

# Writing Class

Build an elegant writing table with a leather top.



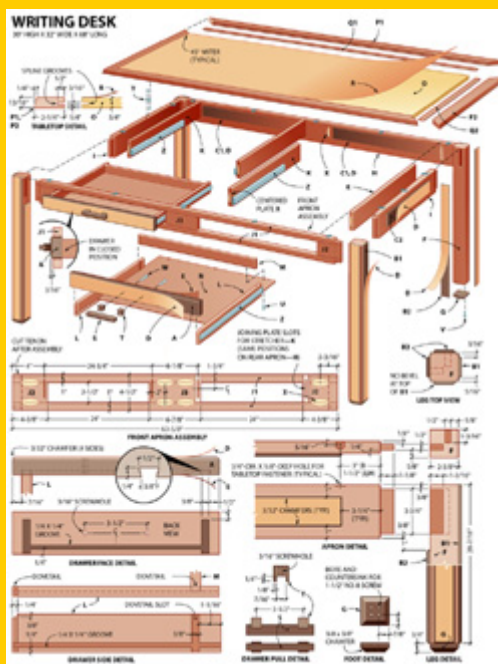
You wouldn't think of dining without a table. Or building a bookcase without a workbench. In a sense, these are just like all of your tools--as important as a knife, fork and plate joiner. So, why should writing that long-delayed novel or letter to your folks be any different? You need the right gear to do your best work--even when it's on paper.



Two drawers on the business side of our desk match veneered panels on the front. The embossed leather is bound by solid mahogany edging.

Our elegant writing table is made of solid mahogany with accents of wenge and pomele sapele veneer. It features two wide drawers that offer ample space for supplies, notebooks--even a laptop computer. And, the table has a leather top--a luxury that's sure to put the art back into writing in your home.

The leather for the top is easy to install and is available in several colors and embossed edge patterns. It's called Antique Desktop Leather and it comes from Van Dyke's Restorers, P.O. Box 278, Woonsocket, SD 57385. The sapele veneer and wenge are available from a variety of mail-order dealers. One supplier is A&M Wood Specialty, 358 Eagle St. N., Box 32040, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada N3H 5M2; [www.amwoodinc.com](http://www.amwoodinc.com).



### MATERIALS LIST--WRITING DESK

Key	No.	Size and description (use)
A*	2	13/16 x 2-3/8 x 23-7/8" wenge (drawer face)
B1	8	3/16 x 1-3/4 x 28-7/16" wenge (leg panel)
B2	8	3/16 x 1-3/4 x 22-15/16" wenge (leg panel)
C1	2	3/16 x 2-1/2 x 24" wenge (apron panel)
C2	2	3/16 x 2-1/2 x 18-7/8" wenge (apron panel)
D	as reqd.	Pomele sapele veneer
E	2	2-3/8 x 23-7/8" mahogany veneer (inside drawer veneer)
F	4	2-3/8 x 2-3/8 x 28-7/16" mahogany (leg)
G	4	3/4 x 2-3/8 x 2-3/8" wenge (foot)
H	1	1 x 4-1/2 x 63-5/8" mahogany

		(apron)
I	2	1 x 4-1/2 x 27-5/8" mahogany (apron)
J1	2	1 x 1 x 63-5/8" mahogany (apron rail)
J2	2	1 x 2-1/2 x 4-3/8" mahogany (apron core)
J3	1	1 x 2-1/2 x 6-7/8" mahogany (apron core)
K	4	3/4 x 3-1/2 x 27-3/8" maple (stretcher)
L	4	1/2 x 2-1/8 x 20-1/4" maple (drawer side)
M	2	1/2 x 1-5/8 x 22-1/2" maple (drawer back)
N	2	1/4 x 19-1/4 x 22-1/2" birch plywood (drawer bottom)
O	1	3/4 x 27-1/2 x 63-1/2" birch plywood (top panel)
P1	2	13/16 x 2-1/4 x 68" mahogany (edging)
P2	2	13/16 x 2-1/4 x 32" mahogany (edging)
Q1	2	3/16 x 1 x 62-1/2" maple (spline)
Q2	2	3/16 x 1 x 27-1/2" maple (spline)
R**	1	27-1/2 x 63-1/2" leather (top)
S	2	7/16 x 3/4 x 5" wenge (pull)
T	4	11/16 x 3/4 x 3/4" wenge (pull block)
U	6	3/4" No. 8 rh woodscrew
V	16	1-1/2" No. 8 fh woodscrew
W	4	1-3/4" No. 8 rh woodscrew
X	16	No. 20 joining plate
Y***	16	Tabletop fastener, Rockler No. 21650
Z***	2	Pair drawer slides, Rockler No. 89707

**Misc.:** Sandpaper; glue; vinyl wallpaper paste; wax or kraft paper; foam roller; Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish (Waterlox Coatings Corp., 9808 Meech Ave., Cleveland, OH 44105).

\* Thickness with veneer.

\*\*Antique Desktop Leather available from Van Dyke's Restorers, P.O. Box 278, Woonsocket,

SD 57385; [www.vandykes.com](http://www.vandykes.com).

\*\*\* Rockler Woodworking and Hardware, 4365 Willow Dr., Medina, MN 55340; [www.rockler.com](http://www.rockler.com).

## Veneering

Use your band saw to resaw wenge stock for the 3/16-in.-thick decorative panels, and lightly plane them to remove the saw marks. Since the finished panels are narrow, plan to veneer wide pieces and then rip two from each blank. Cut the cores for the drawer faces from 3/4-in.-thick wenge. Use a veneer saw to cut the veneer to the exact sizes of the wenge blanks. Make light passes with the saw to avoid tearing the veneer (Photo 1). While the thin panels are veneered only on their exposed faces, the drawer front panels need balancing veneers on the inside faces. If you'd rather conserve the more expensive sapele, you can use mahogany for this purpose.

To assemble the drawer fronts, use a foam roller to spread glue on one face of each wenge blank. Invert each piece onto its mating veneer, coat the opposite faces and add the other veneers. Place the two panels in a stack with kraft or wax paper between them and on the top and bottom. Sandwich the stack between 3/4-in.-thick cauls and apply clamps (Photo 2). Veneer the leg and apron panels the same way.

Remove the clamps after about 2 hours, and place the panels in a stack with spacers so air can circulate. Let them dry for at least 24 hours before trimming to size.

## Building The Frame

Rip and crosscut mahogany to finished size for the legs. If you can't get thick stock, glue up blanks from thinner material. Glue and screw square blocks of wenge to the bottom of each leg, and trim a chamfer around the bottom edge with a sharp block plane.

Use a plunge router with a spiral up-cutting bit to cut the leg mortises (Photo 3), and finish each by squaring the ends with a sharp chisel.



Use a veneer saw and straight board to cut the veneer. Make light passes to avoid tearing the wood.



Stack the pieces with paper between each panel and on the top and bottom. Add 3/4-in. cauls and apply clamps.



Route the mortises in the legs. Clamp a second leg to the workpiece to support the router base at each leg end.



Using a block plane, chamfer the edges of the veneered panels as shown in the drawing. Lightly outline the panel locations on the leg faces and glue the panels in place (Photo 4). Allow the clamps to remain for about 30 minutes and then gently scrape off any excess glue.

Cut 1-in.-thick mahogany to size for the aprons. To make the openings in the drawer apron, rip three consecutive strips from a wide piece of mahogany stock--the first 1 in. wide, the next 2-1/2 in. wide, the last 1 in. wide (Photo 5). Crosscut the middle strip to create the drawer openings, and use joining plates and glue to reassemble the parts.



4 Mark the panel positions on each leg, spread glue on the back of a panel, and clamp until the glue sets.



5 Rip three consecutive strips for the drawer apron. Cut the wider middle strip for the center and end sections.



6 Use a dado blade to cut the tenons on the apron ends. The rip fence acts as a stop to ensure uniform tenon length.

Install a dado blade in your table saw and cut the tenon cheeks on the apron ends (Photo 6). Adjust the blade height and hold the aprons on edge to cut the shoulders at the top and bottom of each tenon, and check the fit of each joint. Use a Forstner bit in your drill press to bore the recesses in the top edge of each apron for the tabletop fasteners. Then, glue the veneered panels to the aprons, and sand the parts to 220 grit.

Begin assembly by joining each short apron to a pair of legs. Spread glue in the leg mortises and on the apron tenons, clamp and let the glue set. While the ends are clamped up, rip and crosscut maple for the drawer stretchers. Cut plate joint slots for joining the stretchers to the long aprons (Photo 7). Apply glue to the slots and plates, and assemble these parts (Photo 8). Compare opposite diagonal measurements to be sure that the assembly is square. After the glue is dry, join



Use the plate joiner to cut the slots for the joints between the drawer stretchers and the front and back aprons.



Apply glue to the slots and plates, and then assemble the parts. Clamp and check that the frame is square.



Rout the dovetail slots in the drawer fronts and sides. A straight board clamped in place guides the cuts.

the long aprons to the side subassemblies. Make sure that all legs rest evenly on the floor.

### Drawers And Top

Trim the drawer faces to finished dimension, and make the 1/2-in.-thick maple drawer sides and backs. Use a 1/2-in. dovetail bit in your router to cut the dovetail slots in the face and sides (Photo 9). Clamp a straight board to the workpiece to guide the router when making these cuts. Note that the slots in the faces stop short of the top edge. Use the same bit in a router table to shape the ends of the side and back pieces. Test the cut on scrap stock to be sure your adjustments are perfect before cutting the drawer parts. Then, rout the grooves in the sides and faces for the drawer bottoms, and cut 1/4-in. plywood for the bottom panels. Apply glue to the dovetail joints and slide the parts together. Slide the bottom panels into position and fasten them to the bottom edge of the back with screws.

Secure the drawer slides to the stretchers so the drawers protrude 3/16 in. beyond the face of the apron when closed (Photo 10). To permit adjustment for fit, use the horizontally slotted holes for the stretcher halves of each slide, and the vertically slotted holes for the drawer halves. When the drawers fit properly, install the remaining screws in the circular holes.

**10**

Attach the drawer slides to the stretchers. Use only two screws in the horizontal slots so you can make adjustments.

Cut parts for the drawer pulls from wenge stock. To make the small mounting blocks, use a dado blade and a zero-clearance table saw insert to cut a groove in the edge of a 12-in.-long strip. Use feather boards and pushsticks to keep your hands away from the blade. Then, crosscut the small blocks and glue the pull parts together (Photo 11).

Cut the birch-plywood top panel to size, place it upside down on a worktable, and use a 3/16-in. slot cutter to rout a groove around its edge (Photo 12). Then, rout similar slots in 13/16-in.-thick mahogany stock for the edging. Miter the edging to fit the panel. Rip and crosscut maple stock for the splines, apply glue, and join the edging strips to the top panel.

To shape the top edging to a 15° angle, mark a line 1/4 in. in from the edge, and trim to that line with a sharp block plane. Then, sand the edging to 220 grit and remove the dust.

### Finishing

It's best to finish the top before applying the leather, but it's important to keep the finish off the surface that will receive the leather. Run a band of masking tape along the edge of the panel, immediately adjacent to the mahogany edging (Photo 13).

We used Waterlox Original Sealer/Finish to finish our desk. Use a brush or rag to spread the finish and let it soak in for about 30 minutes. Wipe off all excess, leaving only a damp surface, and let it dry overnight. Lightly scuff the finish with 320-grit

**11**

Make the drawer pulls from wenge pieces. Use spring clamps to hold the parts together while the glue sets.

**12**

Use a slot cutter to rout the groove around the edge. Cut a matching groove in the mahogany edging.



sandpaper, dust off and apply at least two more coats.

Use a brush to spread vinyl wallpaper paste on the panel, taking care to adequately coat the edges and corners (Photo 14). Let the first coat dry about 2 hours, then apply a second coat.

Roll up the leather and align one short edge against the mahogany edging. Unroll the leather and use your hands to smooth it, pushing out any bubbles and stretching it to fit tightly to the edging (Photo 15). Allow it to sit for 10 to 15 minutes, then go over the surface again. Let the panel dry overnight.

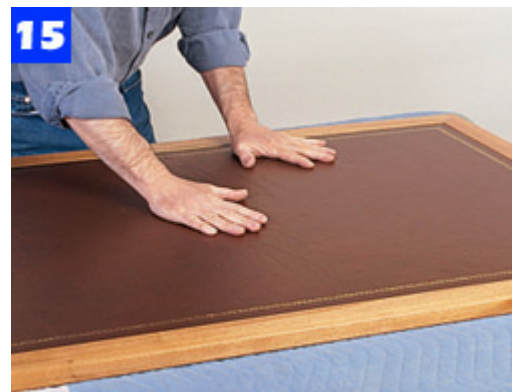
Screw the tabletop fasteners to the apron. Turn the desktop over and attach the base with an even overhang on all edges.



With the edging in place, mask the plywood panel to keep the finish from getting on the surface.



After finishing the edging, spread vinyl wallpaper paste on the panel. Allow it to dry, then apply a second coat.



Roll the leather onto the panel while fitting it tightly against the edging. Use your hands to push out any bubbles.



# WRITING DESK

30" HIGH X 32" WIDE X 68" LONG

