.

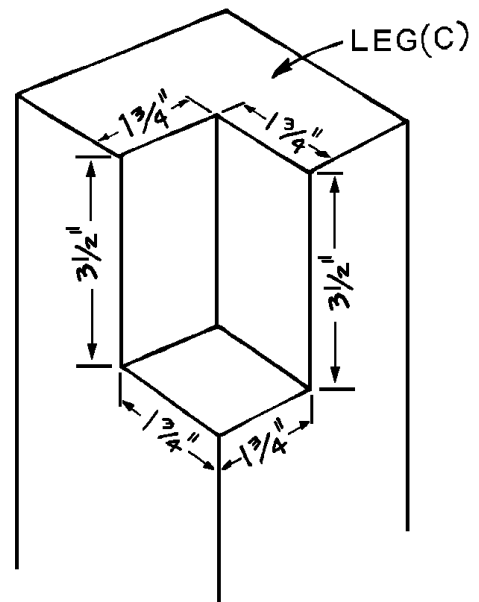


Figure 3

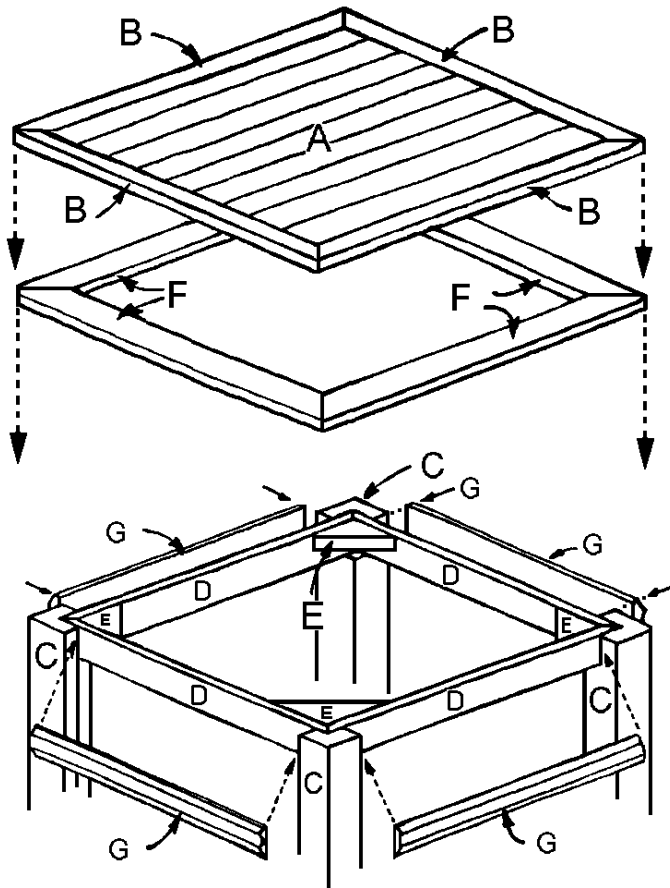


Figure 4

Adding the Table Top

1. Set the assembled table top upside down on a level surface. Then place the assembled base upside down on top of it. Align the edges of the top trim pieces (F) with the table top assembly. Glue and screw them together. Screw through the top trim pieces (F) into the table top, as close as possible to the side rails (D). Use 1-1/4"-long screws spaced about 6" apart. Countersink the screws so that the molding to be added in the next step can cover the screw heads.
2. Cut four side trim pieces (G) from the decorative molding, each 42" long. Glue and screw them to the outside of the side rails (D) using one 1-1/4"-long screw every 6 inches. To avoid making holes in the molding, screw through the side rails (D) into the side trim pieces (G).

Finishing

1. Fill any cracks or crevices with wood filler, and thoroughly sand the assembled coffee table.
2. You can paint or stain the table the color of your choice. I applied a maple-toned stain to this table and let it dry thoroughly. Then I applied a light coat of white paint and before it could dry, wiped most of the paint off. Finally, I finished it with several coats of varnish.

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