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perfect Mitered Edging

With the right setup and a few simple techniques, you can cut perfect, gap-free joints.

■ When I built the hobby bench (above), one of the first things I wanted to do is get a perfectly mitered corner (see inset photo above). Getting seamless miter joints can be a challenge so I asked Steve, our shop craftsman, how he did it. He uses a simple technique that guarantees great results.

Start Square. It goes without saying that you need to start with a straight and square panel. This makes the process of fitting the edging go a lot smoother. It also means making sure your table saw is set up for accurate 90° cuts. And an accurate setup carries over to cutting the mitered corners of the edging that wraps around the panel.

Table Saw Setup. While I sometimes angle the miter gauge to cut miters, Steve pointed out that he gets better results by tilting the blade, as in the photo at left. He uses a digital angle gauge to set the blade to 45°, leaving the miter gauge square to the blade (inset photo at far left). Using this

method, the top of the saw table fully supports the workpiece. This helps keep it stable during the cut and minimizes any flexing.

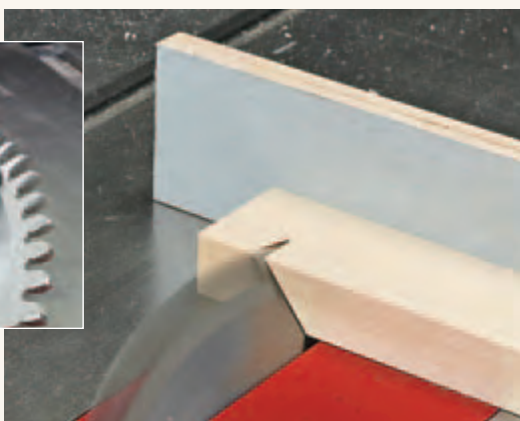
APPLYING THE EDGING

With the saw set up, you can start to work on the edging. Let me give you an overview of the process. Instead of starting on one side and working around the panel, the process starts with the ends (short sides) of the panel first. Once those pieces are positioned accurately, you fit the longer pieces between them. You'll see the benefits of this method on the step-by-step process that follows.

Reference Blocks. Before getting started, the first step is to miter a couple short pieces of edging to use as reference blocks. You'll use these blocks to help locate and fit the first piece of edging. The photo at the top of the opposite page shows you what I mean.



▲ **Accurate Setup.** A digital angle gauge helps guarantee an accurate miter.



▲ **Tilted Blade.** Using the table top to support the workpiece along its length yields an accurate cut and a tight-fitting joint.



Cut to Fit. Start by temporarily clamping one of the reference blocks on the long edge of the panel at the corner. You can use the second reference block to position it precisely at the corner.

Now cut a miter on one end of the edging and fit it against the reference block. Then it's an easy task to mark the length of the edging along the opposite edge of the panel. This mark will be a guideline as you sneak up on the fit.

At this point you can clamp the second reference block to the opposite edge, as shown in the photo above. Now you're ready to do a little fine-tuning on the short end piece. Cut the edging a little long and check the fit.

Keep checking the fit and shaving a little at a time until you get a perfect joint. You're aiming for a seamless miter and no gap all along the edge of the panel. I like to use a couple of bar clamps to lend a helping hand during this process (drawing at right).

Time For Clamps. Once you're happy with the fit, it's time to apply the glue and clamp the edging in place. Parallel-jaw clamps are ideal for this, as you can see in the main photo and photo at right.

But I find F-style bar clamps work as well. Just make sure to place a few both under and over

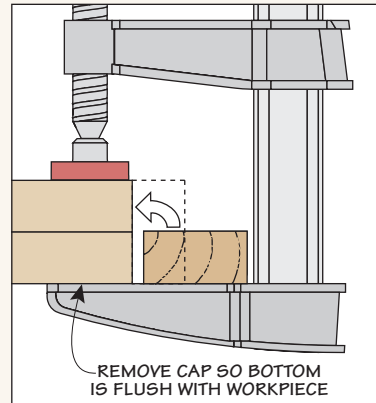
the panel to keep the edging tight along the top and bottom edges of the panel for a gap-free joint line.

Glueup. It's during the glueup that the reference blocks provide one last benefit. They keep the edging from slipping side-to-side on the wet glue as you tighten the clamps down. And the shorter vertical clamps help provide a working platform for applying glue and rotating the piece into place, as you can see in the photos and drawing above. With one end complete, you can repeat the process at the opposite end of the panel.

Long Edges. After you've glued on the two short edges, they'll become your references for



◀ **Reference Blocks.** A mitered scrap piece clamped to each end will help you fit the first piece of edging.



◀ **Handy Helpers.** Use clamps to help hold the workpiece when applying glue.

cutting and fitting the long pieces. Here again, concentrate on one piece at a time (photo below). These longer pieces have a tendency to bow and twist more than the shorter ones, so they require a little more time and test-fitting. But it pays off in a seamless fit, as the inset photo on the opposite page shows. The result of a little patience and taking one step at a time will speak for itself. 🛠️



◀ **Take It Slow.** After the short pieces are glued in place, turn your attention to the long edges.