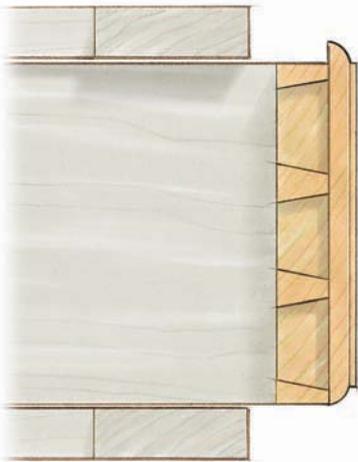
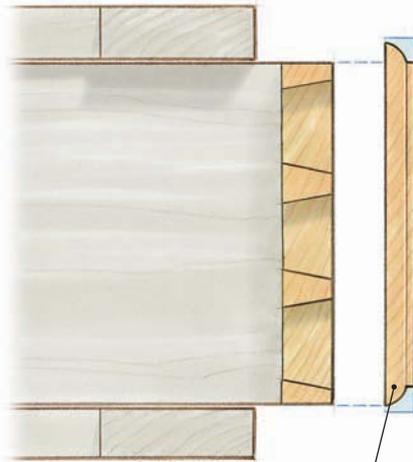


2 Options for Lipped Drawers



ONE-PIECE FRONT



APPLIED FRONT

Clever construction tips for both

BY CHRISTIAN BECKSVORT

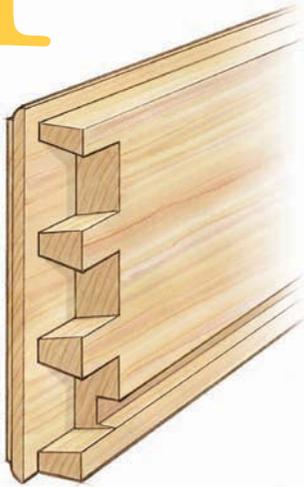
Lipped, or half-overlay, drawers have a distinct appeal. They are more decorative than flush drawers, with a molded profile on all four edges. And they cover the gaps on the sides and top of the drawer. Just as half-blind dovetails are more involved to make than through-dovetails, so lipped drawers require more work than flush drawers. I'll show you two approaches to this elegant method of drawer construction. In one approach, you make the lip integral to the drawer front. In the other, you create the lip by first building a drawer box, then gluing on a thin, oversize false front.

The more traditional method

Traditionally, lipped drawers were built by first rabbeting and molding the drawer front and then dovetailing the parts. Assuming the drawer front is $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick, you would cut $\frac{1}{2}$ -in.-deep by $\frac{1}{4}$ -in.-wide rabbets on the two ends and the top. The bottom does not get rabbeted because a lip there would be vulnerable to breaking if the drawer were removed and set down. However, a decorative profile, whether quarter-round or thumbnail, is cut into all four edges. The rabbeted portion of the drawer front should fit tightly into the case opening, just like a flush drawer, with appropriate room at the top to allow for wood movement. As an aside, when making drawers taller than 9 in., the width of the top lip should be increased to cover the greater amount of seasonal wood movement.



1 Solid front



RABBET AND ROUT THE DRAWER FRONT

Cut the rabbet. Two cuts on each end (right) and along the top (below) of the drawer front blank create the rabbet, leaving a lip on three edges.



Add a profile. Rout all four sides of the drawer front to create a decorative profile.



After you have cut the rabbets and molded the profiles, the dovetailing can begin. To establish the baseline of the tails, transfer the depth of the rabbet to the drawer side. Then scribe a line representing the thickness of the drawer side onto the inside of the drawer front. Because of the lip, this is difficult to do with a marking gauge and is best done by laying the pieces on each other and using a knife to scribe the lines. Once the tails are laid out, sawn, and chiseled, transfer them to the ends of the drawer fronts. With the end of the drawer side held tightly against the lip, you'll need a very narrow knife to get into the tail cut-outs (see photo, opposite page).

Sawing the pins for these half-blind dovetails is more difficult than with flush drawers, because the lip gets in the way. To avoid sawing into the lip or past the scribe mark, you have to stop after cutting only about a third of the sides of each pin. The rest needs to be chiseled out. To get into the corners, a fishtail chisel comes in really handy. The waste gets wider at the bottom and needs to be split to avoid breaking the top edges of the pins.

When the half-blind dovetails and the back through-dovetails are fitted, the drawer can be glued. Once the glue has

TAILS FIRST

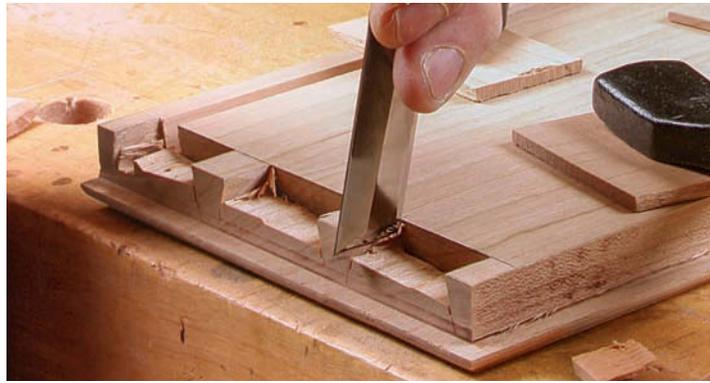


Accurate transfer is the key. Transfer the depth of the rabbet to the drawer side (top). Also transfer the side thickness to the inside of the drawer front (above). A marking gauge won't work with the lip in the way, so put the side in place and use a knife to scribe the location.



Transfer tails to pin board. Becksvoort uses a spacer in the drawer-bottom groove to align the tail board to the pin board. Slide the tail board up to the lip on the drawer front and scribe the tails onto the pin board.

PINS ARE A LITTLE TRICKY



Lip gets in the way. You can saw only about a third of the side of each pin before you saw into the lip. You'll have to chisel the rest.

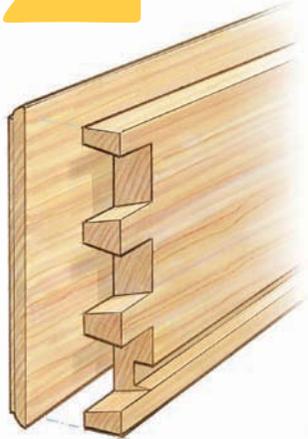


Getting at the rest of the pins. As with regular half-blind dovetails, chisel in from three angles: Chop to the scribe line, pare to the sides, and clean out between the pins to the level of the lip. To get into the corners, a fishtail chisel is really handy.

Tricky trimming. Neither plane nor sander can trim the pins while leaving the lip intact. Instead, pare them flush with a chisel. A cranked neck or offset chisel is best (below), or you can use a regular chisel with the bevel side down.



2 Applied front creates the lip



APPLY THE FALSE FRONT



Make it oversize. After building a drawer box with through-dovetails, glue on an oversize false front, matching it to the drawer-front wood.

dried, the pins must be trimmed flush. This is the trickiest part of the procedure, since neither plane nor sander can trim the pins while leaving the lip intact. Even a bullnose plane is not the answer because the lip is quite fragile. The time-honored method is to pare the pins with a chisel. A cranked neck or offset chisel is best, although you can carefully pare using a regular chisel with the bevel side down.

An applied front

The second method for making a lipped drawer is simply to apply a thin, oversize false front to the completed drawer. The drawer box, made from 1/2-in.-thick parts, is fitted to the opening the same way you'd fit a flush drawer (tight or slightly oversize on the sides, with the appropriate gap at the top). You can use secondary wood for



Position the applied front. Center the applied front left to right on the drawer box. Use spring clamps to hold the front so that it only slightly overhangs the drawer bottom.



Clamp it down. Use a caul on top of the applied front so you don't mar it, and tighten the clamps lightly.



Remove the spring clamps. When the bigger clamps are holding the front in place, take away the spring clamps, add more big clamps, and tighten it all down.

TRIM TO SIZE AND ROUT THE PROFILE

The front is flush on the bottom. Use a block plane to flush the bottom of the applied front to the bottom of the drawer box.



the sides and back; the front needs to be primary wood. You'll make all four corners as through-dovetails, so use the marking gauge to scribe the corners, and make the drawer. What could be easier? Fitting the drawer is the best part; the plane or sander glides right over all four sides.

Once the drawer box is fitted, mill the wood for the false front to $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick and make it a good bit more than $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wider and $\frac{1}{4}$ in. taller than the drawer box. Now carefully glue on the false front, reducing the amount of glue along the edges to avoid squeeze-out. Use tape or spring clamps to align the false front, and use a thick scrap, about the size of the drawer front, as a caul to prevent clamp marks. Clamp it up and allow it to dry.

Then flush the bottom of the front to the bottom of the drawer box. Trim the top and side lips to final size. And finally, rout a quarter round or thumbnail profile into all four edges (sides first, then the top and bottom). You now have a lipped drawer that required much less work than the traditional method. □

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Cut it to size. On the tablesaw with the bottom of the drawer front against the fence, rip the top lip to size (above). Then crosscut the two side lips to size (left).



Add the profile. On the router table, profile the perimeter of the newly applied front.