Writing Table

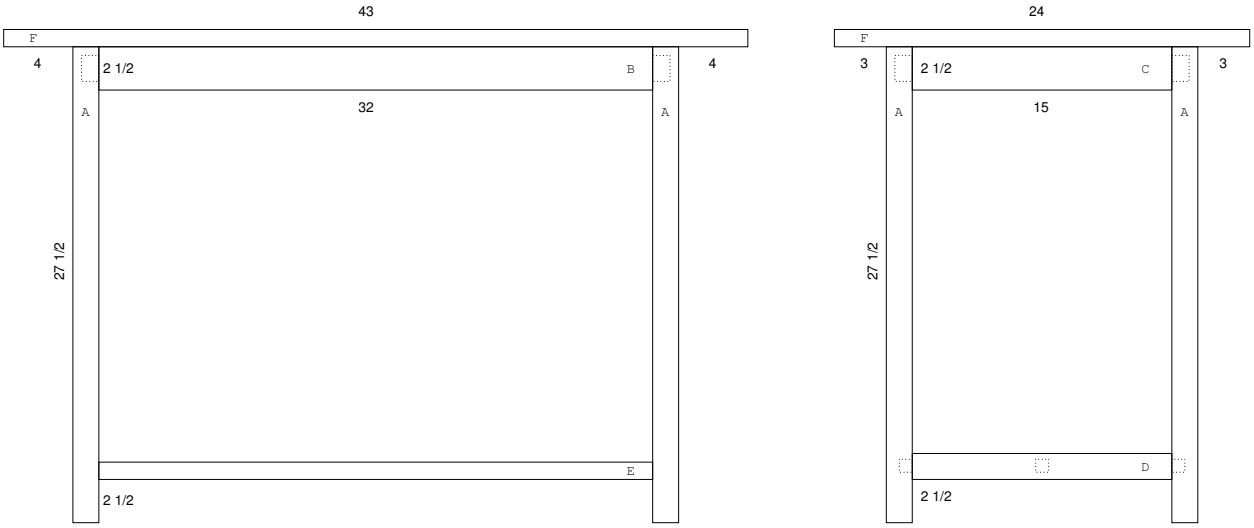
Christopher Swingley

Introduction

Here is an easy to build version of the "monastery table" Norm Abrams built during the 2003 season of *This Old House*. The plans are simplified by not turning the legs, and using a solid top for the table.

Plans

These plans show the design of the table. The height should be adjusted to a comfortable working height for you.



The base construction is mortise and tenon joinery and the table top can be held to the base using any method that allows for wood movement. I will probably use buttons that ride in a groove in the top rails.

Cut List

Key	Qty	Description	T	W	L	Notes
A	4	Legs	1½	1½	27½	Mortises for rails on top and bottom.
B	2	Long Rails	1	2½	32	1×1½ inch tenons on ends.
C	2	Short Rails	1	2½	15	1×1½ inch tenons on ends.
D	2	Bottom Rails	1½	1½	15	¾×¾ inch tenons on ends, mortise for foot rail.
E	1	Foot Rail	1	1½	32	½×¾ inch tenons on ends.
F	1	Top	1	24	43	Edge jointed from narrower boards.

All dimensions are in inches.

Tools Used

Tool	Uses	Substitutes
Saws		
Disston D-23, 8 tpi	· Cutting all lumber to size	Crosscut handsaw
H. Peace, 5 1/2 tpi rip	· Cutting all lumber to size	Rip handsaw
Handplanes		
Wooden jack plane	· Initial sizing of rough cut lumber	
Wooden try plane	· Sizing of rough cut lumber	
Wooden fore plane	· Sizing of rough cut lumber	
Miscellaneous		
Starrett folding rule	· All measurements	Your favorite measuring tool
Veritas wheel gauge	· Squaring up boards	Your favorite marking gauge

Construction Notes

For my version of the monastery table I started with several rough cut spruce left over from the sawyer who cut my bevel siding. Pieces were approximately two inches thick, and eight inches wide. The legs were sawn from a single plank and planed to approximate dimension using a jack / fore / jack combination of wooden planes. The first jack plane used has a deeply cambered iron, set to take a deep cut. The fore plane has a shallower camber and is set to take a thinner shaving, and the final plane uses a very gradual camber and is set fine.

The rails were cut to the appropriate width and then resawn in half to yield the thickness shown on the cut list and plans. The same planing procedure was used on these pieces.

All pieces were trued on one side first, using a pair of winding sticks with parallel edges. When one side is flat and straight, use a marking gauge with it's face on the side you just flattented to mark the opposite side. By planing down to these lines, you should have a board that is the same thickness in one dimension, and has no twist. From there, work on flattening one of the other two edges, but in addition to keeping the edge flat and without twist, make sure that it is 90 degrees to one of the two faces you've already flattened. Finally, use the marking gauge again to mark the thickness for planing the opposite side. The end result is a board with all four sides flat, without twist, parallel to the oppsite face, and perpendicular to adjacent sides.

Notes