

# Add a Drawer to a Table

A well-engineered pocket guarantees that a drawer will run true in all seasons

BY STEVE LATTA

As is often the case with furniture, the parts we don't see can be just as important as the ones we do. This nightstand has a single drawer and for that drawer to work properly, it needs an invisible infrastructure that allows it to slide in and out easily without binding, stop in the proper location, and avoid tipping too far down. That means installing drawer runners, guides, a kicker, and stops. There are lots of ways of approaching all of this, but the simple methods shown here work in the vast majority of applications.

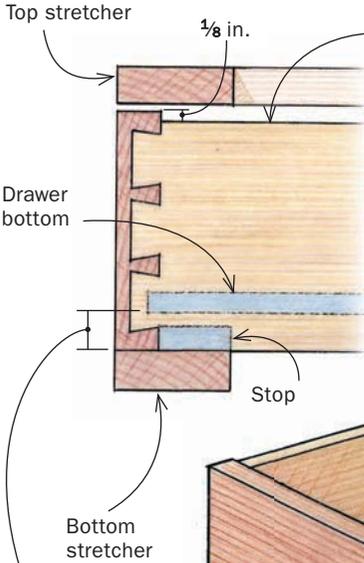
## Smart milling

If you mill parts for the drawer infrastructure at the same time as the rest of the piece, you'll save time and increase accuracy. On just about every table I have made, the bottoms of the lower stretchers line up with the bottom edge of the back and side aprons. Consequently, the runners will end up the same thickness as the lower stretcher, and the kicker the same as the top stretcher. Rather than trying to match them up later, simply take all those parts to thickness at the same time. And

## KEYS TO FLAWLESS DRAWER FUNCTION

In this article we'll focus on building a perfect drawer pocket, with guides and runners that keep the drawer running straight and true, stops that keep the drawer in place, and a well-placed kicker that prevents tipping. You also need to build the drawer correctly to ensure that all those parts can do their jobs properly.

### BUILD A GOOD DRAWER



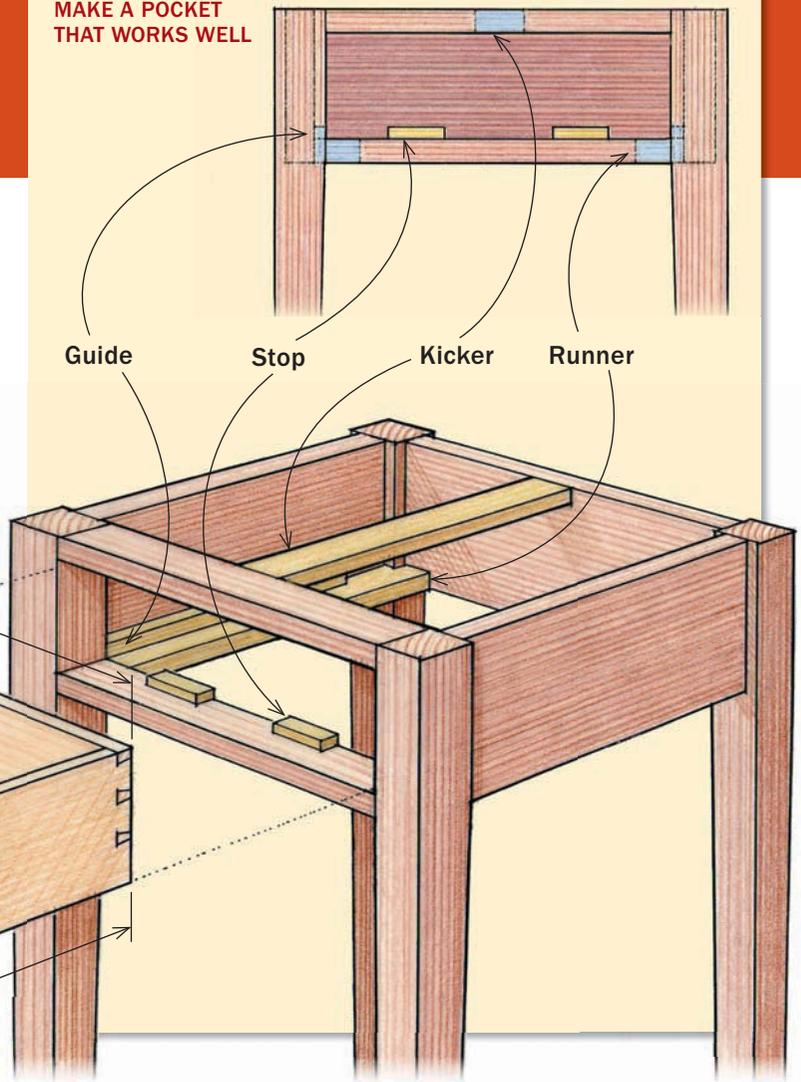
1. Make the side  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. narrower than the front. This allows the front to have a minimal gap in the opening without having to worry about the sides swelling and rubbing with humidity.

2. The back should be about  $\frac{1}{16}$  in. narrower than the front, creating a slightly tapered drawer. The front will fit better, and the sides won't bind on the legs or guides.

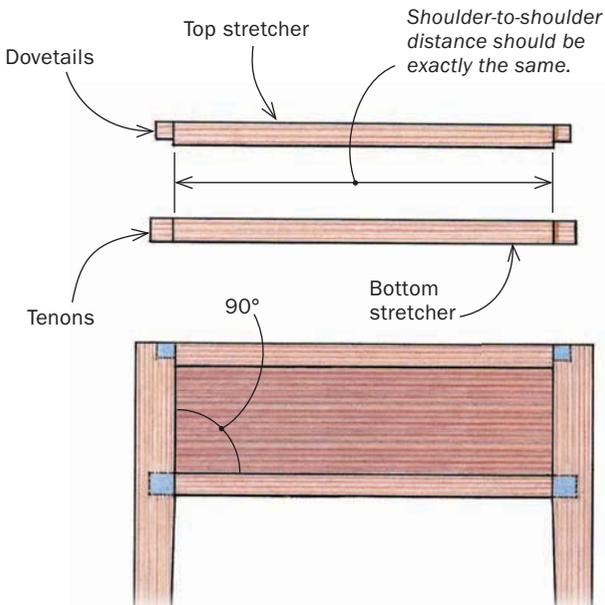
3. The bottom should rest at least  $\frac{5}{16}$  in. up from the lower edge of the sides to allow room for drawer stops that will be glued to the lower stretcher.

4. The overall depth of the drawer must stop short of the rear legs so the back doesn't bump into them every time it closes.

### MAKE A POCKET THAT WORKS WELL



### START WITH A SQUARE OPENING



**Foolproof construction.** If the shoulder-to-shoulder distance of the top stretcher, bottom stretcher, and back apron match, the drawer box is guaranteed to be square.



## KICKER KEEPS DRAWER FROM TIPPING



**No-tip construction.** The kicker has a  $\frac{1}{4}$ -in.-long tenon on each end that fits into mortises in the rear apron and top stretcher.

since the runner and kicker require no specific width, it makes sense to match their width to the stretchers.

### No tipping

I lay out the mortises for the kicker in the rear apron and top stretcher using a marking gauge and knife, then cut them by hand using a chisel. After the mortises are cut, I dry-assemble the table, measure the distance from the rear apron to the top stretcher, and add  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. for each of the  $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. tenons. Then I cut the tenons on the tablesaw using a miter gauge with an auxiliary fence. I plane and give a final sanding to all the pieces and glue up the table, including the kicker. I add the runners, guides, and stops later.

### A drawer that glides

The runners provide the track that the drawer runs on while it moves in and out of the table. I notch mine around the back leg.

Using a small double square, transfer the two offsets of the rear leg to the back of the runner. Although they should be the same, differences occur. To some, such an accurate fit might seem a

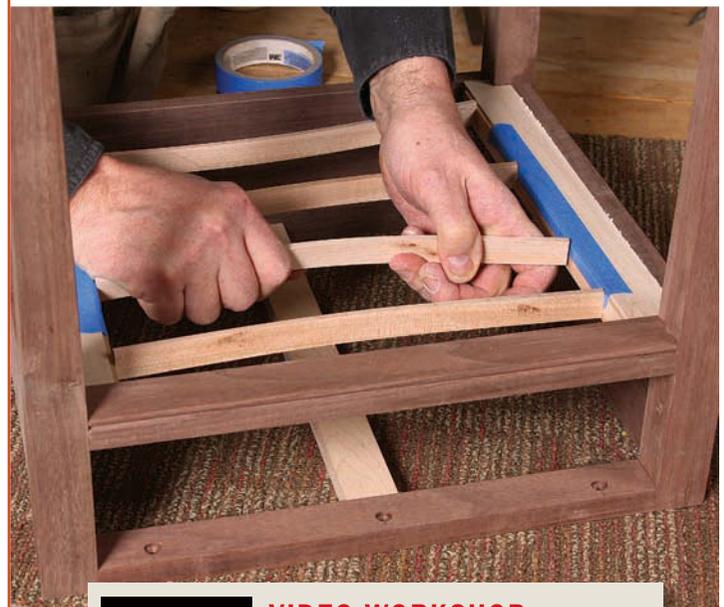
## RUNNERS CREATE THE SMOOTH RIDE



**Notch first, length later.** The runners are notched to fit around the rear legs. Latta cuts them at the tablesaw using the fence as a stop and sneaking up on the fit. Once the fit is dialed in, cut the runners to final length.



**Sprung wedges for clamps.** The runners are glued and clamped in place (left) with thin strips of wood wedged to create pressure without marring (below). The process works well if the exterior has already been finished.



### VIDEO WORKSHOP

Watch Latta build this table from start to finish in a members-only video at [FineWoodworking.com/262](http://FineWoodworking.com/262).

## GUIDES ADD SIDE-TO-SIDE STABILITY



**Two small notches have big payoffs.** Both are cut along the length. The notch against the apron straddles any squeeze-out (top left). The notch on the inner face makes trimming with a shoulder plane a breeze. Cut the guide 2 in. short. Set it tight to the front (top right). If you need to plane it, the full run will be easier than trying to chisel the last 1½ in. or so (above).

waste of time, but I simply am not in that camp. The work must be clean, readily seen or not.

### Runners and guides keep the drawer aligned

The guides fit against the apron and are flush with the inside corner of the leg. Rip a small notch ( $\frac{1}{16}$  in. by  $\frac{1}{16}$  in.) on both bottom edges of the guide. After the runners and guides have been installed and the finish applied, I add a pair of stops that keep the drawer in the right place every time it is closed. Rub a little paraffin along the bottom edge of the drawer, and you're ready to go. □

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## STOPS MAKE IT ALL LOOK GOOD



**Glue the stops in place.** With the tabletop off and the drawer bottom removed, slide the drawer into its closed position in the opening. Glue and clamp the stops 1½ in. from the sides.



**Flush up and fit.** If the stop overhangs the lower stretcher, use a block plane to trim it flush (left). If the front of the drawer protrudes from the table, trim a bit off the front of the stop (below) and try again. The fronts of the stops are notched like the guides to simplify planing.

