

Tiny Carved Gnomes

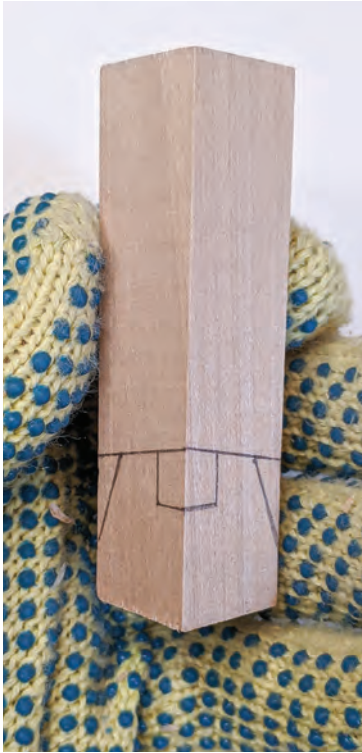


Complete this simple, customizable figure in one sitting—and then make a whole army of them!

By David Young

I love carving small figures. It's incredibly satisfying to complete a carving in one sitting, but carving small has another advantage as well: with a few cuts at this scale, I can quickly create dramatic shapes that would take many cuts at a larger scale.

This little gnome character grew out of experimenting with shapes and looking for a simple pattern that had three essential elements—a tall hat, a textured beard, and a simple but recognizable body design. This pattern provides unlimited opportunity for customization. Try your own beard design, crazy hat shapes, color combinations, or any other details you desire. You won't be able to stop at just one.



Getting Started

Gather your materials. I use a 1½" (38mm)-blade detail knife, but pretty much any carving knife will do. I use a ⅛" (3mm) 90° V-tool in one step, but you can use a knife for these cuts, if desired. If the carving is a little small for your taste or if you don't have any ¾" (1.9cm) basswood on hand, the pattern scales perfectly to a 1" by 1" by 4" (2.5cm by 2.5cm by 10.2cm) block.

Prepare the blank. Draw the pattern lines for the hat, nose, and sides onto the blank with a pencil or pen. It's easiest to draw the rest of the pattern freehand as you go along.

ROUGHING OUT



1

Rough out the hat. With a knife, establish the brim of the hat by placing a stop cut all around the perimeter and carving up to it. On the front, cut up to the brim from about halfway down the nose. On the sides, cut up to the brim from the point of the elbows indicated in the pattern. After carving up to the brim all the way around the hat, work your way around the hat itself, flattening each hard corner to create a cylindrical shape. Add a slight flare to the brim by carving in and up just above the brim.



2

Rough out the nose. Place a stop cut at the bottom of the nose and carve up to it. Use the tip of the knife to create vertical stop cuts along the sides of the nose, and then carefully carve along each of these from the bottom of the nose up to the hat brim to create a square. Pay attention to the location of the tip of your knife and avoid going too deep.



3

Round the nose. Undercut each corner of the nose with the tip of the knife, and then cut the corners off at a 45° angle. Continue to remove sharp corners until the nose is perfectly round.



4

Shape the body. With the knife, begin carving up toward the brim of the hat from the elbow point on each side of the nose, tapering the body and head of the carving inward as it approaches the hat. Then flatten the body below the nose and round any sharp corners created in the process. Repeat the same process to shape the back.



5 **Carve the cheeks.** Draw the round cheeks with the pencil. They should be roughly circular, about the same size as the nose. Make stop cuts along the cheek lines with the tip of the knife. Slice carefully at an angle along the inside of each stop cut (from the cheeks outward) to establish the cheeks, and then round the edges created in the process. *Note: For a simpler carve or just for some variation between gnomes, you can omit the cheeks.*



6 **Carve the beard.** Draw the beard outline. The beard should be a semicircle starting at the hat directly above the elbows on the sides and extending about halfway between the nose and bottom of the carving. Make a stop cut with the tip of the knife across the entire beard line. Shave up to the stop cut from the bottom and sides until the beard sticks out $\frac{1}{16}$ " to $\frac{1}{8}$ " (2mm to 3mm) all the way around. On the sides, carve the upper arms in behind the beard to create shoulders. Then use the tip of the knife to round the sharp edges of the beard.

ADDING DETAILS



7 **Carve the arms.** Draw the locations of the arms, coat, and pockets. Place a deep stop cut along the bottom edge of each arm and carve up to it from the base of the block, flaring the bottom of the robe up to the arms. Then make stop cuts along the pocket lines, extending just past the width of each arm. Cut a triangle chip out of the corner where the bottom of each arm goes into the pocket. Then carve the pockets.



8 **Finish the arms and robe.** Smooth all the edges along the bottom sides of the arms and pockets. Carve the front of the robe, starting with a stop cut, and then carving along it at an angle to remove a thin V-shaped slice. Cut out the triangular opening at the bottom of the robe.



9 **Shape the hat.** Draw the main shape of the hat on all sides. Then cut large V-shaped notches into each corner. Each notch should be roughly parallel to the brim of the hat, slanting down toward the back and up toward the front. As you work on the notches, taper the hat in the front and back as it gets closer to the top.



10

Detail the hat. Extend each notch on the sides of the hat to create a zigzag pattern when viewed from the front or back. Carve in and up along all the outside edges of the hat to create small flares at the brim and each corner of the hat. Check the profile of the hat, ensuring that it tapers in toward the top and the very tip. At the top of the hat, carve additional notches to create folds in the crook of the hat.



11

Add the finishing touches. Carve a smile by making a simple stop cut and carving up to it, and then round the upper lip. Texture the beard using a 1/8" (3mm) micro V-tool or the knife. Start by adding V-cuts along the outside edge of the beard at regular intervals all the way around. Leave space between each cut so you can come back and add upward V-cuts in between each of those, pointing up toward the nose. Add small V-cuts above the upper lip and in any other large gaps that may remain between your cuts.



Paint Notes

Beard base: classic French gray (1)

Beard detail: drybrushed vintage white (1)

Coat: tropical blue (2)

Hat: citron green (2)

1 FolkArt®
2 Americana®

Painting and Finishing

Brush the carving with boiled linseed oil (BLO) and dry with a rag. *Note: Always dispose of oil-soaked brushes and rags according to the manufacturer's instructions, as they can spontaneously combust.* Paint with acrylic paints, referring to the Paint Notes (see above). I thin my paints slightly with water (2 to 3 drops of water for every 10 drops of paint). Leave the nose and cheeks unpainted, or add a slight blush, if desired. After the paint and oil have dried, finish the carving with a matte spray, such as Krylon®.

materials & tools

MATERIALS

- Basswood, 3/4" (1.9cm) square: gnome, 3" (7.6cm) long
- Basswood, 1 3/16" (3cm) thick: log, 5/8" x 4" (1.6cm x 10.2cm)
- Basswood, 1 3/8" (3.5cm) square: stump, 1 7/16" (3.7cm) long
- Pencil or pen
- Boiled linseed oil
- Clean rags
- Acrylic paints, such as Americana®: citron green, tropical blue; such as FolkArt®: camel, classic French gray, pure black, vintage white

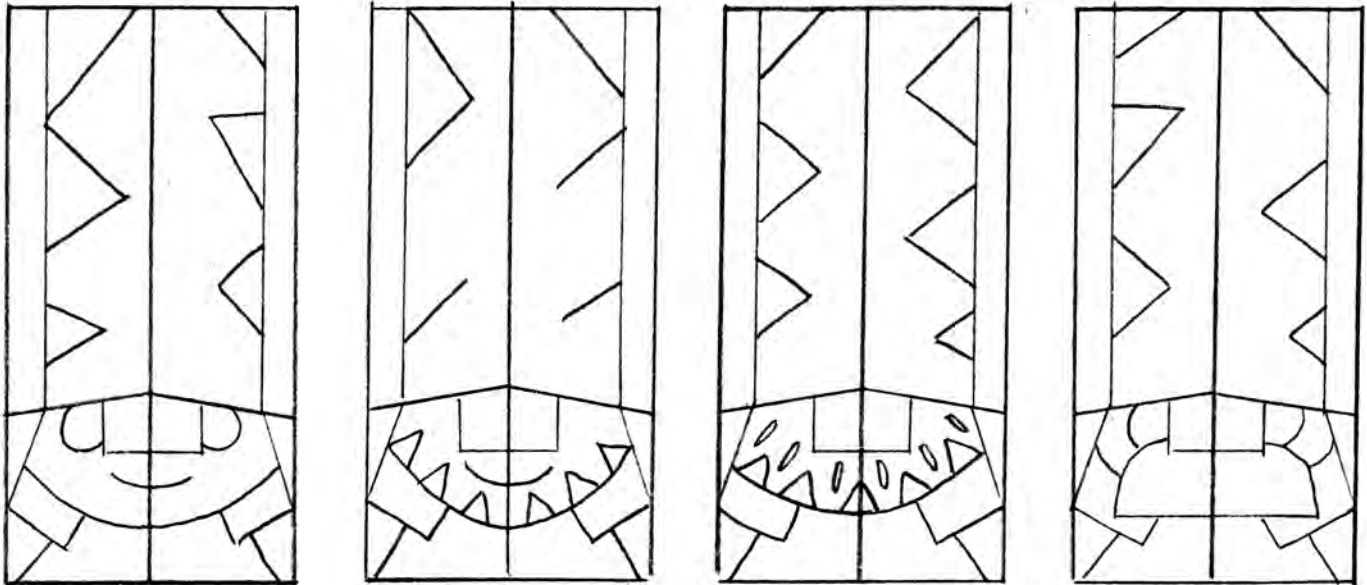
- Antiquing medium, such as FolkArt® (optional)
- Clear spray finish, such as Krylon®: matte

TOOLS

- Carving knife
- Micro V-tool: 1/8" (3mm)
- V-tool: 1/4" (6mm) 60° (optional)
- Small toothpick or embossing tool

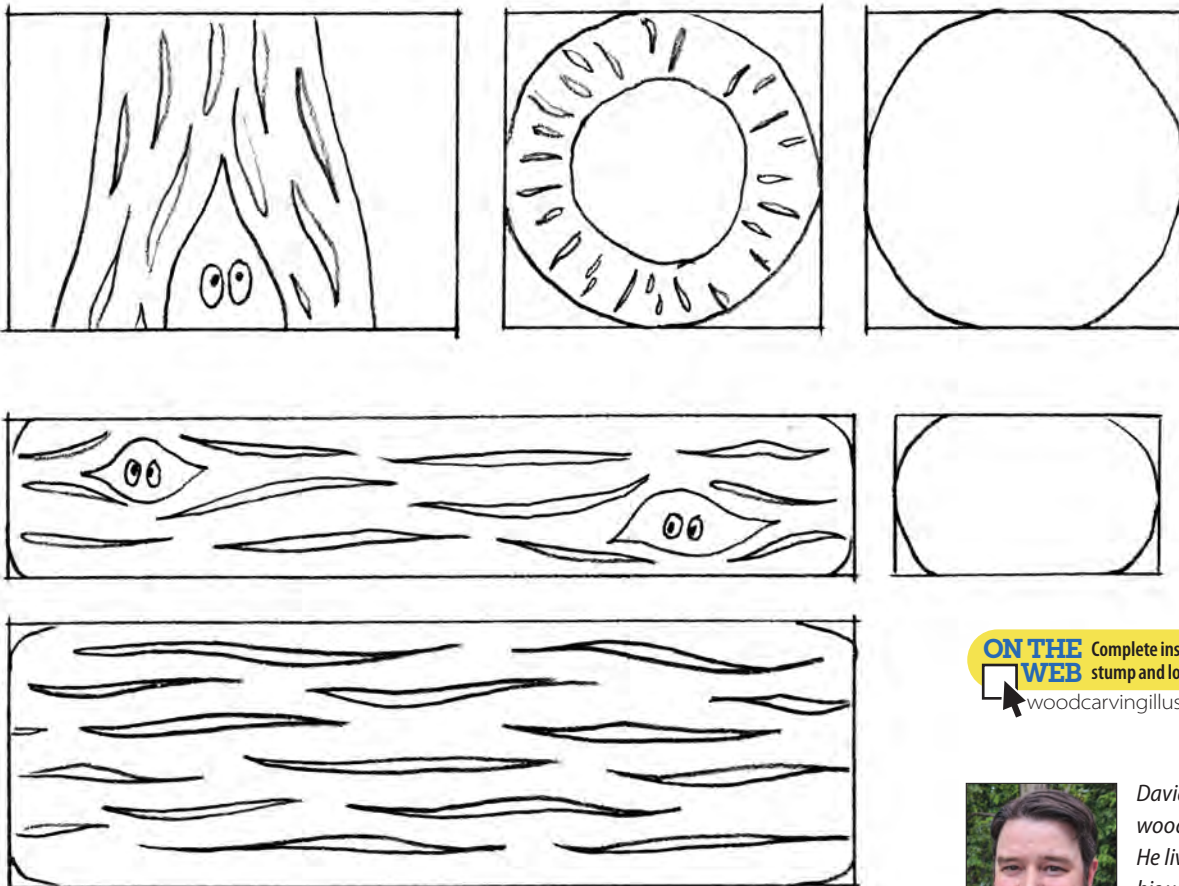
The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.

Tiny Gnome Patterns



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Stump and Log Patterns



ON THE WEB Complete instructions for the stump and log are online.
woodcarvingillustrated.com



David Young has been woodcarving since 2019. He lives in Holt, Mich., with his wife and three kids. You can find more of his work on Instagram @dywoodcarving.