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Hi Steve R,

There's a common misconception among non-woodworkers that people who build their own furniture and other home projects must save a fortune by doing it themselves. This was the case many years ago, back before modern mass production and distribution streamlined the process, allowing us to furnish an entire household without ever needing to leave home.

And I'm not just talking about disposable, knockdown furniture you can put together with an Allen wrench, but rather furniture that you can shop for at higher-end retailers that can certainly last for decades. This kind of furniture looks and functions great. Most likely, it's made from MDF with real wood veneer. It might feature quality drawer runners and machine-cut dovetails holding the drawers together. It's unlikely a solitary woodworker could build, say, a dresser like this for less money than just buying it.

Of course, this is nothing new to us. It only takes building your first project for you to realize the costs involved in making something out of wood. Sure, there's the wildly fluctuating cost of lumber (is wood the new Bitcoin?) but there are also consumables such as sandpaper, glue, screws, and assorted whatnot. There's the cost of energy to power your tools as well as the expense of tool maintenance – not to mention the time involved in making something. And let's not forget those little goofs that end up in the scrap bin.

This isn't to say that making projects or woodworking in general has to be expensive. I'm a big proponent of buying used or consumer-grade tools and obtaining free or upcycled lumber. And making smaller projects such as gift boxes can be just as

satisfying as big furniture projects while taking a smaller chunk of your paycheck. Plus, there are a million tips and tricks online that will save you money. Woodworking can fit into any budget.

Brand new woodworkers often experience a light bulb moment after their first few projects that there's more to this whole woodworking thing than building a table. Your very first project might be a bit of a struggle. You will be hyper-focused on every single measurement and you will still cut something the wrong size. Your assembly might come together a little wonky. You'll have gaps. Your finish may look a little sketchy. But damn, you made a thing!

Your second project will go much smoother because you apply a bunch of basic skills you learned during the first project. You'll notice things are starting to make more sense. You may even spot a few pitfalls that you can avoid. Before you finish this project, you start thinking about your next project and begin planning it out in your head.

And by now you might start to understand the intrinsic benefits of making projects out of wood. It's a craft that requires a hand and mind connection, and thinking several steps ahead is essential. You need to be able to imagine the big picture in order to accomplish tiny tasks. Every project you make will have its own challenges you need to overcome and problems you need to fix.

Woodworking is a brain activity that's been linked to improved mental health. Personally, I think it contributes to a healthier lifestyle in general. Sure, it's about making a project, but the longer you keep building, the more you'll start to embrace the process itself and realize how much more valuable *your* projects are than the stuff you can buy.

Have a great month,

Steve

New to woodworking? Does buying lumber intimidate you?

Don't feel lost

I've heard from a lot of beginners that they're a little unprepared for their first trip to the lumber department of the blue or orange big box home center. So in this video, I want to arm you with confidence and knowledge to make the experience a little less overwhelming.



What are your thoughts on epoxy?

I recently spoke to Cam Anderson on my podcast about why the epoxy trend has so many people talking and why [Blacktail Studio](#) is the fastest growing and most popular Maker channel on YouTube right now. People (myself included) love watching him make enormous tables out of huge slabs of wood combined with epoxy. ([Listen to the interview here.](#))



Also, check out what my friend Blake McFarland ([BM Sculptures](#)) is doing with epoxy. I think his work is absolutely gorgeous.



So what are your thoughts? Is this a trend you'd like to see vanish or do you think it's here to stay? Do you love it or hate it? **Take a moment to fill out [this poll](#)** and I'll let you know the results next month.

Community Highlight

Christmas traditions

In response to last month's newsletter, a member of our woodworking community wrote in to share a Christmas tradition that I found too great not to share.

Each year Florent spends time in his shop making toys to donate to children in his neighborhood. Then, on Christmas Eve he and his kids pull on their ugly sweaters and hit the town to deliver the presents. This year he built 11 airplanes using my [2015 plans](#), as well as three [duck pull toys](#) from the plans I shared back in 2014.

Not only did he craft fun toys to share with his neighbors, but the finished products are SO cute! Well done, Florent!

Check out the feathered families he made especially for children that had studied these specific birds. To test your knowledge, try to name these species before reaching the answers at the bottom of the issue. ;)



This Month's Member Projects

Here are two cat-themed projects members of [The Weekend Woodworker](#) made this month!

Side table cat house



Anything with a cat will catch my attention, as did this little cozy little box Edmond made for his cats who, naturally, prefer to sit on top! 🐱

While I personally love the mid-century aesthetic with the hairpin legs, the cats aren't as enamored. Edmond says no cat has gone into the box yet. Cats, amirite?

One thing you might try is making another hole in the side, or even one on each side. Cats seem to prefer to have multiple exit options in case they need to make a quick getaway.



Scratching in style

Oh alright, since you insist, here's another cat project! 🐱 Matthew's been making these fancy holders for cardboard cat scratchers.

These definitely get the [Cobra and Bubbles](#) seal of approval. The poofball is "Carbon".

Okay, okay. **Next month I'll feature some of your doggo projects.** Let me see what you've made!

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](#).

P.P.S. The featured species from top to bottom: An American black duck with 2 dickcissels, black-legged kittiwakes, and a family of Puerto-Rican sharp-shinned hawks.

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