# Shopmade Trimmer

## *Simple carriage steadies trim router to flush-cut plywood edge-bands*

by Jim Siulinski


Every time I use sheet goods to make cabinets, I'm faced with the job of banding the exposed edges. I'm turned off by glued veneer tape because I worry that it will eventually peel away or chip off. It also has that department-store furniture look. I prefer a solid wood edge-band, which is more durable and more attractive.

Applying and trimming solid-wood edge-banding, though, can be difficult and time-consuming. After applying an oversized strip to the edge, you have to trim it flush with the face of the panel. I find it difficult to balance a router or laminate trimmer on a panel edge, and I immensely dislike sanding out the inevitable snipe and chatter marks from router wobble and bearing hops. I looked for a way to improve the process.

### The solution is a stable carriage for the trim router

My solution was to make a carriage for a trim router with an extended base and fence and handles like those on a handplane

***A simple tool for cleaning up banded plywood edges—****The author devised a carriage that improves stability for his trim router and makes flush cuts a breeze.*

(see the drawing). The trim router is mounted in the fence and attached to the base at 90°. The base rides on the face of the panel, and the fence rides along the edge. The 15-in. by 5-in. base significantly increases the surface area of the tool. It's stable and wobble-free. An adjusting knob (see the center photo on the facing page) set into the top of the plane body allows precise alignment of the trimming bit with the bottom of the base for a perfectly flush cut.

I scrounged most of the materials from a junk pile at my workplace and from a friend's woodshop. I used melamine with a medium-density fiberboard (MDF) core for the base and fence because it's stable, durable and slides well over the work. The wood in the plane body is jarrah, though any stable hardwood will do. The only uncommon part is a scrap of anodized-aluminum angle bar I used for a bracket to house the adjusting knob. If I hadn't found the angle bar, I probably would have made some kind of bracket out of wood. Like many shopmade jigs, this one is fast, easy and inexpensive to build. The whole jig took about four to five hours, start to finish.

## It works much like a handplane

With the edge-banded plywood lying flat on a workbench, I use the carriage much like a handplane. To avoid tearout, the trimmer should be used with the bit turning into the cut, in the same direction as the trimmer's movement (see the drawing). This means that the carriage must be used in a left-handed fashion. (Lefties should appreciate this.) Facing the work on a bench, start at the left, and move to the right. The mass of the carriage and the sure grip of the plane-like handles make it easy to keep the bit from self-feeding and clogging or skating down the workpiece. Be sure to clamp your work to the bench. A few test-cuts should ensure proper bit alignment with the base. I like leaving the band ever so slightly proud—just in case—and afterward, lightly sanding it flush.

## Few or no obstacles to a clean cut

One of the trimmer's major advantages is its ability to trim directly over dadoes. I think it is easier to cut a dado prior to edge-banding, thus avoiding a more complex stopped dado cut. Using a trim router with just a bearing for a guide would ruin the edge as the bit turned into the dado.

Another advantage is that the trimmer is not thrown off by dried glue. A 9/16-in. gap between the edge of the base and the fence makes it unlikely that any dried glue squeeze-out will interfere with the carriage base. A bearing-guided bit would create bumps in the edge-band as the bearing rolled over drips. It should be noted that a warp in the sheet will alter the trimmer's cutting depth, so clamp your work flat to the work surface.

The trimmer carriage works best when edge-banding sheet material at least as large as the carriage. I typically use it when making bookcases and shelves. Because the essential use of the fence is to make a stable cut, the carriage may be adapted to many other applications. I sometimes use it to trim the edge of a face frame on a finished case. By adjusting the bit, you can use it to cut rabbets. By changing bits, you can apply different molding profiles—and not just to edge-bands. □

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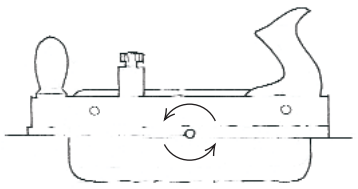
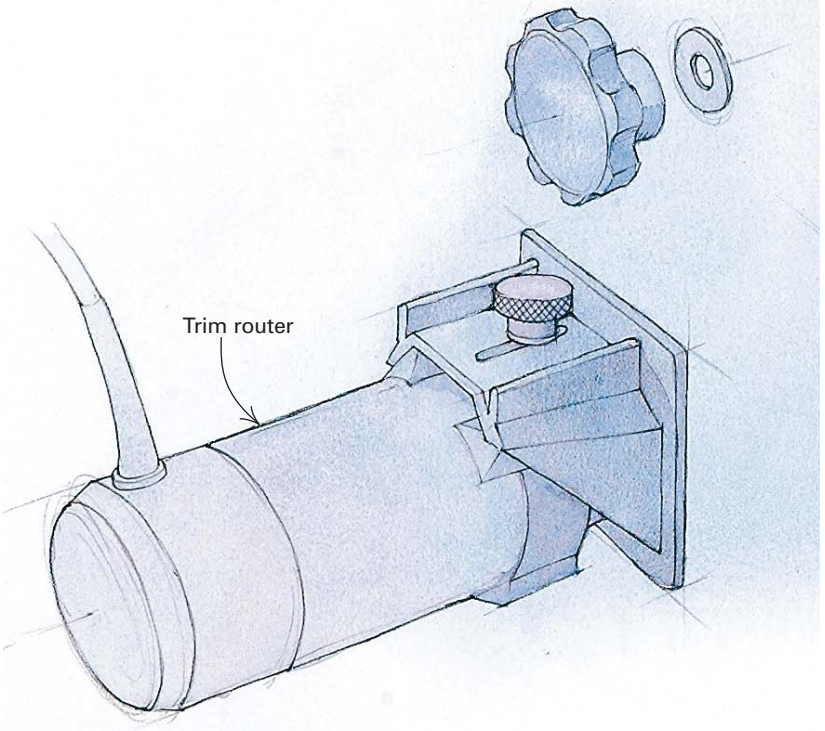
### Carriage for trimming solid wood edge-bands

This carriage was designed to improve the stability of a trim router while cutting solid wood edge-bands flush with panels. The base rides on the face of the panel. The plane body and handles make a sure and comfortable grip. The fence guides the trimmer along the edge of the panel. An adjusting knob and bracket allow fine adjustments to the depth of the cut.



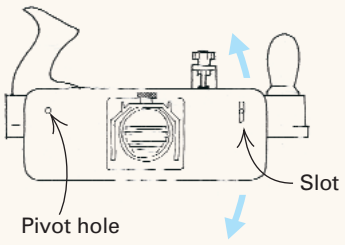
**Cutting direction**

Use the trimmer with the bit turning into the cut to avoid tearout. Go slowly and steadily because the bit can self-feed.



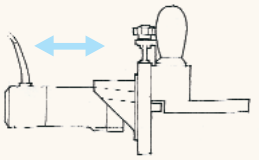

**Adjusting the depth of cut**

The trimmer's performance depends on how evenly the bit cuts with the bottom of the base. It must be finely adjustable.



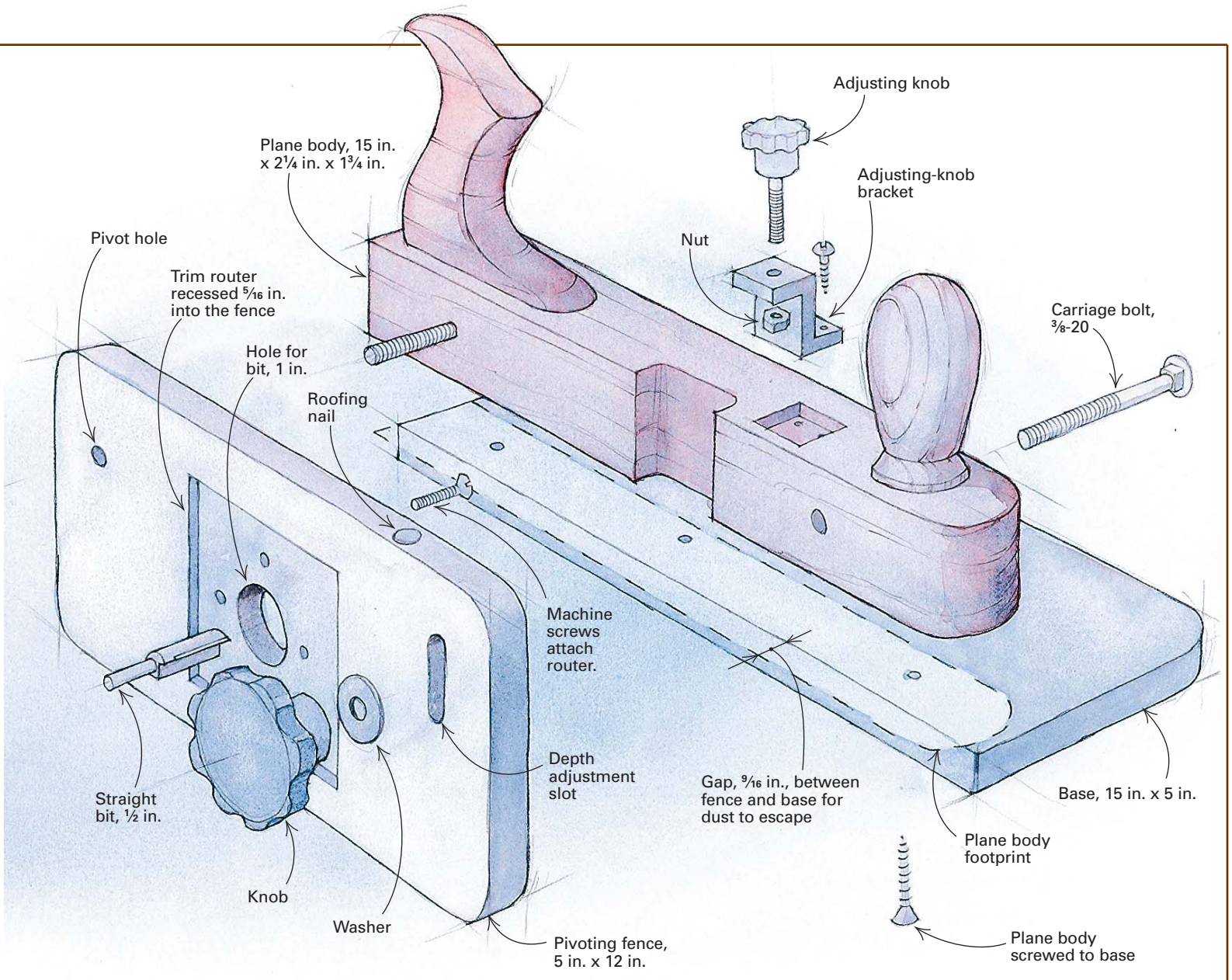

Slot in fence allows the base to travel up and down, pivoting on the opposite carriage bolt.

Laminate trimmer's depth adjustment works to set trimmer's width of cut.





Drawings: Jim Richey




***Easy design and assembly** from odd materials. Trimmer is mounted in a fence and attached to a base at 90°.*

***Adjusting knob sets cutting height.** A roofing nail makes a resilient contact point, reducing wear on the fence.*

***Gap between base and fence avoids obstacles.** Trimmer won't hang up on glue squeeze-out or oversized edge trim.*

Photos: Strother Purdy