



# Stand Up to This Desk

Shaker-inspired design is comfortable and practical

BY CHRISTIAN BECKSVOORT

The office corner of my shop wasn't really an office. It had the file cabinet, the phone, a sound system, and a stool, but what it really needed was a desk. I'm not a sit-down kind of guy, and I've had my share of back issues. So I started exploring stand-up desks, since I've heard they can do wonders for your posture and productivity. Most of the

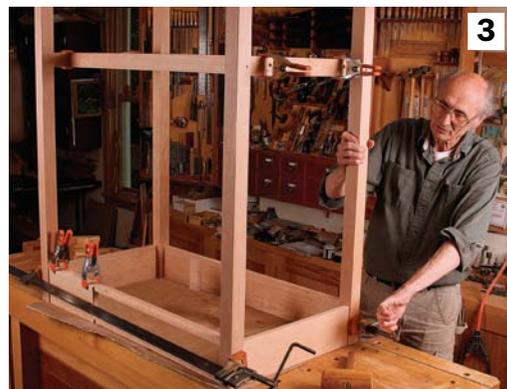
ones made today have a flat surface of the appropriate height, but lacked what I consider essential, a foot rail. Also, I wanted a slanted surface to draw on, much like an architect's drawing board, or a sloped desk box or schoolmaster's desk.

I also had several other requirements. It had to be built to my height, so you may need to tweak the



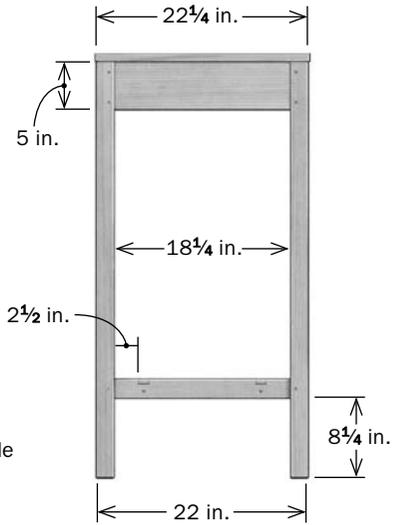
## MAKE THE BASE

**The order of the aprons.** Once you've glued the legs to the side aprons and side stretchers, add the front and back aprons (1). Then add the dovetailed stretchers (2) and the top and bottom drawer rails (3). The drawer kickers and runners are attached to spacers. The right assembly is screwed to the rails at the front and a screw block on the back apron (4). The left assembly is glued or screwed to the side apron.

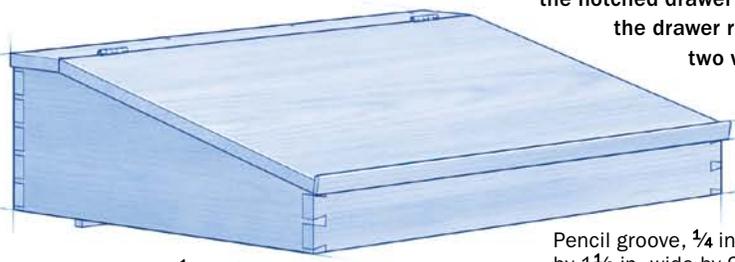


# CHOCKFUL OF CHALLENGES

There are a few quirks to building this desk, such as the notched drawer rails, each with different joinery, the drawer runner-and-kicker assemblies, and two writing surfaces with different attachment methods.



**SIDE VIEW**



Kicker, 1/2 in. thick by 1 7/8 in. wide by 18 1/4 in. long

Dovetail, 1/2 in. thick by 1 in. wide by 1 1/8 in. long

Top, 3/4 in. thick by 13 1/4 in. wide by 22 1/4 in. long

Pencil groove, 1/4 in. deep by 1 1/2 in. wide by 9 3/8 in. long, 1 in. from front edge

Top rail, 1/2 in. thick by 1 1/2 in. wide by 37 3/8 in. long

Notch for front apron, 1/2 in. wide by 11 1/4 in. long

Back apron, 3/4 in. thick by 5 in. wide by 38 3/4 in. long

Stop block, 3/4 in. thick by 4 3/8 in. wide by 3 in. long

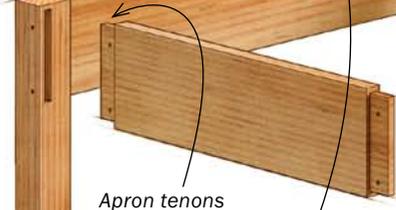
Side apron, 3/4 in. thick by 5 in. wide by 20 3/4 in. long

Spacer, 1 in. thick

Tenon, 3/8 in. thick by 4 1/4 in. wide by 1 1/8 in. long

Partial front apron, 3/4 in. thick by 5 in. wide by 12 3/8 in. long

Figure-8 fasteners



Apron tenons are mitered to meet in back leg.

Runner, 5/8 in. thick by 1 7/8 in. wide by 18 1/4 in. long

Spacer, 1 in. thick by 20 1/4 in. long

Finger groove, 20 in. long, (1/2-in. cove bit)

Bottom rail, 5/8 in. thick by 1 1/2 in. wide by 37 3/8 in. long

Tenon, 3/8 in. thick by 5/8 in. wide by 1 1/8 in. long

Tenon, 1/2 in. thick by 1 1/2 in. wide by 1 1/4 in. long

Drawer bottom, 1/4 in. thick

Drawer sides, 7/16 in. thick

Legs, 1 7/8 in. square by 43 in. long

Dovetail, 1/2 in. thick

Front and back stretchers, 1 1/8 in. thick by 2 in. wide by 39 1/4 in. long

**FLUSH FRONT**

Top rail

Partial front apron

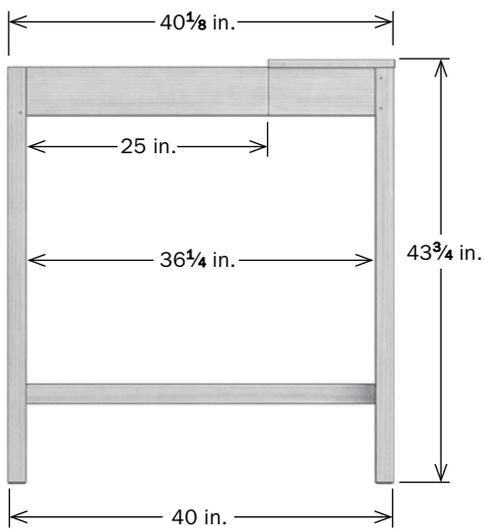
Plug, 3/8 in. dia.

Side stretcher, 1 1/8 in. thick by 2 in. wide by 20 3/4 in. long

Drawer front added to drawer after glue-up.

Recess for applied drawer front

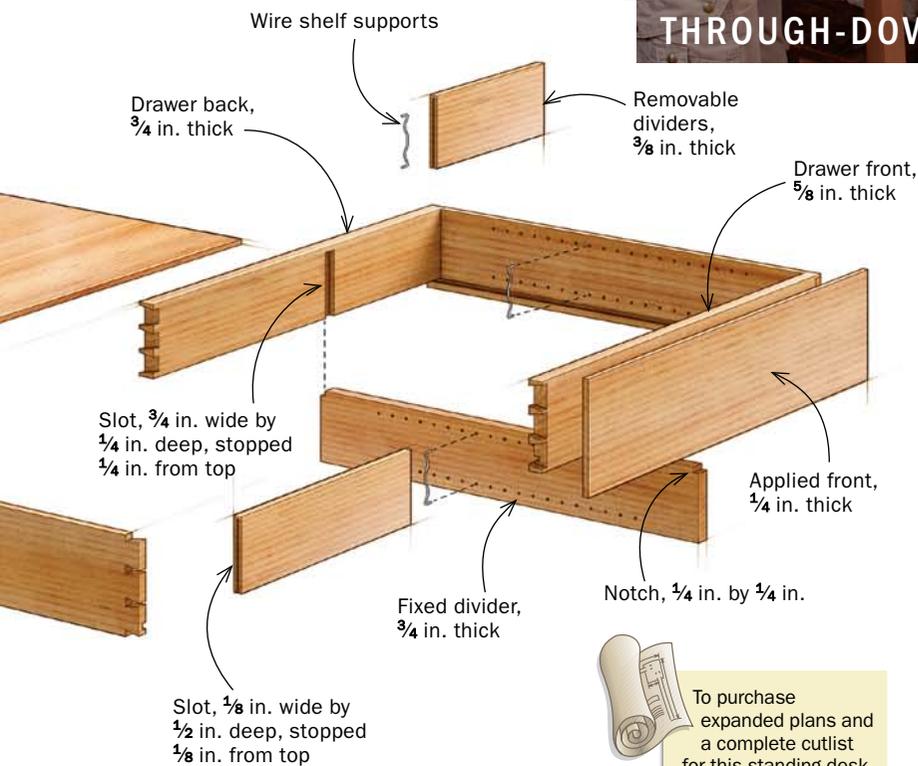
Glue joint



FRONT VIEW



## AN APPLIED FRONT ON A THROUGH-DOVETAILED DRAWER



To purchase expanded plans and a complete cutlist for this standing desk and other projects, go to [FineWoodworking.com/PlanStore](http://FineWoodworking.com/PlanStore).



**Add the applied front while the drawer is in place. This allows you to locate it precisely. The applied front conceals the drawer rails and, with the finger groove in the bottom rail, serves as the drawer pull.**

## A drawer divided

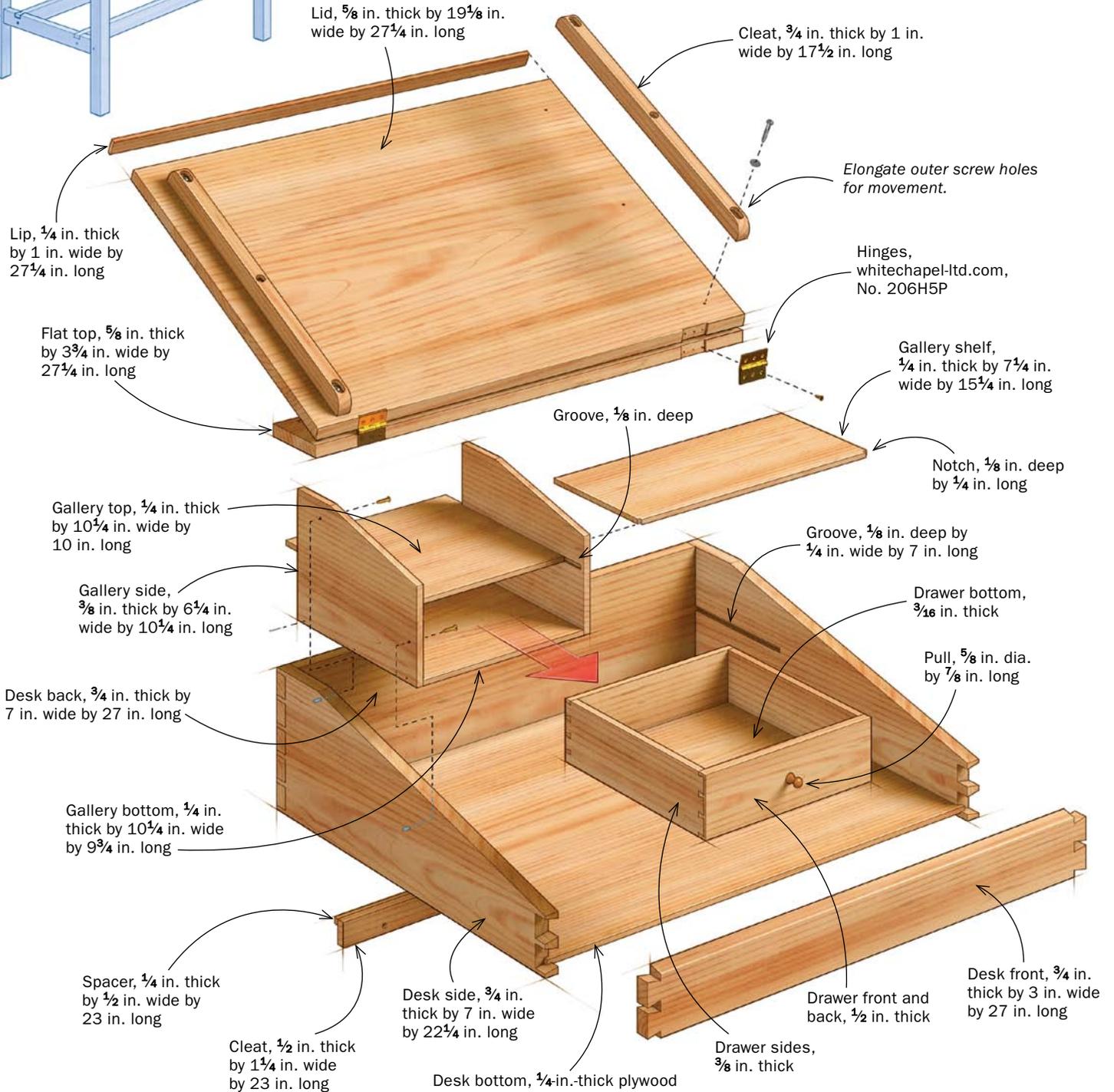
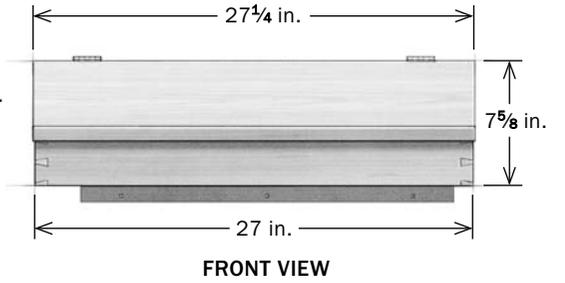
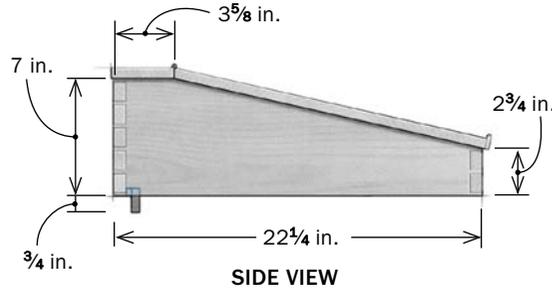
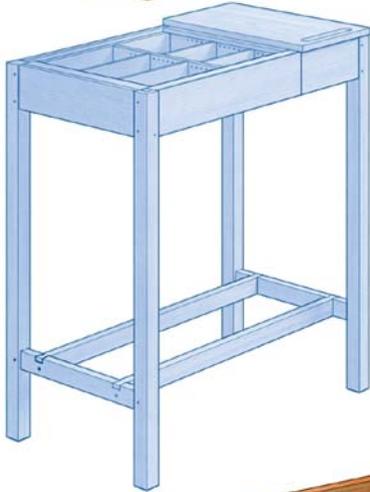
Before installing the drawer bottom, glue the permanent divider into the slots in the front and back of the drawer. The other dividers are adjustable. These grooved dividers slide in wherever you want them. Becksvoort uses hidden wire shelf supports to hold the dividers (leevalley.com; No. 00S05.51) and nips the ends off the two prongs before installing them.





## SLANTED-LID DESK IS A BIG COMPONENT

The slanted lid creates a traditional look and opens to reveal a gallery with lots of storage options.





## BUILD THE DESK BOX

**Dovetail as if the angle didn't matter.** After cutting the dovetails, Becksvort dry-fits the desk box and bevels the top edge of the front with a handplane. After drawing a layout line across the front, he starts by using the sides as an angle reference and planes his way across the front.

dimensions to suit your own height. Next, it required the aforementioned foot rail to improve comfort and posture. In addition to the slanted surface for drawing, I wanted a flat area for a coffee mug, books, or laptop, as well as a few drawers for paper, pencils, invoices, and the usual office accoutrements. With a few sketches, I settled on a design that looks and functions very well. But I've since built a few (all in cherry) with slightly different layouts, drawers, and dimensions. When I decide I want to have a seat at this desk, I just pull up my stool ("Sturdy Stool for Home or Shop," *FWW* #245).

### Slanted desk adds a classic touch

I built the base first using mostly mortise-and-tenon joinery, and added the drawer. With that done, I started the desk box with the slanted lid.

First I milled the front, back, and angled sides. Next I dovetailed the corners. Then I cut grooves for the bottom, and one stopped groove on the right side for the



**Install the flat part of the lid.** After the bottom is installed and the desk box is glued, predrill, screw, and plug the flat part of the lid to the top of the desk. The next step will be angling the slanted part to meet this flat.

## TACKLE THE LID AND THE INTERIOR



**Mark and cut the angle.** Using a bevel gauge, slide the lid up to the flat and mark the angle where they meet. Then rip the lid to that angle on the tablesaw.



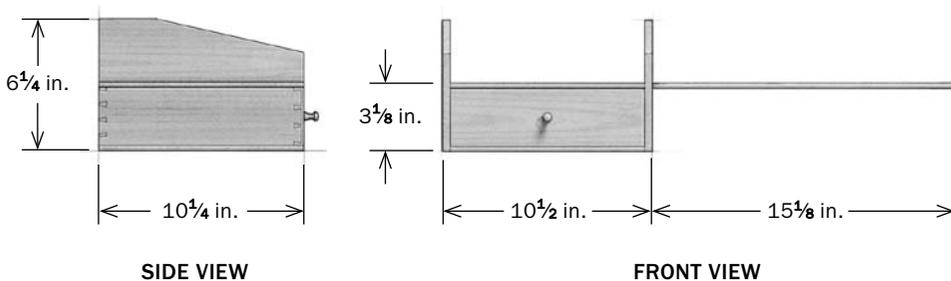
**Cleats keep lid flat.** Install solid-wood cleats, with elongated holes to accommodate movement, just in from the desk sides.



**Install the gallery.** Build the drawer box first and slide it into place. The shelf on the right fits into grooves in the drawer box and desk side.



**Hinge the lid.** With the lid resting on the flat and supported beyond that, screw the hinges into their mortises.



interior shelf. Once the box was glued and sanded, I attached the flat top, and then I glued up the lid. When the glue was dry, I cut the lid to size, sanded it, and added two cleats below to keep it flat. A small lip on the front edge keeps papers from sliding off.

### A simple gallery keeps you organized

The interior consists of a drawer box with storage space above, and a shelf spanning the distance to the other side. After everything was dry-fitted and sanded, I made

## ■ MAKE A BIG ASSEMBLY EASIER

Becksvoort clamps the desk to the base (making sure to clamp the lid closed as well), and then rests the whole desk on its back.



**Screw the desk to the base.** At the front, the desk gets predrilled and screwed to the base through the top drawer divider. At the back, screw through the applied cleat on the desk into the back apron of the base (inset).

the small drawer. When the interior was completed, I hinged the lid to the top of the box. Then I attached the box to the base, screwing through the top rail at the front and an applied cleat at the back.

Finally, I cut the horizontal surface to size and routed in a pencil groove near the front. That piece was firmly attached to the front and back rails with figure-8 fasteners.

I finished the desk with three coats of Tried & True Varnish Oil, mixed about 50/50 with spar varnish. The desk has worked well, as expected and designed. □

*Contributing editor Christian Becksvoort designs and makes furniture in New Gloucester, Maine.*



**Attach the horizontal surface.** Use figure-8 fasteners, mortised into the base.