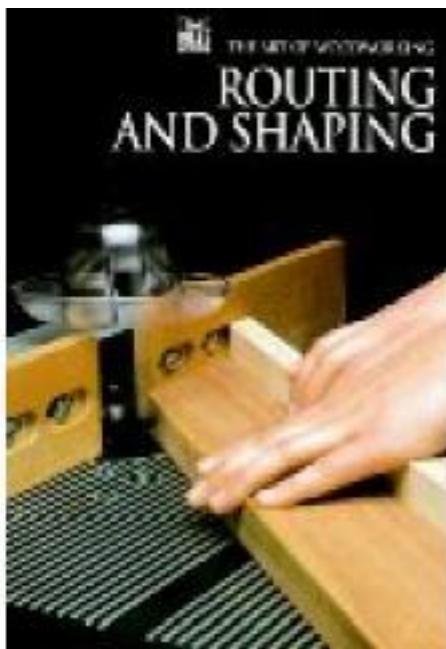


Routing and Shaping Art of Woodworking



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My first experience with woodworking was serving as a boat builder's apprentice as a teenager. I enjoyed working with wood so much that I later enrolled in a furniture building program at Boston University. At both places I found that each of my instructors or mentors had his own favorite tool that could be made to perform many tasks besides the obvious ones. One teacher might use a table saw with an angled

fence to cut cove moldings; someone else would fit a radial arm saw with a disk sander or attach cutters to mill profiles. At the school and in the boat shop, the spindle shaper was more often used as a sawhorse or a workbench than as a tool. I was left with the impression that the shaper cuts profiles in the edges of boards and that was about all. It was not until I opened my own shop that I realized how much more versatile the tool really is. I have had my 3-horsepower tilting arbor shaper for almost 10 years now and I would be lost without it. Woodworkers have personal styles, and I tend to be very machine-oriented. More and more, I find that the hand tools that I once used daily now sit idle in my tool cabinet. For me, end results and speed matter most and I find that the shaper outperforms my old hand tools hands down.

Combined with a decent powerfeed unit, a shaper can cut dadoes better than a table saw and dean up an edge as well as a small jointer. If you have a collet that accepts router bits, you'll quickly find that the shaper outclasses even the largest of routers, with a range of cutters that is unmatched. I recently bought a crown molding cutter for my shaper. It's a stacking system so I can either use the complete assembly to make a cut or install the individual parts to carve separate profiles.

That's only the beginning. Add rub collars and large-diameter bearings and I expand the range of the shaper even more. With these inexpensive accessories I can make a template out of scrap stock and affix it to my good stock. The shaper then acts like a big flush trimmer and I can get perfectly uniform finished pieces every time.

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