

Uses for Hot-Melt Glue

Quick-drying, weak-bonding glue is perfect for temporary holds

BY MARK SCHOFIELD



Choice of glues. Hot-melt glues are available with different open times for different materials. They come in 4-in. or 10-in. sticks.

A recent review of a new hot-melt glue gun system (*FWW* #157, p. 32) that touted its permanent adhesion prompted Hilliard Stone, a reader in Texas, to write in praising the virtues of traditional hot-melt glues. He noted that their weak adhesion makes them perfect for many tasks, including temporarily attaching parts until their final location has been decided on, such as when fine-tuning jigs or placing handles on drawers; attaching furniture parts to templates for routing or sanding; acting as a temporary clamp while other glues set; and holding panels in frames while allowing wood movement. I decided to see for myself how valuable traditional hot-melt glue is, and I came up with a few new uses of my own. Hot-melt glue is available from Woodworker's Supply (800-645-9292; www.woodworker.com).

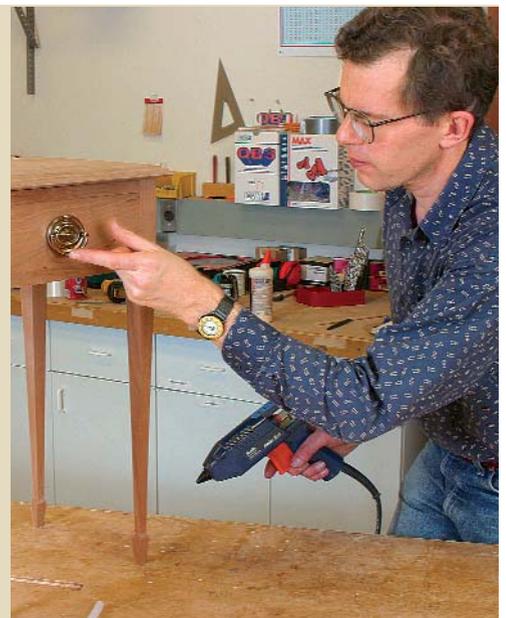
Mark Schofield is an associate editor.

Finding the exact placement of hardware

It sometimes is hard to decide what hardware looks best on a piece of furniture, and locating handles and pulls is always a challenge. You can remove a drawer from its chest to see what hardware looks best on it, but you may discover that the location or hardware doesn't look so hot with the drawer back in the chest. Applying hot-melt glue sparingly allows you to mount handles in trial locations while the drawer is in place, giving you an accurate picture of its appearance. Remove the hardware carefully to avoid damaging the surface. Hot-melt glue also can be used to align false drawer fronts.



Experiment with the location of hardware. To avoid damaging the drawer front, apply only a tiny bead of hot-melt glue to the back of the pull (above) and press it in place (right).



Assembling various jigs

Working with small or curved parts presents many challenges, among which is how to mill them safely. One solution is to attach them to a larger piece of wood, which then can be handled safely when cutting on the table-saw or the router table. It would be impossible to use a miter gauge to guide the piece of gooseneck molding past the sawblade with any degree of safety.



Well secured. Blocks on both sides of the gooseneck molding lock the workpiece to the plywood carrier. Secured to the carrier, the gooseneck miter can be trimmed using the rip fence as a guide.

Clamping help

Crown molding is notoriously difficult to attach without resorting to a nail gun that ultimately mars the surface. A neat trick is to apply beads of hot-melt glue in addition to normal amounts of yellow glue; the former gives a temporary fix while the latter dries to form a permanent bond. Use the hot glue sparingly because large amounts can create a slight gap between the two pieces of wood.

To avoid marring the surface of a piece during glue-up, wood or medium-density fiber-board (MDF) pads are placed between the clamp jaws and workpiece. To keep the pads from slipping, attach them to the clamps with hot-melt glue.

AFFIXING MOLDING



First apply yellow glue to the molding for the permanent bond. Add a few small blobs of hot-melt glue just inside the yellow glue (above). Locate the molding quickly before the hot-melt glue hardens (right). The hot-melt glue holds the molding in place while the yellow glue sets.



PADDED CLAMPS

Blocks of MDF or softwood can be glued quickly to the metal jaws of clamps to protect the workpiece (left). With the pads glued to the clamp, it is much easier to align the clamp while applying pressure. A sharp blow with a hammer removes the pads from the clamps.





Cutting multiples

Furniture makers often need to reproduce intricately shaped parts for their pieces. To ensure uniformity among those parts and to save time, use hot-melt glue to hold a stack of blanks together, and cut the stack on the bandsaw.

Separate with a chisel. The bond of hot-melt glue usually is easy to break with a chisel (right). A stubborn glue joint can be weakened with acetone.



Attaching a template

Hot-melt glue can be used to hold a workpiece to a template when pattern-routing. When finished, pry off the template with a chisel, loosening the glue with some acetone, if necessary. If you are template-routing, the same template can be mounted on different workpieces in succession. Apply the glue sparingly.



Handling small pieces safely. When pattern-routing a small piece, it is safer to attach it temporarily to a larger piece of wood using hot-melt glue.



Building models and mock-ups

When designing a piece of furniture from scratch, it may be hard to envision what it will look like in three dimensions. Making a full-size prototype often requires too much effort, but a scale model held together with hot-melt glue can reveal design flaws.

A scale model. Use MDF or cardboard to mock up a design quickly.

