

The language of furniture construction

BY STEVE SCOTT

An old Czech proverb says that to learn a new language is to gain a new soul. That transformative power also exists in woodworking, where the craft's dialect can seem as bewildering to the newcomer as a foreign tongue. Grasp it, though, and you'll begin to see and think in new ways.

Like any craft, woodworking has specialized terms for its tools and techniques. It is full of everyday words that live different lives in the woodshop—from frogs and fences to stretchers and aprons. A comprehensive glossary could fill a book, and has, but this short one will get you started.

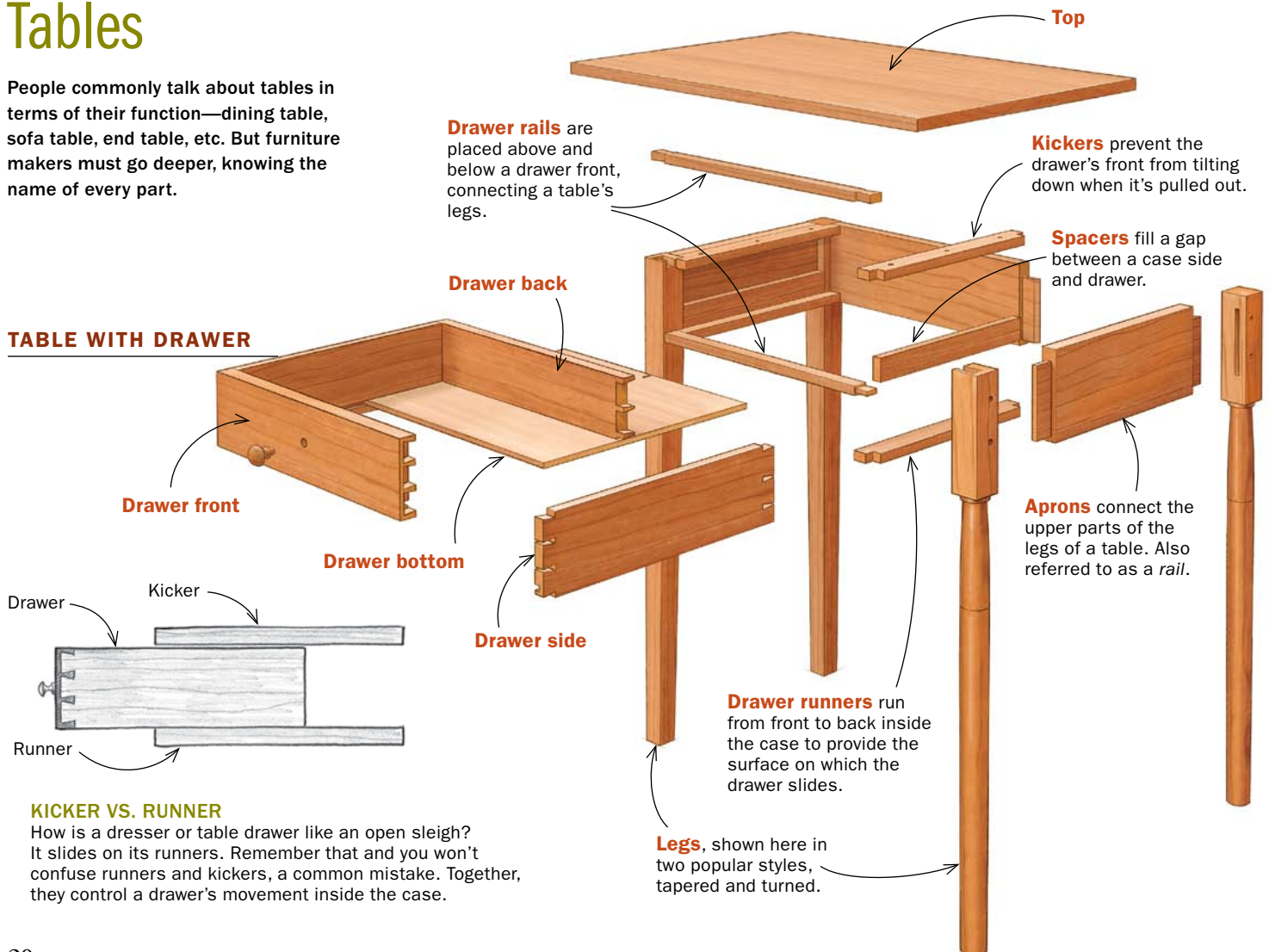
Because the furniture itself is the heart of furniture making, we decided to begin with a visual glossary of furniture parts. When you start researching projects you'd like to tackle, or you find yourself describing what you want to build, this guide will help. It will also act as a reader's guide to *Fine Woodworking* magazine, representing the official terms we have settled on over the decades.

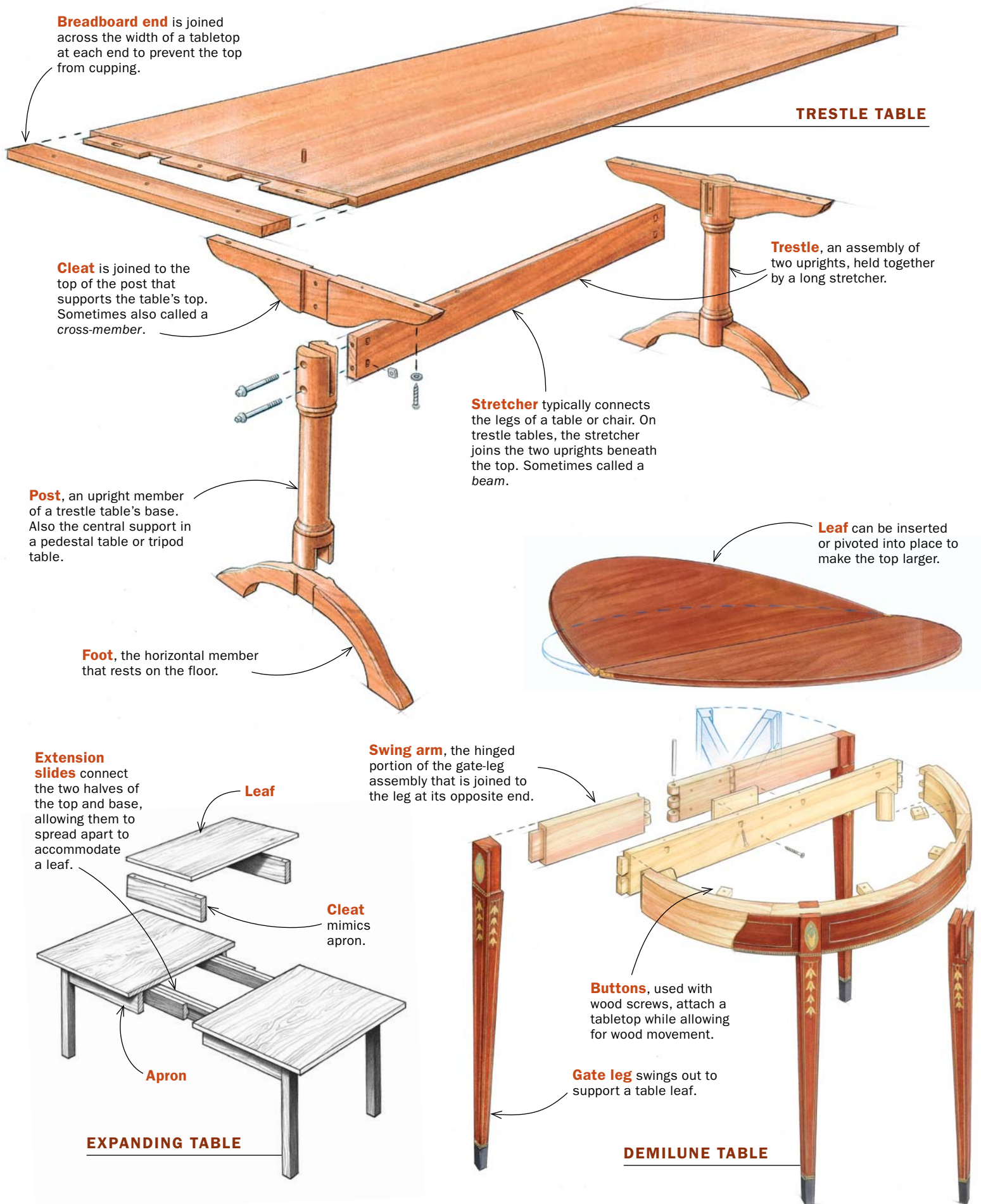
Knowing the language of woodworking won't make you a woodworker, but it can help you learn the craft, share your ideas, and express yourself. It also connects you to the history and tradition of the craft. And there's a lot of soul in that.

Tables

People commonly talk about tables in terms of their function—dining table, sofa table, end table, etc. But furniture makers must go deeper, knowing the name of every part.

TABLE WITH DRAWER

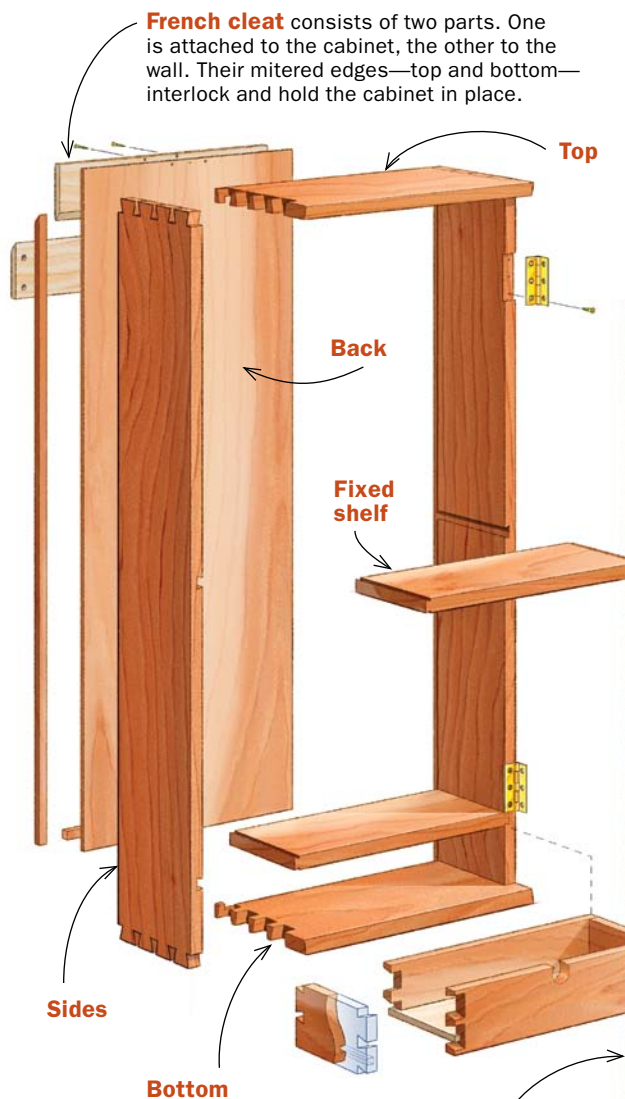




Case pieces

A conversation about a case piece can start out simply enough. After all, it's just a carcass—or box—with the standard top, bottom, back, and sides. But once you get inside the box, things get more complicated.

WALL CABINET



Door stiles are the vertical members of the door frame. Sometimes referred to as *hinge-side stile* and *strike-side stile*.

CHEST OF DRAWERS

Web frame separates a drawer or drawers from the ones above or below. The frame is made of secondary wood, except for the front rail.

Shiplapped back is screwed or nailed in place.

Door rails are the horizontal members of the door frame.

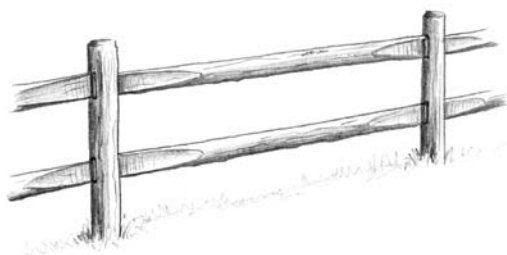
Screw block is glued to one adjoining piece and screwed to another, to allow cross-grain movement.

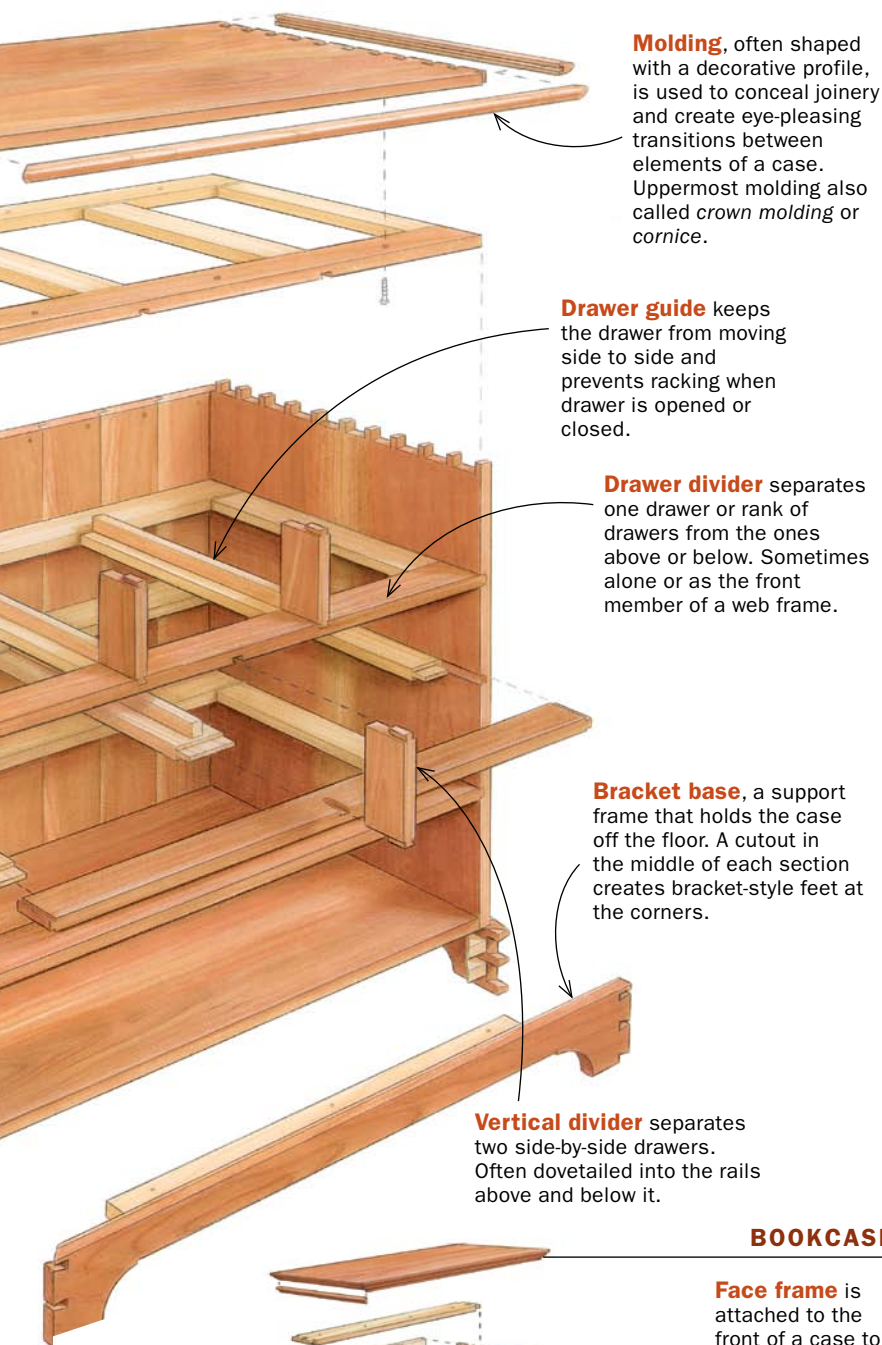
Glue block is used to reinforce joinery.

Door panel can rest in grooves or be held by different combinations of rabbets and moldings on the front and rear of the frame.

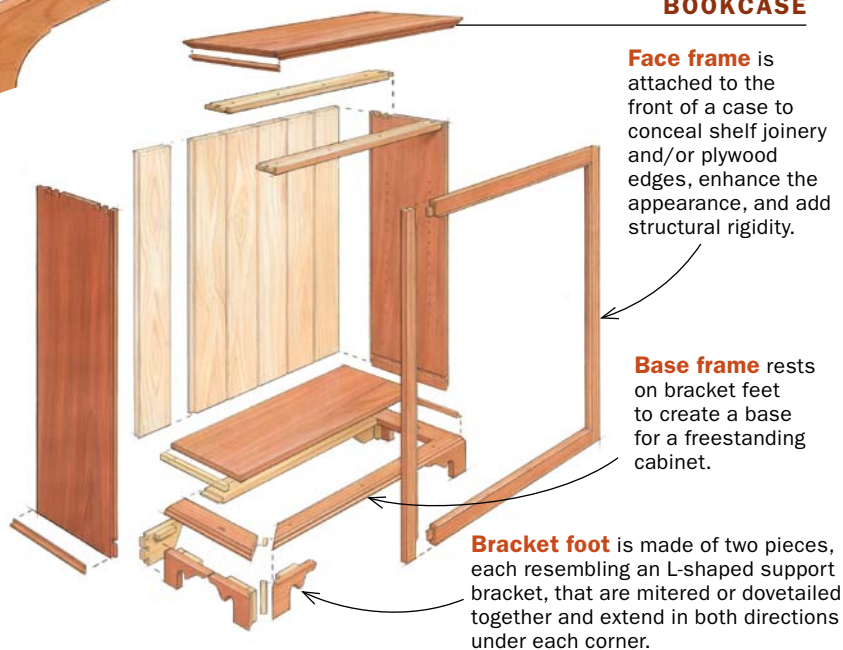
RAIL OR STILE?

Doors have their own pair of often-confused parts. It's simple enough to say that a door frame is made of rails and stiles, but which are which? A simple way to remember that rails are horizontal is to think of them like fence rails. Also, stile is an old word for post.





BOOKCASE



Chairs

The language of chairs pays special attention to the back, the part with the most variety.

