

Tapered Legs on a Jointer

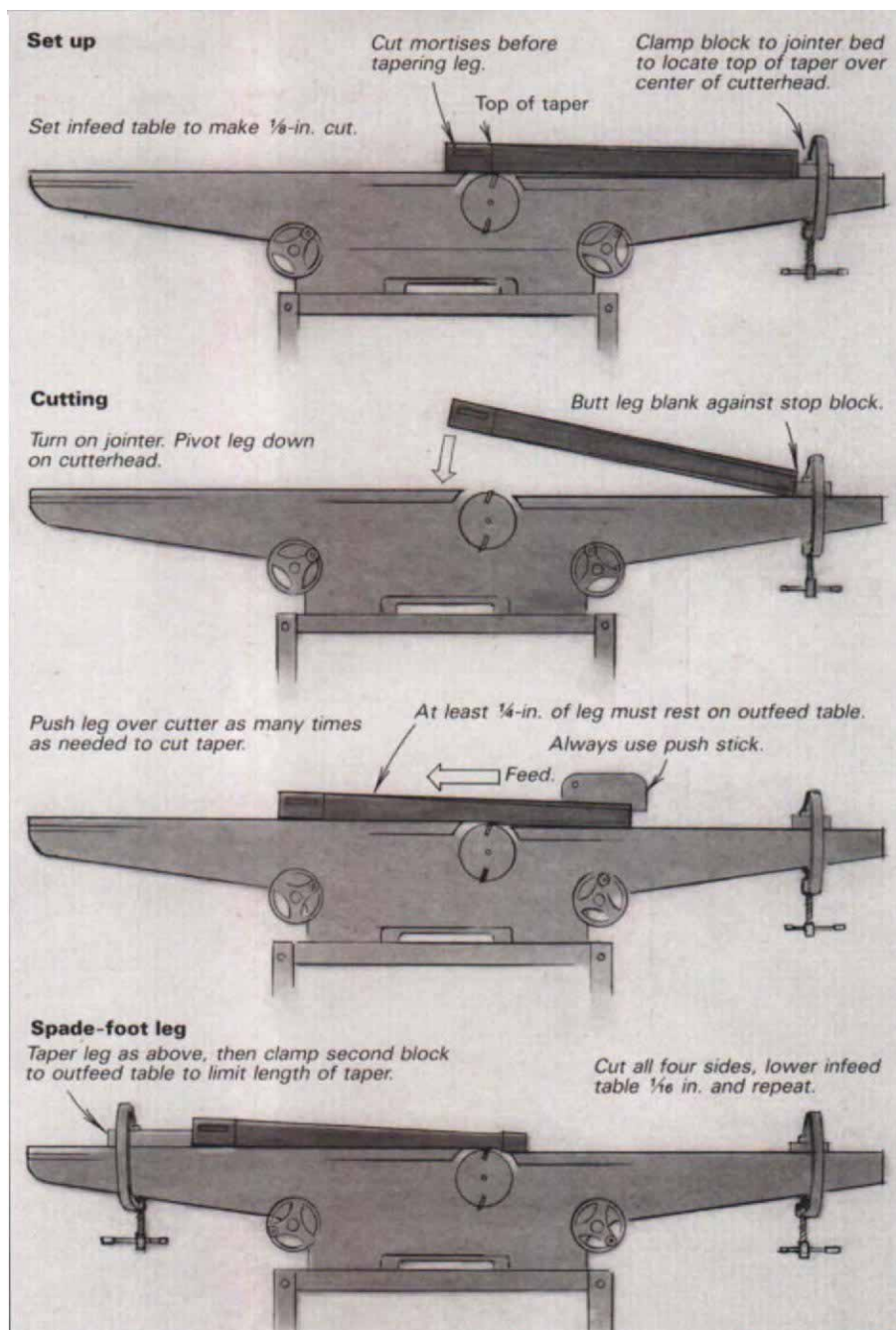
by Eric Schramm

If the turned legs on the pine table shown on p. 52 don't suit your fancy, you might want to build the piece with elegant tapered legs. I cut them with several passes on my jointer, which I fit with stop blocks to set the length of the taper and regulate the slope of cut. This method is fast, accurate and produces smooth surfaces. You could also taper the legs with a bandsaw or tablesaw, then finish with a smoothing plane, which is what I do with very short tapers rather than trying to pull small pieces over the cutterhead.

For a table like this I begin with 1¼-in. stock and taper it on all four sides to ⅞ in. Before you begin cutting, draw the taper on all four faces of the leg and carry the guidelines onto the bottom end of the leg so they remain visible after you start cutting. It's also easier to cut the leg mortises above the taper in the square stock before you begin shaping.

If you're tapering stock that's shorter than the length of the infeed table, set up the jointer as shown *before* starting the machine. Lower the infeed table to make a ⅞-in. cut. Place the stock on top of the infeed table and against the fence with its top section resting on the edge of the outfeed table. Butt a stop block against the end of the leg and clamp the block to the infeed table.

Now, remove the leg and start the jointer. Place the bottom end of the leg against the stop block, carefully open the blade guard wide enough for the leg to slide by and lower the leg until the top end rests on the outfeed table. Setting the top of the leg on the outfeed table like this will hold the end high, so that the cut will be tapered toward the other end of the stock as you push the leg through the jointer with the push stick. *Be very careful.* Don't use



the jointer without a push stick. Mine is a 6-in. by 4-in. block of wood notched on one long edge to fit over the leg. Continue cutting each side in turn, until the end is tapered to the guidelines you've laid out. Then plane or sand to smooth the transition from the square stock to the taper.

If the leg is to be tapered from end to end, you must leave extra length at the top of the leg and adjust the stop block to prevent the leg from missing the edge of the outfeed table. At least ¼ in. of the leg must be on the outfeed table to prevent the leg from dropping onto the cutterhead and kicking back. If the stock is longer than

the infeed table, you can use the same procedure outlined above, if you attach a movable extension that can be moved along with the infeed table.

If you want to make a spade-foot leg or another form requiring a stopped taper, taper leg as above, then attach a second stop block to the outfeed table. Repeat the procedure using the second block to stop the cut. After tapering each side, lower the infeed table about ⅞ in. and cut each side again. Repeat until the foot is formed. □

Eric Schramm designs and builds custom furniture in Los Gatos, Calif.