

To avoid repetitive instructions, this page is included in each issue to assist novice scrollers with basic scrolling techniques.



Squaring Your Table

Most scroll saws have an adjustable table that allows you to make cuts at different angles. There are times when you want the saw set at an angle, but most cutting is done with the blade perpendicular to the table. If the table is even slightly off-square, the cuts will be angled. This interferes with puzzle pieces, intarsia, segmentation, and many other types of scrolling projects.

The most common method for squaring a table uses a small metal square, or right angle tool. Set the square flat on the saw table against a blade that has been inserted and tensioned. Adjust the table to form a 90° angle to the blade.

The cutting-through method is also popular. Saw through a piece of scrap wood at least 3/4" (19mm) thick and check the angle of the cut using a square. Adjust the table until you get a perfectly square cut.

You can also use the kerf-test method. Take a 1 3/4" (44mm)-thick piece of scrap wood and cut about 1/16" (2mm) into it. Stop the saw, back the blade out, and spin the wood around to the back of the blade. If the blade slips easily into the kerf, the table is square. If it doesn't slide into the kerf, adjust the table and perform the test again until the blade slips in easily.



Attaching Patterns

Temporary-bond spray adhesive is the most common method used to attach patterns to stock. Photocopy the pattern. Spray the adhesive on the back of the copy of the pattern, wait a few seconds, and then press the pattern down onto the blank. Rubber cement or glue sticks work similarly.

You can also use graphite or carbon transfer paper. Place the pattern on the blank and slip a sheet of transfer paper in between the pattern and the blank. Use a few pieces of painter's tape to hold the pattern and transfer paper in place. Trace around the pattern with a red pen (so you know where you have traced). Choose a light-colored transfer paper for darker woods. Carbon paper costs less than graphite paper, but must be sanded off before finishing.

Stack Cutting

Stack cutting lets you cut several pieces of a project—or even several projects—at one time. Essentially, you attach several blanks together and cut them as one unit.

One way to attach blanks is with tape. Line all the layers up and wrap a layer of tape around the outside edge. You can also wrap the whole stack in tape for extra stability. Use masking tape, painter's tape, or clear packaging tape.

Hot-melt glue is another option. Glue the blanks together with a dot of hot-melt glue on each side.

You can also join pieces by driving brads or small nails into as many waste areas as you can. Cut off any overhanging nails as close to the surface as you can, and then sand them flush to avoid scratching or catching on the table.



Blade Tension

Before inserting a blade, completely remove the tension. Clamp both ends of the blade into the blade holders and adjust the tension. Push on the blade with your finger. It should flex no more than 1/8" (3mm) forward, backward, or side to side.

A blade that does not have enough tension will wander. It will also flex from side to side, making for irregular or angled cuts. If you press too hard on a loose blade, it will usually snap. A blade that has too much tension is more susceptible to breaking and tends to pull out of the blade holders. In general, it is better to make the blade too tight rather than too loose.

Blade-Entry Holes

Some patterns have blade-entry holes marked. If the pattern doesn't, place the holes near a line to be cut to prolong the blade life, but don't place the hole on a curving line or inside corner (if possible). Drill the hole perpendicular to the blank. Use a drill press if you have one; otherwise, use a hand drill and make the holes as vertical as possible. Drill through the blank into scrap wood to prevent tear out on the back side of the blank. If you have the space, use a larger bit—it will make it easier to thread the blades through. For thin veining cuts, use the smallest bit the blade will fit through.



Removing Patterns

Dampen a glued paper pattern with mineral spirits to aid in removal. Commercial adhesive removers work as well. A quick wipe of mineral spirits will remove most adhesives left behind on the wood.