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Premium Plan

Simple Dresser

In this plan you'll find:

- Step-by-step construction instruction.
- A complete bill of materials.
- Construction drawings and related photos.
- Tips to help you complete the project and become a better woodworker.

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A Super Fast, Ridiculously Inexpensive

Simple Dresser

By Bruce Kieffer

All you need is about a hundred dollars and a bit of time. A half day later, you're done!

Sometimes building furniture is not about making a museum quality piece, but rather it's about pure function and saving time and money. My wife and I needed a dresser to tide us over until I could build our "real" dresser, so off to the furniture store we went, only to find very expensive junk — basically made of cardboard — and nothing for less than $200.

I'm thinking, no way am I putting money into anything like that when I can build one for half the price that will function 100 times better. Hence the piece you see here. It really fits the bill … and when I complete our official dresser, it will find a new life somewhere else in our home!

The construction is simple: just cut, rout, biscuit, drill, and assemble. I used 3/4" melamine with a maple coating for the carcass, 1/2" fiberboard for the drawers and 1/4" melamine for the back and drawer bottoms — a half sheet of each. The panel stock I used was CARB 2 compliant (very low formaldehyde), so I didn't need to apply any finish, and that's a huge time saver.

Now, even though it costs just $100 for materials, in no way does that imply it's an ugly beast. Sure, it's not a Victorian bow-front dresser crafted from Honduras mahogany, but it does look pretty darn good considering what it's made from, and I'm confident it will serve me well for many years. I was so happy with the results that I even made another one to be used as a sewing supplies cabinet, and I have future plans for shop cabinets based on the same design.

Construction Notes

You'll need the following tools to make this little dresser: a table saw, a router with an edge guide, a 1/8"-radius roundover bit and 1/2"-diameter straight bit, a pattern flush-trim bit, a router table,

Photo 1: ***Get started by routing the 1/4" x 1/2"-deep rabbets in the sides (pieces 3) to accept the back (piece 5). Use a 1/2"-diameter straight bit and edge guide.***

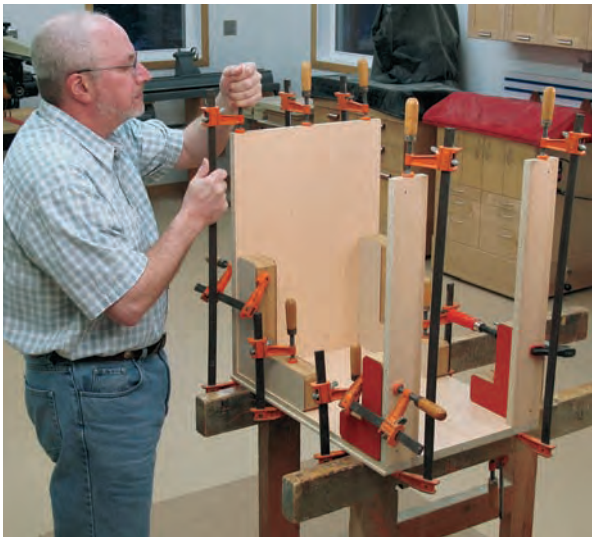
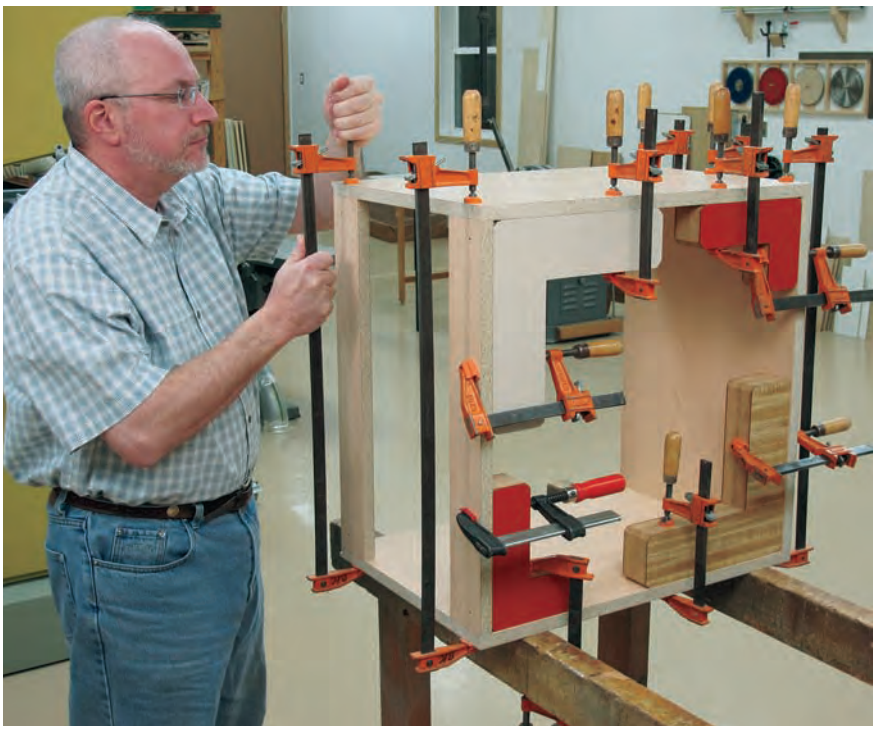


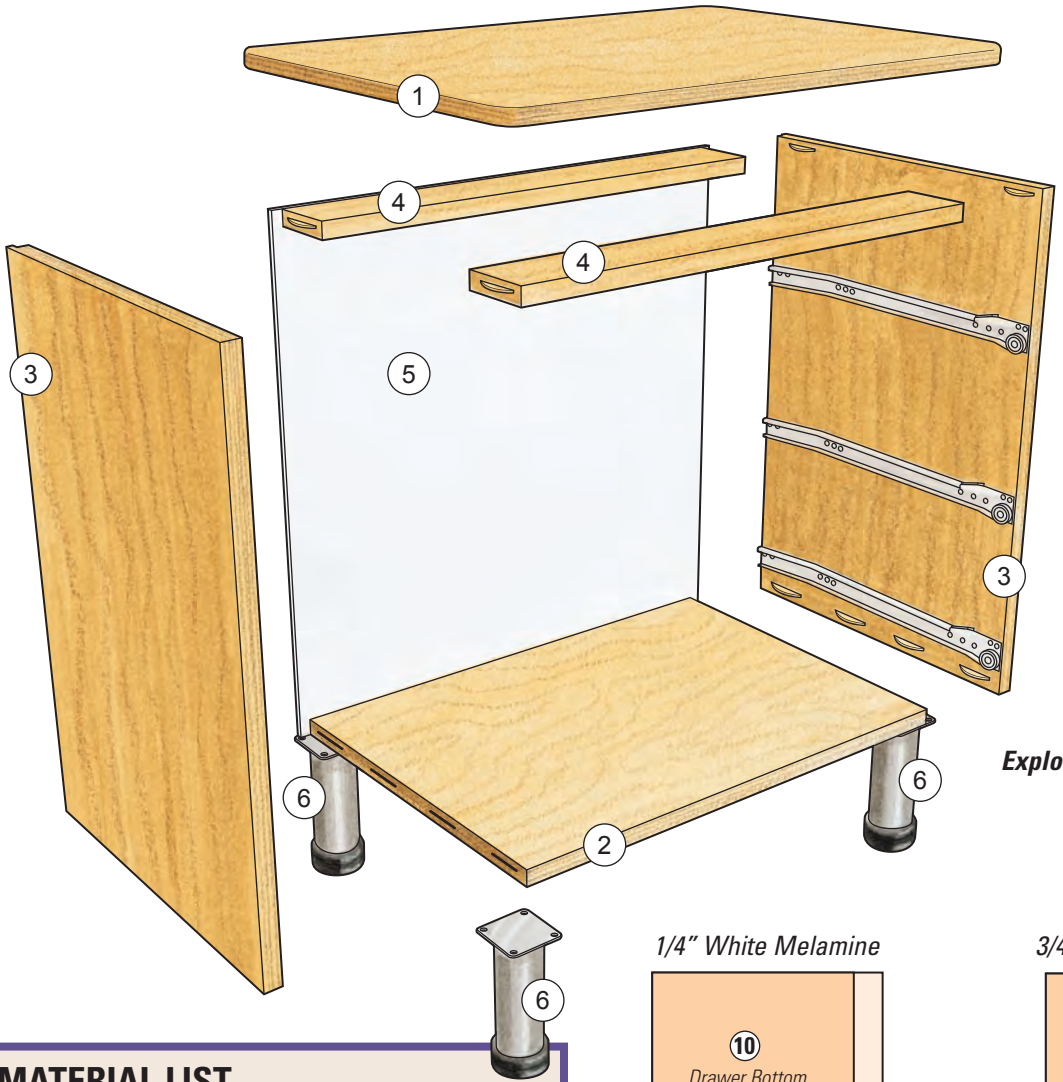
Photo 2: ***Assemble the carcass in two stages. First glue, biscuit, and clamp the bottom (piece 2) and stretchers (pieces 4) to one of the sides (piece 3).***

Photo 3: ***Complete the carcass assembly by adding the remaining side. I use cabinet squares to ensure the carcass parts are 90° to each other.***



a biscuit jointer, drill press, brad nailer, staple gun, a jigsaw, and some bar clamps. Having a palm router to shape the 1/8"-radiused rounded over edges is also nice, but not absolutely necessary, and you could manage without using a router table if you chose instead to machine the drawer side end rabbets on your table saw, using a dado blade and a zero-clearance throat plate.

Although most of the pieces of this project are some form of rectangle cut on the table saw, it is always a good idea to take a moment to look at the *Drawings* and the *Material Lists* before

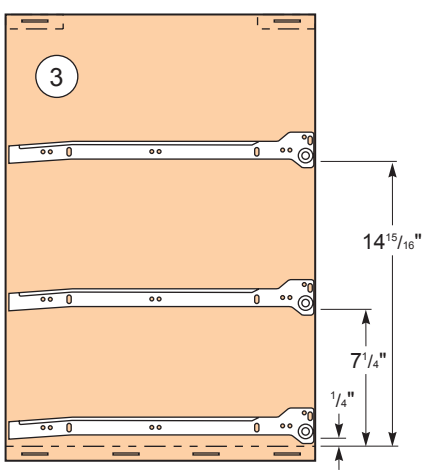


Exploded View

MATERIAL LIST

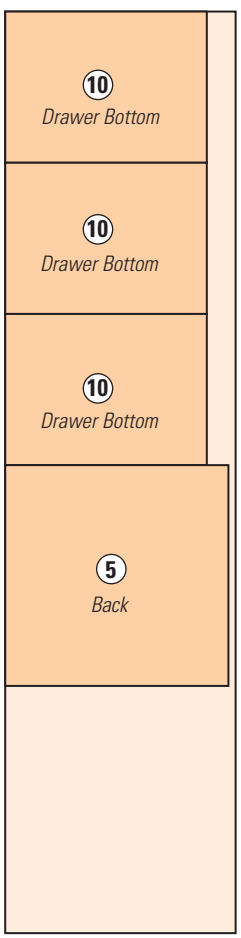
		T x W x L
1	Top (1)	3/4" x 17¾" x 24½"
2	Bottom (1)	3/4" x 15⅞" x 22"
3	Sides (2)	3/4" x 16⅛" x 23¼"
4	Stretchers (2)	3/4" x 3" x 22"
5	Back (1)	1/4" x 23" x 23¼"
6	Adjustable Cabinet Legs (4)	2" dia. x 6"

Side
(Inside View)

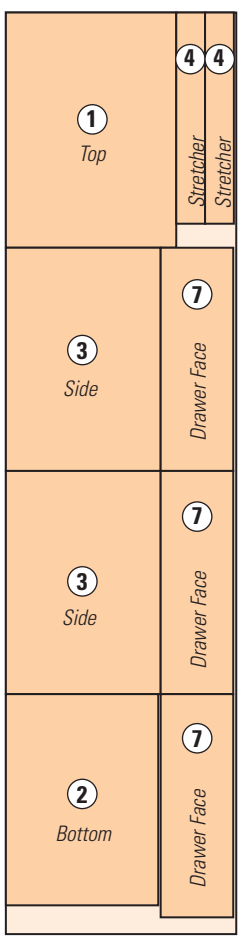


Cutting Diagrams

1/4" White Melamine



3/4" Maple Melamine



"I'm thinking — no way am I putting money into anything like that when I can build one for half the price that will function 100 times better."

you start cutting up material. Cutting the 1/2" fiberboard and 1/4" white melamine pieces from half sheets is easy since there's room for waste with them, but getting all the 3/4" maple melamine pieces from a half sheet is a bit tight. Use the three cutting diagrams provided here so you can minimize your waste. The secret, I found, was to start by putting the stretchers (pieces 4) next to the top (piece 1). Once I'd figured that out, the rest of the pieces fell into place.

The dresser design is based around the use of 3/4 extension white, epoxy-coated, side-mounted drawer slides. They're inexpensive, very easy to mount, and they operate really well.

The drawer components of the slides wrap around the bottom edges of the drawer sides. This allows the drawer bottom to be overlaid and nailed or stapled on, eliminating the need for cutting drawer bottom rabbets. If you use other slides, then note that the dimensions in the *Drawings* for the cabinet components of the drawer slides' mounting heights are the same as the distances the drawer bottoms are relative to the carcass bottom (piece 2). Knowing that should help you figure out any alterations you may need to make if you use different drawer slides.

You'll notice that the design is so simple that there is only one size drawer, and one size drawer face. This makes the work very easy. The only difference in the drawer construction is the alignment of the drawer faces to the drawers. The top two drawers are the same, with a drawer face bottom edge overhang of 1/4", but the bottom drawer face overhang is 15/16". Carefully follow the specified dimensions in the *Drawings*, and you should have no problem getting everything to align correctly when you assemble your dresser.

Assemble the Carcass and Drawers

Now that you have the overall picture of the project, it's time to start making sawdust! Go ahead and cut all the pieces to size using the *Material List* on the previous and next page (pieces 1 through 5, and 7 through 10), and get started by routing the back rabbets (see photo 1). Machine the biscuit slots in the bottom (piece 2), sides (pieces 3) and stretchers (pieces 4). With that done, drill the screw holes in the stretchers. Glue, biscuit and clamp the carcass together as shown in photos 2 and 3, back on page 37.

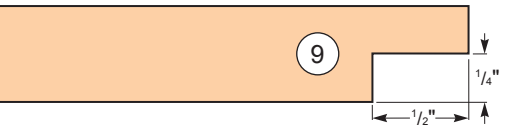
Drill the screw holes in the drawer fronts (pieces 8) (photo 4). The 5/16"-dia holes allow you to make minor drawer face alignment adjustments later. Rout the rabbets on the ends of the drawer sides (pieces 9) (photo 5). Now, assemble the drawers (photo 6), using 1" brads to "pin" the drawer joints. Attach the drawer bottoms (pieces 10) to the drawers using 3/4" staples. Rout 1/8"-radius edges around the top edges of the drawers (photo 7), but don't rout the front edge of the drawer fronts. Then drill the pull bolt holes in the drawer faces (pieces 7) and

Photo 4: ***Drill the 5/16"-dia. holes in the drawer fronts (pieces 8) for the screws used to attach the drawer faces (pieces 7).***

Photo 5: ***Rout the 1/4" x 1/2"-wide rabbets on the ends of the drawer sides (pieces 9). The total finished width of the drawers needs to be 21".***

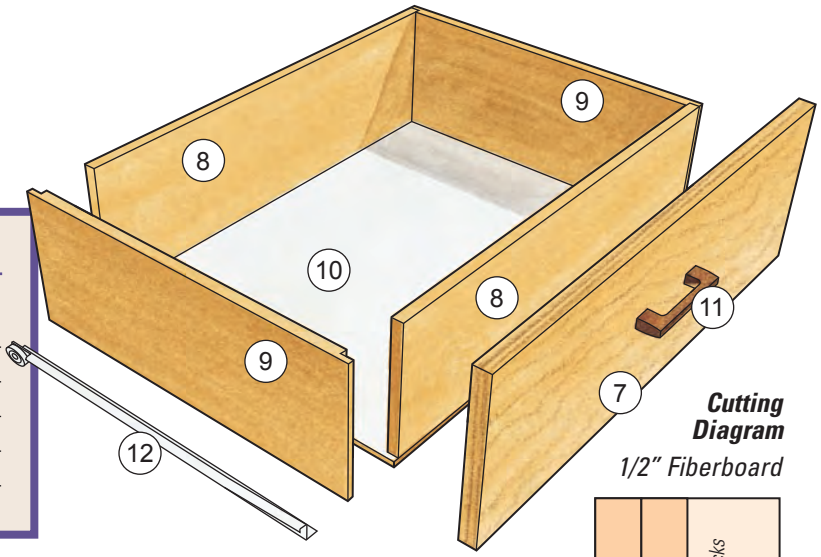
Photo 6: ***Glue and nail the drawers together. I made a 14 13/16"-long L-shaped support from white melamine to hold the drawer front and back (pieces 8) upright and square as I attached the first drawer side (piece 9).***

Drawer Side
(Top View)



MATERIAL LIST

		T x W x L
7	Drawer Faces (3)	3/4" x 7 9/16" x 23 1/4"
8	Drawer Fronts and Backs (6)	1/2" x 6" x 20 1/2"
9	Drawer Sides (6)	1/2" x 6" x 15 13/16"
10	Drawer Bottoms (3)	1/4" x 15 13/16" x 21"
11	Pulls (3)	96mm Amerock®
12	Drawer Slides (3)	16" Blum



Cutting Diagram
1/2" Fiberboard

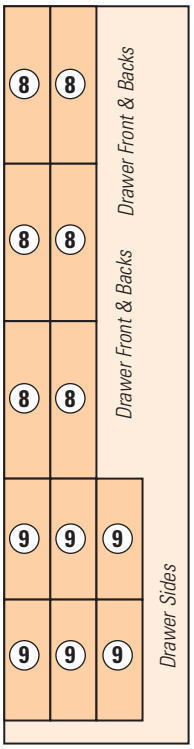


Photo 7: ***Rout the 1/8"-radius roundover top edges on the assembled drawers. Don't rout the front edges. I screwed a long auxiliary base to the palm router for added support and control.***

follow up by routing the drawer face 1/8" roundover on the corners and edges (photo 8).

To mount the drawer faces, align and clamp them to the drawers and mark the pilot hole locations for the drawer-face mounting screws as shown in photo 9, below. Note that on the two upper drawers the faces overhang the drawers by 1/4" at the bottom, and the lower drawer's face overhangs its drawer by 15/16". Unclamp the drawer faces and use your drill press to drill the pilot holes, then attach the drawer faces.

Mount the drawer slide cabinet components (pieces 12) to the carcass sides using spacers to locate them (photo 10). Only the long flat bottom edge of the slide should rest on the spacer when you mount the slides. Align the slide front ends

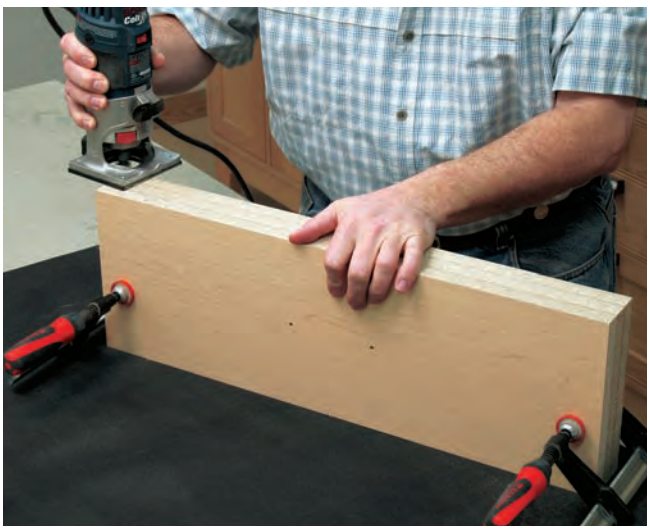


Photo 8: ***Rout a 1/8" radius on the corners of the drawer faces (pieces 7). Clamping the drawer faces together and gang routing them like this makes supporting the router much easier.***

Photo 9: ***Mark the pilot hole locations for attaching the drawer faces to the drawer boxes. Use 1⅛"-wide spacers to center the drawer face side to side, and 1/4" "lifts" to align the height.***

Photo 10: *I used spacers to position and mount the drawer slides. Work from the top down, starting at 14 15/16" up from the carcass bottom, then 7 1/4", and finally 1/4".*

Photo 11: *Rout the 1"-radiused corners of the top panel (piece 1) to shape. Rough-cut the corners first, and then finish the shaping with a shop-made template and router with a pattern flush-trim bit.*

flush with the carcass front edge. Now attach the drawer slide components to the drawer boxes. Align their front edges 1/16" back from the drawer faces — it stops the drawers from banging against the face of the carcass. I used a 1/16"-thick spacer.

Final Assembly

Staple the back (piece 5) to the carcass. Shape the top's (piece 1) 1"-radiused corners as demonstrated in photo 11 and then cut the 1/8" roundovers on the top's edges. Then, screw the top to the stretchers. Note that the overhang is 3/8" at the back.

Drill the pulls' bolt counterbore holes in the drawer fronts (photos 12 and 13). If you're wondering why I drill the pull bolt counterbore holes this way, it's because inevitably the pull mounting bolts loosen over time, and I want to be able to tighten them without having to remove the drawer face, and then having to realign the drawer face. When that is done, secure the pulls (pieces 11) to the drawer faces.

Mount the legs (pieces 6), being careful not to split the carcass sides when you're driving the screws into the panel edges. This is an inherent problem with composite panels. Drill pilot holes for the leg mounting screws, and make the pilot holes for the screws that go into the side panel edges 1/16" less than the screw's diameter. Apply wax, and drive the screws slowly. Insert the drawers and make any necessary alignment adjustments to the drawer faces. And ... you're done! (I told you this was going to be fast!)

Photo 12: *Drill 3/32"-diameter holes through the pull holes in the drawer faces and through the drawer fronts to locate the pull bolt holes on the insides of the drawer fronts.*

Photo 13: *Drill 1/2"-diameter pull bolt counterbore holes through the drawer fronts. Use a Forstner bit centered in the locator holes you just drilled. Don't drill into the drawer face.*

Bruce Kieffer has been a professional woodworker since 1978. He is the proprietor of Kieffer Custom Furniture and a frequent contributor to the pages of Woodworker's Journal.