



ADVICE FOR BEGINNERS

*New beginnings are always an adventure, and getting started in woodworking is no exception. As with so many other activities, the quickest way to get off on the right foot is to get succinct advice from someone, or in this case a community of helpful people who have been down this road before. We were amazed and edified by the range of good responses to this month's survey question: **"What advice would you give to someone just starting out in woodworking?"***

"Take classes. Learning by trial and error is not only time consuming, but expensive as well. Know why you are buying a tool, and what you intend to do with it. Make first projects out of stable wood like Poplar before trying exotics. Learn from your mistakes, and make a scrapbook of all you do. Examine others' works and have fun."

"Just go and make something that you can finish. Buy the best tools you can, and buy them once. Learn to use each tool safely. Never believe you need a \$1,500 tablesaw to make a birdhouse. Pick the tool that does the job the best way for you. Buy lots of clamps. And you will never have enough room, so make the best of what you have."

"Start out with sheet material, hammer and nails, a circular saw, and tap me on the shoulder if you need some help. Purchase the best tools you can when you need them, and learn to do the job with the tools you have. Push yourself a little into untried territory, and read... read... read all you can about woodworking."

"The best possible tool to possess is confidence in yourself. All other tools are useless without it."

"Learn all you can about safety. Decide what you want to build. Learn all you can about safety. Buy the tools you need for your first project. Learn all you can about safety. Repeat these steps for your next project."

News and Views from

WoodCentral.com

by Ellis Valentine

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"I'd recommend reading books that give basic overall knowledge of working with wood, using tools, and general construction of projects. I call myself self-taught, but truth be told, I've had a few books help me along the way."

"I would take them to the shop and see what piece of equipment grab their interest first, and from there, move on to tools used in conjunction with it. I'd discuss the different ways that a task can be completed and advise them to start small, do their research, and stay within their means."

"Take classes that emphasize techniques, rather than projects at first. Don't buy cheap tools. You can never have enough clamps. Plan ahead for storage and good lighting. Start with inexpensive materials like Poplar, Fir, and Southern Yellow Pine."

"I'd say log on to WoodCentral.com every morning and read every- thing."

"First, pick a project. Research what tools and skills are needed and ask questions. Tool opinions are just that; you can start without spending a whack of cash. Start in and make some mistakes. I've learned much more by fixing my mistakes. I wish I had built my workbench years before I did. Beware of lathes! They can become addictive."

"Consider your tool budget and research what you can get for the money. You don't need every tool in the book. Don't let the lack of a 'widget' hold you back."

"Find a mentor you can learn from. Look at their work, ask ques- tions, and pick their brain. Pick a project and build it. If it doesn't turn out, you can always burn it and start over. At least, you're not a surgeon."

"Get all the info you can and start small, toolwise. An amazing amount of work can be done with basic tools. Try out different materials to establish preferences. Don't let elitists put you down or discourage you. Everyone started as a beginner."

"I'd ask what they'd like to make and explain that it is not cheaper to make it yourself. I'd warn them about tool lust and suggest a start with an easy project. I might offer to share my shop."

"My advice would be to get the tools and begin. If you get stumped, find someone with the knowledge to advise you."

Choose another project and repeat. Your skills and knowledge will be built on the foundation of experience, and the sky is the limit."

"Learn to sharpen. Any wood-related activity will greatly benefit from sharp tools."

"Start now. In other words, quit worrying and start woodworking/ woodturning/carving, whatever."

"Do not overlook the importance of dust collection as a health consideration. Wear gloves for finishing; nasty stuff soaks through your skin. Find a club, friends, or family to help you get started. Ask dumb questions. Be safety minded and make it a specific point to learn something from each item you make."

"Learn to draw it. If you can draw it, you can build it. That is how my father started me at age nine."

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"Buy tools as you need them and buy quality when you do. Know that all the icons in the craft use hand tools for part of their work. Use of these tools requires practice, so discipline yourself to practice." "Don't be fooled by gadgetry. Nothing is going to make you an expert woodworker overnight. Lean heavily toward hand tools and learn to sharpen them by hand. They are enjoyable, cheaper and safer." "I'd have a beginner hang out at my shop for a couple of days, and we'd bust open an Ash log and make ladderback chairs. I'd loan him tools until he bought them himself. Very soon, that friend would have a brace, set of bits, saws, hollow auger, and spokeshaves of his own."

"I'd say, 'Make me an offer!'"

"Find the time to take a class with a good instructor. This way, you won't develop bad habits, which will have to be unlearned later. Also, you can get experience using tools before you have to purchase them."

"First, if you're planning to earn a living at it, marry someone rich. Start to accumulate wood. Learn safety rules like, 'Never put your fingers where you wouldn't put your tongue. Stand around and watch me, and while you're here, grab a broom, and take out the trash. Don't ever lend your tools to anyone. Get a flannel shirt. Take up golf; it's less dusty and healthier."

"They should start by making sure that their spouse, is going to be happy spending hours alone listening to shop noise. They also should understand that every new project requires a new tool, and that the cost of materials is much more than what the project could be bought for commercially."

"Come hang out in my shop, but be forewarned: I'm messy and disorganized. In exchange for the use of my tools, space and guidance, help me make my shop a cleaner, safer, and more organized space."

"Be willing to put the time into making a drawing and a plan of procedure. The time spent up-front will save you time, materials and mistakes during the making."

"Run away. Run as fast as you can and cut up your credit cards before you catch the addiction. If the flat side doesn't get you, the

turning side

will,"

"My son will turn eight soon. I told him the best way to learn was by apprenticing to a master, and generously offered to take him on. He wanted more details. I explained his responsibilities would include keeping the shop swept, making sure tools were put away, and obeying me without question. I pointed out an apprentice was like a slave. 'I'd rather be a servant; servants get paid,' he replied. We agreed on 25¢ an hour, shook on it, and began. I showed him layout tools, the concept of 'square,' and how to measure. In 15 minutes his eyes glazed over. 'I want to practice sawing, Daddy.' I reiterated the part about unquestioning obedience, and he said he was going upstairs to play with his brother. So, if a family member wanted to get into woodworking, I'd say, go read a book or something." Participate in future surveys at WoodCentral.com Send suggestions for survey topics to webmaster@woodcentral.com