



Issue 50, August 2024

Hello friends,

Whoa! This is issue #50! That's a round number.

August always feels like the last month of summer even though the season staggers three weeks into September. I hope you've been enjoying your time! Did you go to the beach? Amity Island? Spend time at a cabin in the woods? Camp Crystal Lake? Or do you prefer just relaxing at home on good ol' Elm Street? Let me know! Personally, I've been feeling a bit overwhelmed with the non-woodworking stuff on my plate and would very much like to get back to just being regular whelmed lol. It's been a summer where I have been unable to get in much time building things, which bothers me. It shouldn't.

So this issue will be a bit shorter than usual as I try to organize my life a little lol. I thought I'd keep it as breezy-as-summer this month and offer some woodworking advice that I've gained over the past 16 years. Some of this you've heard me yapping about for years, but there might be some new tidbits. And a few things I need to remind myself of. Yeeeah... basically, this is my personal therapy issue. 😄

I say the past 16 years because the work I've been doing related to YouTube has been the most prolific period of woodworking in my life. It's highly unlikely that I would have ever built the hundreds of things I have without the push of it being my job to produce "content."

So here's some woodworking advice:

1. **If you want to be a woodworker, make things.** If you want to be an artist, make art. If you want to be a writer, write. In other words, just do the thing.
2. **Get comfortable and proficient using a table saw.** Obviously, if you are interested in hand-tool woodworking this doesn't apply, but in the modern, power tool workshop, a [table saw is immensely useful](#). Some experienced woodworkers may take issue with this and suggest alternatives such as a track saw, radial arm saw, or even a bandsaw, but no cutting tool is as reliable, accurate, versatile, and relatively easy to use as a table saw. There are very few projects I make that don't get run through my table saw at some point. The only drawback to using a table saw is that it has the potential to cause physical harm if used incorrectly. Which brings me to...
3. **Safety is no joke.** Take it seriously. I have managed to run a tablesaw and other power tools thousands of times in my life and never suffered a serious injury on any of them because I never become complacent. I have lots of videos on woodworking safety and I include safety tips in almost every video. My best tip is to never make any cut or use any tool if you are not 100% certain how to use it; and more importantly, how the specific cut you intend to make will play out. Imagine where your hands and body will be positioned from the moment you flip the power switch on until you power it off.
4. **Prioritize things you *want* to make.** Sure there will be things you "need" to make, but the things you want to make will often turn out

better. Find a passion project, maybe something purely decorative, or maybe a project that introduces a new technique, and have fun with it. No pressure.

5. **All woodworking projects are doable.** Have you ever run across someone on Instagram or YouTube who makes absolutely stunning furniture, and then discover that they only began woodworking a year ago? The only difference between them and you is they were ambitious and focused, probably with more time on their hands. But everything they do is stuff anyone can do. Sometimes, especially if you are new to woodworking, you may think that a certain project is beyond your skill level. Limiting beliefs are powerful: Eliminate them. Every woodworking project, no matter how complex, is just a series of smaller, easy-to-comprehend steps.
6. **Pay attention to aesthetics.** We sometimes get so caught up in the mechanics of building that we lose sight of the appearance. Little things like selecting boards with pleasing wood grain patterns and thinking about space and proportion will go a long way to a more satisfying final result.
7. **Fix mistakes rather than starting over.** Almost every mistake in woodworking is fixable in some way. It's tempting to scrap the board or whatever you're working on and start over. One of the most satisfying parts of woodworking is overcoming challenges, so embrace these opportunities to build your skill set.
8. **Don't over-sand.** Most projects will require sanding to smooth the wood, remove blemishes, and prepare the surfaces for paint, stain, or finish. Usually, this is a two or three-grit progression. Depending on the condition of the wood, you first sand with a coarse grit (60 or 80), then progress to a medium grit (100 or 120). Quite often this is enough. Sometimes, you might want to smooth the surfaces a bit more with a fine grit (220). Stop here.

With the wide range of sandpapers available, you may want to keep sanding with finer and finer grits, all the way to 1200 or even

higher. The wood will feel amazingly silky smooth. But as soon as you apply a wood finish, all that time will have been wasted. The *finish* is what you are feeling when you run your hand along a smooth tabletop, not the wood. Also, sanding to such a high grit can actually prevent a good finish; the super fine sandpaper tends to burnish the wood, preventing proper adhesion of the finish.

9. **Use plans.** Whether you design your own furniture (something I highly recommend) or buy plans, your time spent in the shop will be so much more efficient than just winging it. I draw up plans for almost everything I make, no matter how simple. That pre-planning allows me to walk into my shop and follow my own set of directions. It's the difference between using a recipe to bake a cake and just eyeballing flour and sugar amounts.
10. **Woodworking is not a sport.** Unfortunately, like any hobby, woodworking comes with gatekeepers who seem to have purity tests regarding what constitutes "real" woodworking. If someone accuses you of "cheating" because you use a CNC or pocket screws or nails or epoxy or rubber bands or duct tape or whatever, understand that woodworking is not a competition. *Cheating does not exist.* You are not breaking any rules because of the techniques or tools you choose to build with. Enjoy woodworking however you want. Maybe you'll come up with something truly revolutionary!
11. **Enjoy the process.** Of course, completing a piece of furniture is very satisfying, but enjoying the time spent building a project is more important. If your only goal is to furnish your home, just buy furniture. It's a lot cheaper and easier than making your own. The real magic of woodworking is taking time to appreciate the experience of shaping and assembling raw materials to create something that didn't exist before.
12. **Don't belittle your work.** Never point out your mistakes to people. Don't tell them, "Well, it didn't turn out exactly how I hoped it would." What you are making at this moment in your woodworking

journey represents the best of your abilities right now. Respect that.

13. **Observe woodworking wherever you see it.** Look around!

Examine furniture in the wild and see how it was built. Take photos of everything that you like and keep an idea file.

Just a few things to think about as you are growing and learning. Woodworking should be fun, challenging, frustrating, and a reflection of your capacity to do things you never thought you were capable of. But it should never be a drag.

I'd love to know any bits of wisdom you've gathered while woodworking. Let me know! Just hit reply to this email.

Final tomato update of the summer. All four plants are bursting with tomatoes!



Also, random thought: Halloween is right around the corner!

—Steve

Plans Update

I've heard from so many of you wondering what happened to my old plans...the ones mentioned in old videos of mine. Here's what happened. I used to have an overly bloated website with a different .net domain. When I built my new website, [ShopWWMM](#), I neglected to change any of the links in the descriptions of my old videos. After a few weeks, I got a bunch of take-down notices from YouTube, who thought my dead links were nefarious. Like, half of my videos were removed from view! I had to go through all 775 of them, one by one, and remove all links to the old "formeremortals" domain.

Luckily I was able to get all those old videos back online, but with no links in the descriptions; thus my calls to "Download free plans... link in description" left viewers with frustrating mysteries.



SO, I have finally begun the slow process of adding these old plans to my website. You can find them at ShopWWMM.com in the “**Legacy Plans**” section. I stuck them in their own area because frankly, they aren’t that good. At least compared to the fully detailed plans I make these days. I mean, they’re accurate, but they just don’t have as much step-by-step instruction. And of course, they are all still free.

I'll be adding more and more as I can...and updating the links in those old videos.

By the way, all of my plans (including the premium plans) are available for free by becoming a \$5 member of [my Patreon](#).

Creative Culture Conversations

I recently had a delightful [conversation with Dannie Berger](#) about creativity, and if it even matters in today's landscape of social media. Is it good enough to create something and post a picture of it? Or has short-form video fundamentally changed the way art is created?



I also chatted with TikTok creator [Dandy Demon](#), in a conversation that [meandered all over the place](#)! From the value of TikTok communities, to generating steady income on OnlyFans, to her experience with an online stalker. This is a fun and fast-paced episode I'm sure you will enjoy!



Creative Culture is available on all podcast platforms, [YouTube](#), and on the [Creative Culture website](#).

Reader Mail

“Growing up as an engineer and computer specialist I understood that details and structure are important. They are comforting in a world seemingly without rules where there are no longer any punishments for bad behaviors like shoplifting.

Structure is my happy place. Where things have a purpose, where every screw or nail contributes to the stability and functionality of the whole.”
—Chip C.

It's worth dipping your toe into a little anti-structure. (In a controlled manner, haha.) Maybe rejecting structure in certain situations can lead to new ways of looking at the world and contribute to a sense of creative freedom. —Steve

“I’m sure I’ve written this before, but I absolutely love your written pieces that have a nostalgic quality to them. They always capture the

bittersweet nature of memories and how everyday experiences have helped to shape our present and future. I just love them and would certainly be interested in a longer-form version if you had any aspirations to write a book.

Regardless, keep on keeping on!” —Carla H.

Thanks, Carla! I've thought about writing a book, but I've never been able to prioritize time for such a venture. Maybe! —Steve

“I look forward to your newsletter editorials and find myself laughing out loud when I’m all by myself reading them. You have a terrific sense of humor and please know that there are folks out in your audience that appreciate your writing. Thank you for your efforts to inform us, and entertain us.” —Mike H.

I fret over getting this written every month. I'm so happy you enjoy it! —Steve

“Hey Team! Please tell Steve that he described my childhood to a ‘T’. I can’t believe it, I grew up in Toronto and he in Cali, but it’s the exact same thing. Uncanny!! Very cool!!

P.S. Ask Steve if after The Price is Right, he watched Alice. On our ABC station from Buffalo, Alice came on right after. There was one more show that I don’t remember right now and then off to the pool for Marco Polo. 😄👩” —Shane E.

Haha, of course. “Kiss my grits!” —Steve

“I remember those summers where whatever happened that day was what was supposed to happen without planning. I’m semi-retired now

and drive a school bus so I have some reason to get up in the morning. So I once again have the summers free. I define 'pure luxury' as having nothing to do and all day to get it done.

There was a poem my father once quoted that encapsulated the idea. The line I remember is "All summer long has an always sound." —Pat P.

Somehow, summers used to feel much longer! —Steve

*Thoughts on this month's newsletter? Got a story to tell? Just want to say hi?
Drop me a line by simply replying to this email.*

Member Projects

"I'm declaring myself finished with [The Weekend Woodworker](#) course, since I omitted the wall cabinet (when I showed a picture of it to my partner and asked her if it might go somewhere in the house, she said, and I quote: "hell no!" Sorry Steve.)

This was a great experience! I'm somewhat of a serial hobbyist and I've found woodworking to be very forgiving to the beginner. Most mistakes can be fixed, and I'm actually pretty pleased with the outcomes of everything I built. It all looks acceptable and is being used around the house or backyard.

I was a little skeptical of the course at first (would I really build these pieces?) but major kudos to Steve for putting together a progression of projects, paired with great instructional videos that gave me a solid foundation in woodworking that I can now carry forward to new things.

I'd seen a picture of a kayak stand on the Internet, and boom – a little bit of time in SketchUp, two days to put it together, and I now have my very own copy. That's not something I would have been able to do before."

—Michael J.



Love the green California Casual Side Table! Great job on the projects and thanks for the ringing endorsement. Well, except for the Catalina Wall Cabinet 😂 —Steve

“Not a course project but a Steve project nonetheless. It is the Springtime Planter Box from April I believe. Very fun to do. This one is a birthday gift.” —J.D. P.



Looks great! Love the contrasting wood colors. —Steve

“I’m new here and new to woodworking altogether. For years I have wanted to get into this craft and finally got the courage to do it. I took

this week off from work and I was super excited to work on the BMW and the side table every day for 4 days (2 days each). I'm super happy with how they turned out despite all the imperfections." —Mariam R.



Life is better with a BMW in the shop! Thanks, Mariam. —Steve

Have you made something you want over a quarter million people to see in next month's newsletter? Just hit reply and send me a pic.

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