

# Making a Memory Box



These are instructions to make a memory box that is 7-1/4" square and 1-3/4" high, with mitered corners and a sliding top. The box can be of common or exotic wood, finished or unfinished. The key is to build a box that will hold love and memories of the children and families who give and receive them.

## Materials:

Sides of box: 37" long by 1-3/4" wide by 3/8" thick (enough length for 7-1/4" for 5 pieces for the sides of the box (5<sup>th</sup> side is explained later)

Top of box: 1/4" thick approx 7-1/4" square (will be trimmed later)

Bottom of Box: 3/16" to 1/4" thick 7-1/4" square

Wood glue

Clamps

Various router bits: rabbeting, mortising, round-over

Sandpaper

Large rubber bands

1-1/2" wide blue painters tape

Create a 3/16" deep rabbet along the lower edge of the box side material. (See Photo 1.) We find it easier to rabbet the one long piece rather than all the small ones. The rabbet should be the same depth as the thickness of the bottom as shown by the scrap of plywood in the rabbet in Photo 2. If a plywood bottom is used, it may range in thickness from 3/16" to 1/4".

Next create a dado slot 3/16" deep and 1/4" down from the top of the box side, on the same side as the rabbet. This dado will be for the top. Be sure to leave 1/4" above the dado. This slot should be about 1/32" wider than the thickness of the top (shown as a second scrap of plywood in Photo 2) so it slides well.

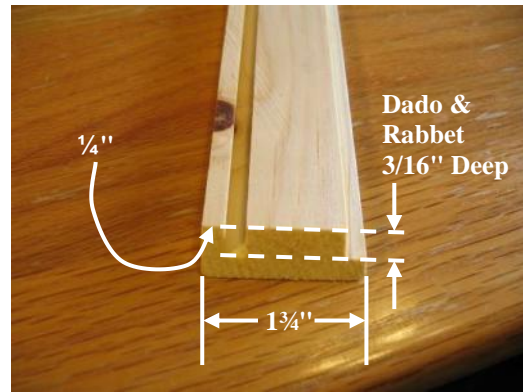


Photo 1

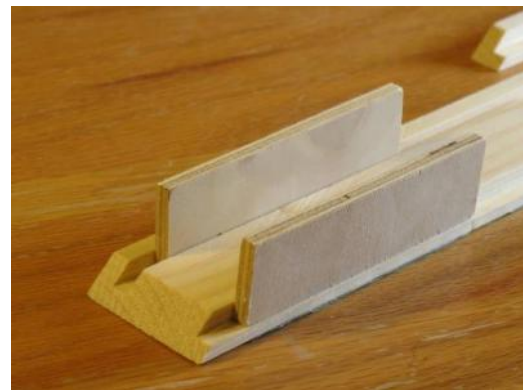


Photo 2

Next miter the sides so each piece is 7-1/4" long (Photo 3). Remember that the miter (short side) has both the dado and rabbet cuts, so the outer sides won't show any slots. Make 5 pieces.

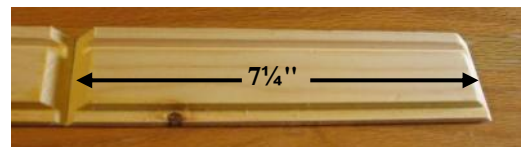


Photo 3

On one of the 5 pieces, cut off the dadoed slot so that that the top of that side of the box is even with the bottom of the dado you made for the sliding top. See Photo 4. This allows the top to slide out. Discard the piece you cut off.

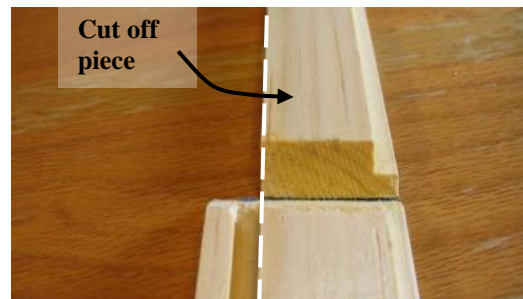


Photo 4

The 5<sup>th</sup> piece is now ready to be cut. You have to save the top of it (Photo 5). The cut is made such that the entire dado slot is preserved (Photo 6). This piece will be glued onto the box top so the dadoed section covers the edge of the top. Don't glue this on until you have fit the top into the slot and trimmed it so the mitered pieces line up perfectly. That way the box will look like it has four perfectly mitered corners.

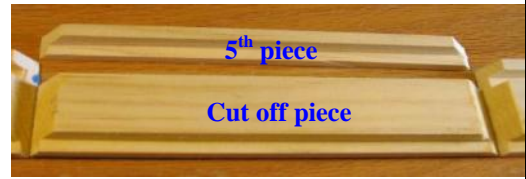
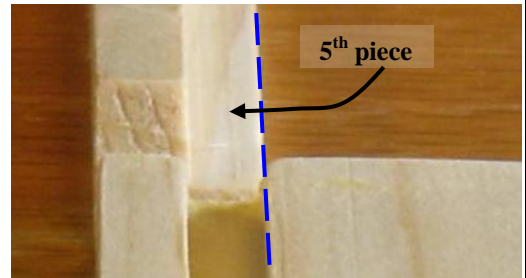


Photo 5



Now it is time to dry assemble the box. We have found that butting the mitered edges together on blue painters tape (shown in Photo 7) allows you to tape them together to get the full box done. Once you have this done, you can carefully measure to bottom dimensions and cut the bottom to fit exactly into the rabbets you have made earlier. Even though we had “dialed in” the measurements, we still had to custom fit each bottom and top to make them work well. We found that it is easy to just take a little off until you get just the right fit on the bottom. When you have it just right, glue up the four sides. We used rubber bands to hold the box together while the glue dried (Photo 8). Set this aside for now.



Photo 7



Photo 8

Once the sides have dried for 1 hour, fit the top into the slot. The end which has the miter glued to it is slightly longer than the other dimensions. Again one needs to creep up on this measurement. It is important to get the sides working well, and keep trimming until you get a good fit with the miter you have cut earlier. The 5<sup>th</sup> piece is glued to the front edge of the lid such that it fits snugly into the mitered corners at each end (Photo 9).



Photo 9

After all pieces are glued and dried, run them over a round-over bit to soften the sharp edges. We start with the corners and then went to the long edges. After rounding them, sand the bottom so the bottom is flush with the sides.

About half the boxes are decorated by kids who are healthy enough to decorate them. The other half is use by kids who are too young or too weak to do the decorations. We can use unfinished boxes as well as finished boxes.

Ralph Desmond puts on a layer of shellac with a spray can and then lightly sands with 320 grit. He applies a double coat of spray lacquer three times, sanding lightly between coats. He can have all these coats on within two hours. He also uses a piece of plywood as a template for cutting a piece of felt to glue on the bottom of the box. He uses a razor blade to cut the felt.

Other box makers leave them plain or perhaps put in a piece of sandpaper for the child to finish the box. Both ways will serve the children. Thank you for your efforts.

