



Custom Woodworking Project Guide

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1. Review Ideas

Get ideas from web pages, magazines, other peoples' houses, etc. Either take pictures or print out so you'll have them to show the woodworker later on.

2. Budget and Estimate the Project

This is a little different step than actually getting a bid. If you have no idea what something might cost, you might want to try to get a ballpark figure, but make sure you understand that it is just that. Your woodworker should be able to work with you on developing a budget. Although they might not like the idea since they think they'll either scare you away with a big number or underestimate the project and give you a false idea of the actual costs and later on have to try and explain why the project will cost more than they originally thought. They will probably talk with you in terms of price ranges. This is the stage where it's absolutely important to work with someone you trust!

3. Sketch Your Plan

This is where you get to put all your artistic talent to work. Good, bad, or ugly, try to get a sketch of what you'd like to have done. This in combination with the pictures from Step 1, should be good enough to give your woodworker so he can prepare a formal bid.

4. Understand the process

Get to know what's going to take place during the course of the project.

- Clearly identify items within the construction area that should be protected in the event that the items cannot be removed from where the work is being done.
- Secure the construction area to keep children, pets, and others from entering or tampering with the project.
- Expect a little extra dust. It is a construction project and cutting, drilling, and sanding will probably be involved. It should be minimal and your woodworker should notify you if they

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expect any significant amounts of airborne material and take adequate precautions to minimize if possible.

- Keep a file of the contract, plans, project specifications, invoices, amendments to the plan, and all other materials related to your project. You should maintain this file 3-5 years.
- Let the woodworker know when special events require an adjustment to the schedule.
- Obtain a formal quote for all services and work to be done. Make sure any special requirements, types of wood, finishes, etc. are included. Be as detailed as possible.
- Expect things to be a little messy and looking a little rough. Don't judge the quality of the work until it has been completely finished.

It is possible that you might want to change something or add an extra during the construction period. Make sure that the contract allows for change order / extra clauses before you sign and properly manage them. If you make a change order, get it down in writing. A change may be different materials, different colors/finishes or a change in design or style. If you ask your woodworker to do anything outside the scope of the contract, expect and negotiate any additional costs or schedule changes that might occur. These changes become part of the original contract that should be signed by the woodworker and owner before going into production. Never accept a verbal agreement to a change and never leave a voice mail, email, or written note hoping the woodworker will add the request to the contract.

5. Discuss/Negotiate Contract

The woodworker will supply a written bid or estimate after looking over the project and probably take some measurements of the project area. Make sure the woodworker bids on the Contract Specifications to avoid any misunderstandings. All bids should specify which materials will be used. Take the time to review the bid or estimate. Walk away from any pressure tactics to sign the contract prematurely. Be careful what you sign – signed bids may act as a contract agreement. Be sure to discuss payment terms. Most projects will require a down payment. This

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down payment is usually used to buy materials to get the project started. For smaller projects, the remaining balance is usually paid in full at the end of the project after the homeowner has approved the work. For larger scale projects that are over a longer period of time, there may be intermittent payments due upon project milestones. Be aware that once final payment is made, it's usually the end of the project and it is assumed all contract items have been fulfilled.

6. Hire Marvelous Woodworking (Another shameless plug)

7. Do the project

This is where project management skills come in handy. Make sure you inspect each phase of the project but don't "hover" over the work. It's important to know what's going on but it's also important to stay out of the way and let the woodworker do their thing. Don't be afraid to ask questions about what's going on but wait for appropriate times unless you think it's a potential problem. Manage any problems as they arise and get them resolved as early as possible. Don't wait until the end of the project to point out something that could have easily been resolved early on.

8. Approve all Work

This is where the homeowner inspects the work and upon approval, pays the remaining balance and the contract is complete. The homeowner should understand that custom work has a little bit different look than mass-produced factory made items. A trained or discerning eye can tell when something is custom made. The work should like it blends with the rest of the décor and finishes. There should not be any corners or areas that immediately draw your eye as soon as you enter the room. The woodworker should leave you instructions on the maintenance and care of the artwork they have just created specifically for you. Enjoy the work and know that the project is one-of-a-kind.

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