Dark, Rich, Full-Bodied

For those who like it strong and robust—a coffee table with substance

The gravity of the situation—a room that needed solid, formal furniture—demanded a table with the blue-blood pedigree of pedestal tables and the classic good looks of dark-stained oak

As a professional furniture maker working with clients, I've learnt that it's the quality of relationship I have, almost as much as the quality of what I build, that keeps them coming back. The idea for this project came from a client who had very specific ideas of what he wanted. Someone else already built a large wall unit for him—a beautiful, dominating piece of furniture that was dark, strong and stately. While this fellow was very happy with the end result, he hadn't enjoyed the process of working with the builder, so for a companion coffee table he came to me. He knew he wanted an oak pedestal coffee table that expanded with a table leaf, and he wanted it as strong and massive as the wall unit. He also wanted a silky-smooth, hidden drawer at each end. We collaborated on the design, step by step. I started with sketches, then a cardboard model to get proportions right, and then a model in cheap pine to settle all the details.

This careful planning process yielded a table that met his criteria. From the 1 1/4"-thick top to the 6" octagonal pedestals, it's nothing if not substantial. It's not difficult to build, but demands a good tablesaw, jointer and thickness planer because of the robust parts involved. To make the drawers exceptionally smooth I chose mechanical slides that are completely concealed and have a spring action that actually pulls the drawer in as it closes.

On The Pedestal

Good hardware is a real workshop timesaver. Turn the table over for a look at the hidden drawer slides—an easy solution for smooth, quiet, self-closing drawers

There are different ways to make table pedestals, and I chose to laminate solid stock for mine. It's the easiest way to get flawless results, with no chance that joints will open up later, as hollow, coopered pedestals sometimes do. Solid construction also gives the sturdiest results.

I dressed enough boards to make a 6 1/2" x 6 1/2" blank, roughly 24" long-enough for both pedestals. I then milled this down to near its finished thickness of 6" x 6" by jointing two sides square before ripping each opposite side with two passes on the tablesaw, one from each rough face. If your tablesaw blade can't extend high enough to slice through wood this wide in two passes, do what you can then use a hand saw to finish the job before jointing the sawn edges clean and straight.

The pedestals aren't regular octagons since their sides aren't equal in width. The plans show how the sides that accept the feet are 3" wide, while the open sides are 2 1/8" wide. I drew this outline on one end of the pedestal blank, then made a temporary fence on my saw and rough-cut the waste before jointing the pedestal blank down to final size and trimming to final length of 11 1/2".

Leg Work

The leg shape is a condensed replica of the leg on a 1930s pedestal table I own. For strength, it's critical that you orient the grain as shown in the plan. After laminating enough stock to get the 2 1/2" leg thickness, I used a bandsaw to cut as close to the outline as possible, then sanded the edges smooth with an edge sander and oscillating spindle sander. Final smoothing is best done with a random orbit sander. All the edges except the ones that join with the pedestal are also softened with a 1/4" radius roundover bit in a table-mounted router.

While you're at it, cut the stretcher that connects the pedestals, then sand and round its

exposed edges, too.

Make The Tabletop

Start putting the tabletop together by edge-gluing enough wood to make the three pieces of the tabletop, with the grain running across the width. Once the top is glued, sanded and trimmed to final size, continue by jigsawing a 3 3/4" radius curve on each corner, then sand all edges smooth. I used a 3/4" radius roundover bit with a 3/16" shoulder on top to soften the table edge even more, followed by a 1/4" roundover bit used on the bottom edge, without a shoulder. The plans show the profile, though the details are up to you. Whatever you choose, rout the top profile in several passes. There's a lot of tough wood to be removed, and you don't want to overtax your router or burn the tabletop edges .

Supporting Members

Ease the bottom edges of the pedestal slightly with 100-grit sandpaper before setting the pedestals upright on a piece of 2 5/8"-thick scrap. Supporting the pedestals like this raises them to their final height off the floor and makes it a lot easier to position and join the legs. The bottom of each leg doesn't line up with the pedestal bottom, but joins 1/8" up. Attach the legs to the pedestals with glue, three screws and a couple of biscuits for good measure. Two screws go through the bottom of the pedestal into the legs (first drill a large counterbore with a Forstner bit), and one screw goes through the top of the leg into the pedestal (counterbored and later plugged).

Extension slides are wisely purchased as a complete unit. Finding the necessary hardware on its own and building to the tolerances required is far more trouble than it's worth

At a joint that needs strength, counterbored screws, glue and #20 biscuits (or dowels) secure the legs to the pedestals

You could also fasten each leg with four 1/2" dia. x 2 1/2" fluted dowels, shopmade splines or two pairs of #20 biscuits. This joint takes a lot of stress, and the stress will tend to pull the joint apart, so it needs to be strong. In this design, the massive feet conveniently give a large surface area for gluing. If I ever redesign this with thinner, more delicate feet, I'll give extra thought to engineering this joint so it's rock solid.

With feet installed, join the two pedestals to the stretcher, using a single #20 biscuit (for alignment) and two #8 x 2 1/2" screws driven diagonally from the top and bottom edges. Don't forget to place the bottom edge of the stretcher 3/4" higher than the bottom edge of pedestal.

Complete this part of the project by fastening the table slide mounting boards to the pedestal tops with screws. Make sure these are square to the stretcher and parallel to each other.

Extension Slides

Extension slides are readily available from many sources in kit form—a shortcut even professional furniture makers take, since these slides are difficult to build accurately (and you would still need to find the hardware). For smooth tabletop expansion the extension slides must be installed exactly parallel. Attach the extension slides with only two screws for now, so you can adjust them later if needed.

Continue by clamping mating edges of the tabletop together (set the leaf aside for now), then place the assembly on the extension slides and centre them before fastening with screws.

The table leaf can now be added, along with the alignment pins, before the table is flipped upside down. Use a blanket or piece of foam as padding to prevent scratches to the tabletop.

The apron attaches to the leaf with screws in deep counterbores. Undermounted alignment pins are easily installed and adjusted

Corners And Aprons

The round corner blocks and beaded aprons come next. The plans show how the corner

blocks are cut from a longer, laminated block on an angle. This makes the visible grain around the curved front of the blocks more consistent. Dry-fit these parts, secure the corner blocks to the underside of the tabletop with #8 x 2 1/2" screws.

Rout the beaded profile on the aprons, then trim to final length so they fit between the corner blocks, as shown in the plan. Trim the end aprons, which aren't attached to the tabletop because they form drawer fronts, with 1/16" clearance between the corner blocks. With the extension leaf installed, cut and fit their small aprons then fasten them with counterbored screws driven from below.

Even though the drawer box specs are given in the materials list, it's best to build yours to fit between the drawer mount member on your table, less the allowance required for the mechanical drawer slides you're using. If you make a mistake and your drawers are too big or small, just move the drawer mount members until the clearance is right. Once the drawers are built and installed, fasten the end aprons that act as drawer faces. Double-sided tape makes it easy to position the aprons just right, before fastening with screws driven from inside.

Finishing Tips

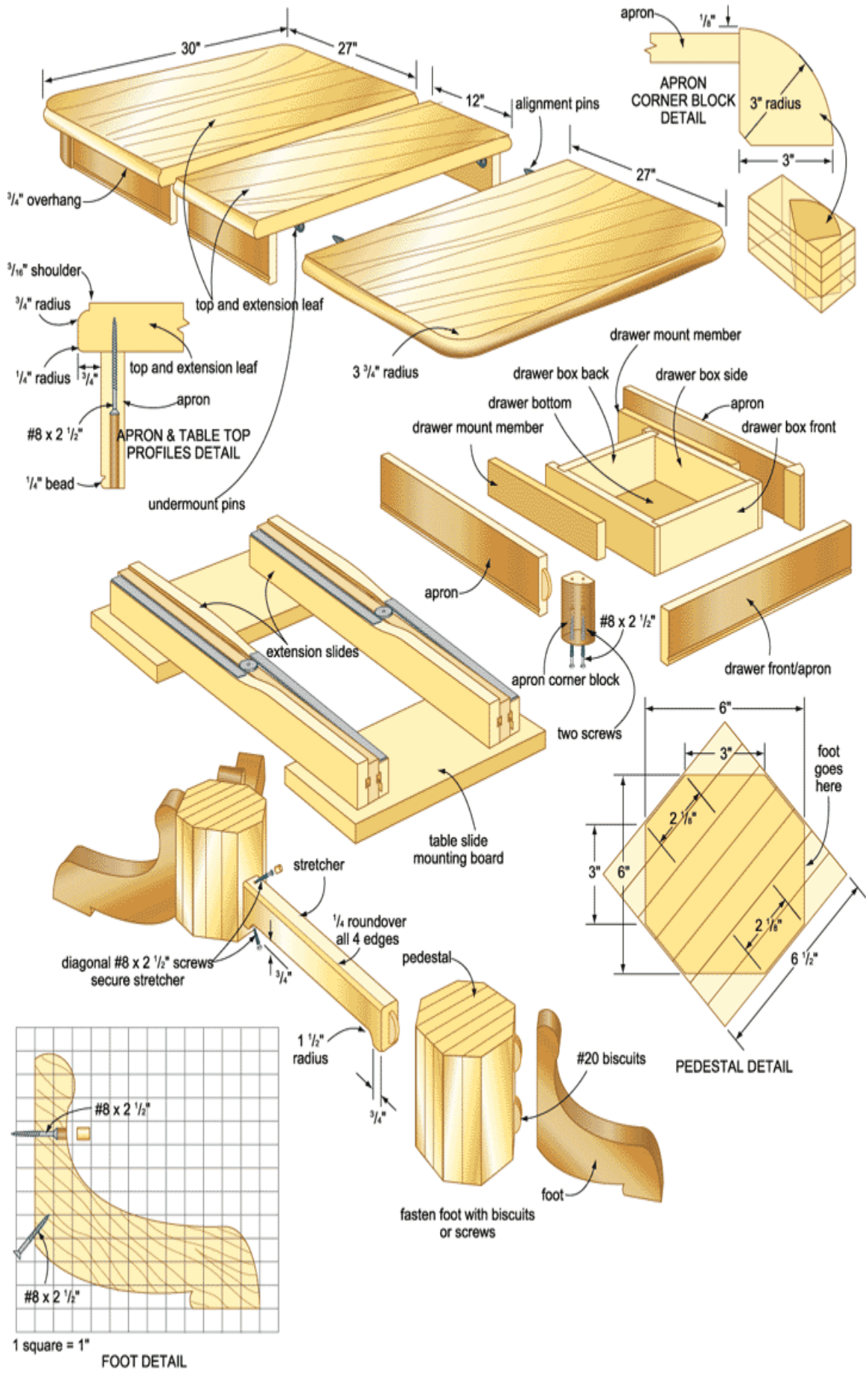
I build furniture for a living so my finishing methods are more involved than a home workshopper might choose. I sprayed non-grain-raising professional stain, toner and 35° sheen lacquer to get the dark colour and look I wanted. Toner is colouring liquid added to lacquer for custom tinting. Any oil-based stain and urethane would be a good home workshop option. It's important to use a dark stain, to reinforce that feeling of mass and weight and formality. A light-coloured stain would look odd, even silly, like seeing the Queen in a t-shirt and sweatpants. It just wouldn't be right.

Click below for a detailed plan

You Will Need

Part	*Size*	*Qty.*
Tabletops	1 1/4" x 27" wide x 30" long (1)	2
Table leaf	1 1/4" x 12" wide x 30" long (1)	1
Pedestal layers	1" x 6 1/2" x 24"	7
Feet	2 1/2" x 8 1/2" x 20" (2)	4
Stretcher	1 1/4" x 5" x 16"	1
Table slide mounting boards	1" x 6" x 24"	2
Apron blanks	3/4" x 3 1/2" x 24" (3)	7
Apron cornder blocks	3" x 3" x 3 1/2"	4
Drawer box front/back	3/4" x 3" x 14"	2
Drawer box sides	3/4" x 3" x 20"	2
Drawer box bottom	1/4" x 16" x 22"	1
Drawer mount members	3/4" x 2 1/2" x 20"	2
Hardware		
Tabletop alignment pins - Lee Valley Tools #00S10.24		4 sets
Extension slides - Lee Valley Tools #17K15.02		1 pair
Drawer slides - Blum Tandem Slides Model 550-16", 3/4 extension		4

1 - see plans for grain orientation
2 - laminate for required thickness
3 - cut apron parts to fit


30"
27"
12"
alignment pins
27"
3/4" overhang
3 3/4" radius
apron
1/8"
APRON
CORNER BLOCK
DETAIL
3" radius
3"
3/16" shoulder
3/4" radius
top and extension leaf
1/4" radius
3/4"
top and extension leaf
apron
#8 x 2 1/2"
APRON & TABLE TOP
PROFILES DETAIL
1/4" bead
undermount pins
drawer mount member
drawer box back
drawer box side
drawer bottom
apron
drawer mount member
drawer box front
apron
#8 x 2 1/2"
drawer front/apron
extension slides
apron corner block
two screws
6"
3"
foot
goes
here
2 1/8"
3"
6"
2 1/8"
6 1/2"
table slide
mounting board
stretcher
1/4 roundover
all 4 edges
diagonal #8 x 2 1/2" screws
secure stretcher
3/4"
pedestal
1 1/2"
radius
3/4"
#20 biscuits
PEDESTAL DETAIL
#8 x 2 1/2"
#8 x 2 1/2"
foot
fasten foot with biscuits
or screws
1 square = 1"
FOOT DETAIL