

# Expanding Table

## Looks Great Open or Closed

Hinged side rails are the secret

BY GREG BROWN



**Side table.** When the table is in the closed position, the rear leaf lies on top of the front one.



**Pull back the legs.** To expand the table, lift the rear apron slightly and pull it backward. The hinged side aprons unfold smoothly.



**Slide the shelf and unfold the leaf.** To lock the side aprons open, you pull an internal panel forward. Then swing open the top leaf.

The problem with most expanding card tables is that they either look good when open or when closed, but rarely both, and sometimes neither. If the legs are symmetrical in one position, they usually aren't in the other, and in either position they may get in the way of the user or not provide optimum support.

I recently made a card table designed by Thomas Chippendale whose base expands and contracts with no compromise in appearance, strength, or utility. What's more, the mechanics can be used on almost any small table design. Whether you are looking for a traditional card table or a contemporary table for a small kitchen, you can adapt it to multiple uses, with no compromise of form or function.

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**Table for four.** The table now seats four comfortably, and the aprons look seamless.

## Anatomy is simpler on standard tables

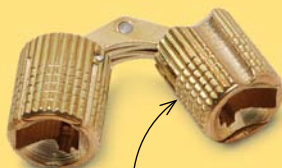
This ingenious accordian mechanism gets even simpler when you don't have to contend with fancy legs like those on Brown's Chippendale-style table. For a standard table base, the folding sections can be hinged directly into the legs, offering a more seamless look. In either case, the overall length of the expandable table sides shouldn't be much more than 36 in., or you risk overloading the hinges. The fixed sides can be as long as you like.

### TOP FOLDS ON CARD-TABLE HINGES



*Traditional card-table hinges are mortised into the two halves of the tabletop.*

### BARREL HINGES ARE A HIDDEN OPTION



Soss barrel hinges

For a cleaner, more contemporary look, *FWW* contributing editor Michael Fortune suggests a series of 16mm Soss barrel hinges from Lee Valley, spaced 4 to 5 in. apart.



*When folded, top is flush with back of table base.*

*Fixed section is half-lapped to reach past folded aprons and hide them when table is closed.*

Folding aprons

Groove for sliding panel

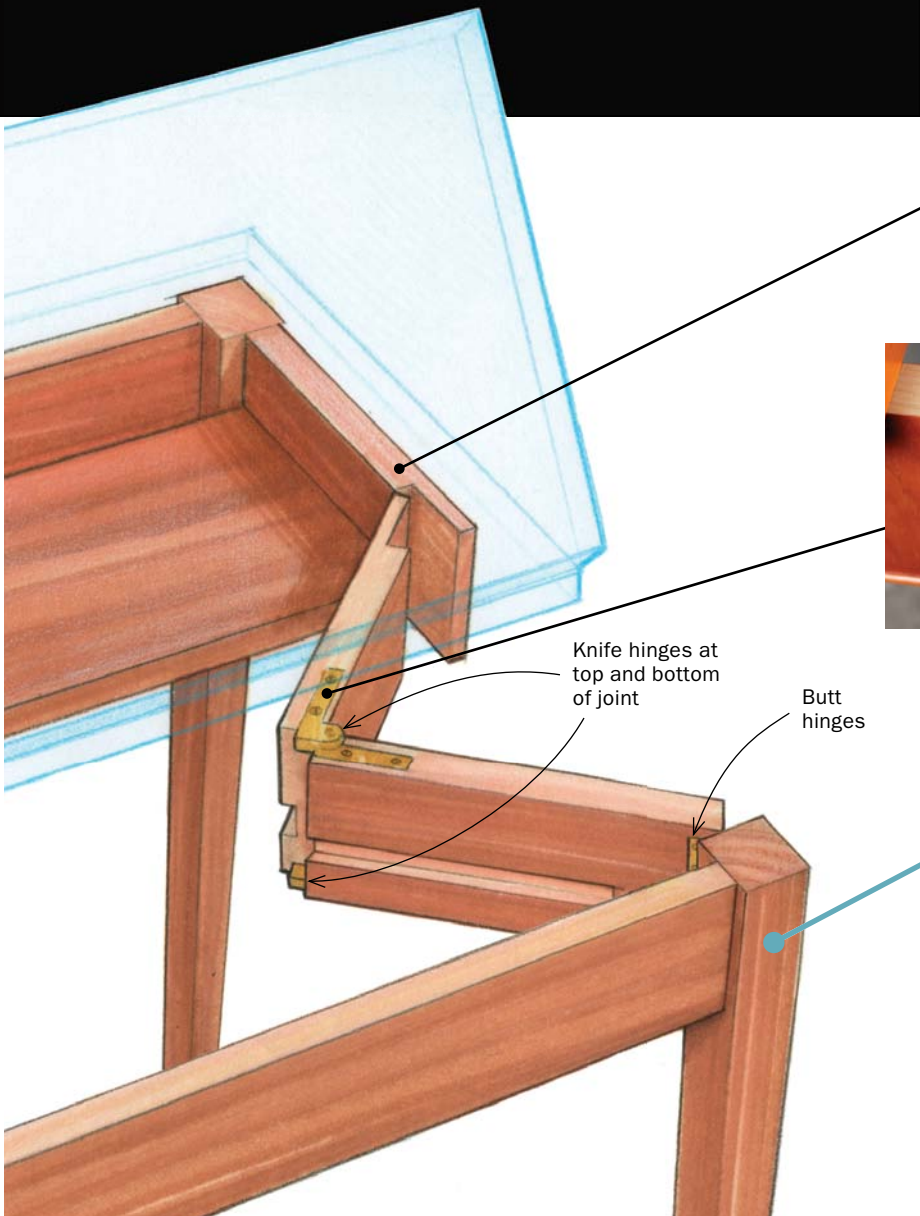
*Front and back aprons are fixed and normal.*

### SLIDING PANEL LOCKS THE SIDES



*An internal panel slides forward in grooves to lock the side aprons open when they are unfolded.*





#### SIDES PIVOT ON BUTT HINGES...

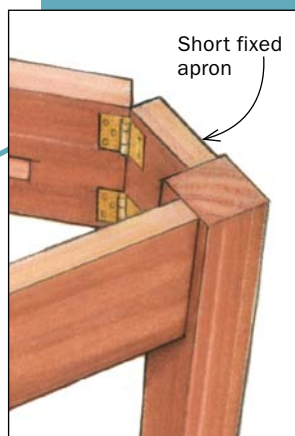
Brown attaches butt hinges in their open position as shown, but mortises them into the surface to place less stress on the hinge screws.



#### ...AND MODIFIED KNIFE HINGES

Brown reverses one leaf in these knife hinges so they can pivot toward each other. This also points both sets of countersinks in the right direction.

### Tweak the design for cabriole legs



On his Chippendale table, Brown added a short fixed apron before the folding ones, to allow for the curved transition to the cabriole leg. The rest of the anatomy is the same.

### FULL-SIZE TOP VIEW IS CRITICAL

The dimensions below are for a typical square table, close to the author's in size. If you need a different size or shape, be sure to make full-size drawings. Do the math to determine the length of the folding

sections, or create mockups using the hinges. The key is that the overall length of the base, including the legs, is exactly half when it is in the closed position. That will keep your tabletop overhang consistent.

