



Issue 17, November 2021

Hi Steve R,

For some reason, I'm always a little surprised to discover the holiday season upon me. "It was just June!" You'd think after 55 years, the last two months of the year wouldn't seem to arrive so suddenly, but well, here we are.

As a woodworker, it's my obligation to remind you to start making gifts. You have seven weeks to get your act together before Christmas. There, I did my part.

That probably provoked one of these reactions from you:

1. "Great reminder! I have a lot of gifts I want to make and I plan to get started this weekend!"
2. "Lol, gift projects. I'm gonna make a new crosscut sled."
3. "Oh crap, that's right. I really want to make some gifts but realistically, that prolly ain't gonna happen. It's like this every year."

If you're Number 1 or Number 2, you've got all the self-confidence you need and don't need any advice from me.

It's you Number 3s I want to talk to, because I'm one of you. We have great intentions, but then the clock starts ticking and we get distracted. If we're lucky, we might actually complete one single gift.

So let me take the pressure off: It's perfectly okay to have a guilt-free holiday woodworking season.

If you're a hobbyist woodworker, I don't recommend making anything because you feel obligated to do so. That's a surefire way to suck the enjoyment out of a project. Save that for your nine-to-five. It's also important to understand that nobody is *expecting* you to make them a handmade gift. Custom gifts are great, but everyone enjoys a good gift basket, too. So there's that.

So what to do? If you have the time and it's not too cold in your shop, it's a good idea to always have a project to work on. It makes getting out of bed that much easier knowing you have something in progress. Nothing has to change just because a big gift-giving holiday is near. Go ahead and work on that crosscut sled or build a new bookshelf. However you find your woodworking happy place in June is no different from November.

However, I strongly feel that making gifts is *extremely* rewarding as a woodworker. I've talked about this before in this newsletter, so I'm not saying you should completely take gifts off the table, but you don't have to constrain this part of your hobby to the end of the year. Gift projects are great to make any time of the year. You won't feel a sense of a deadline and honestly, giving a person a gift when it's not a holiday or birthday is super satisfying for both you and the recipient. Everyone loves a surprise!

And if you can't spend a lot of time in your shop, take some time to keep your brain tuned into woodworking. Collect pictures of potential projects and start an idea file. Take the time to learn Sketchup or Fusion 360; being able to design your own projects is a game-changer. Make a map of your shop space and your tools and play around with potential layout improvements...maybe plan out a complete spring makeover. Go through your scrap bin and get rid of wood you realistically won't ever use. Read a woodworking book. Enroll in an [online woodworking course!](#) 😊

Grow your skills, try new things, but mostly, keep it fun.

Steve

P.S. I just thought of another great activity for downtime. Have you listened to my podcast, [The Woodworking Talk Show](#)? I'm having a fantastic time interviewing so many different woodworkers and makers such as Marc Spagnuolo, Roy Underhill, DIY Danie, Matthias Wandel, Bourbon Moth, Jimmy Diresta, Blacktail Studio, and many many more. I guarantee you'll enjoy the conversations and learn something in each episode. Check it out on [Spotify](#), [Apple](#), and all other podcast platforms.

Plywood Demystified



Here's one of the most useful videos I've seen in a while. This is from recent podcast guest Brad, from [Fix This, Build That](#). In it, he demystifies the weird grading system used for plywood. Watch this and be well-informed the next time you buy plywood.

Get the most out of your miter gauge

One of the best jigs you can make for your table saw is a crosscut sled. If you haven't seen my simple version, [check it out](#), along with some other essential jigs.

But in many cases, a miter gauge can work just as well. It just needs a few simple improvements. Here are some simple things you can do to get more out of that cheapie one that came with your saw.



Community Highlight

The Karpinteros

Last month I was contacted by Vinchi, a fellow DIY content creator who is located in the Philippines. He shared his personal channel and page with me, as well as informed me about a Facebook Group that he is an admin for called The Karpinteros. This directly translates to carpenters in English but in the Philippines is used to refer to wood, mason/stone, and metal workers.

This group shares project photos, and tips and tricks for a variety of hobbies. To my surprise, my channel has inspired the group's members to begin or continue their woodworking journey. How cool!

It makes me smile when I hear how videos made in my shop can impact communities halfway around the world.

Keep up the good work, Karpinteros!



My modest workshop and basic tool tutorials gave Vinchi the confidence he needed to build his own workspace (the shed above) as well as a crib for his son. Well done!

This Month's Member Projects

Check out these great gift ideas built by a few of our [Weekend Workshop](#) and [Weekend Woodworker](#) members!



Simple Ornaments

Nobody said gift projects need to be complicated! Check out these ornaments Joe cut and his wife, Katie, painted. These would be fun to customize as a family!



Gifts for Gamers

Games are great gifts for the whole family. Here's a Tock game Philippe made. If you haven't heard of Tock, it's similar to Pachisi, Aggravation, or even Sorry.



Wonderful Wishing Well

This isn't probably a gift idea, but man do I love this wishing well! I seriously want to make one of these for my yard. Love the color. Great job, Vincen!

Thanks for reading,

- Steve

P.S. If you are new this month, you can read last month's issue of Notes From the Shop [here](#).

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