

You Can Build an

Apartment Dining Table

By JEFF BRANCH

Have you ever found yourself wanting a new piece of furniture, but everything you see in stores is too big? Big furniture is everywhere these days. The great thing about woodworking is you can make a project fill the available space perfectly.

As newly weds, the apartment my wife and I lived in had a small dining area. The table you see here was designed for that space.

The inspiration was taken from a game table I saw in a magazine. The legs, stretchers and aprons were heavily influenced by what I saw. The chamfered legs are the most distinctive design elements. The table top is similar to the original, but was stretched in length to accommodate occupied chairs.

Construction is pretty straight forward. Most all of the joinery is accomplished by way of dowels. With some handsome lumber, this project could easily become a family heirloom.



Main Dimensions

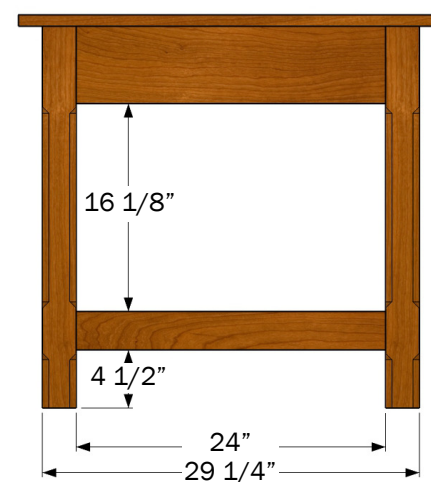
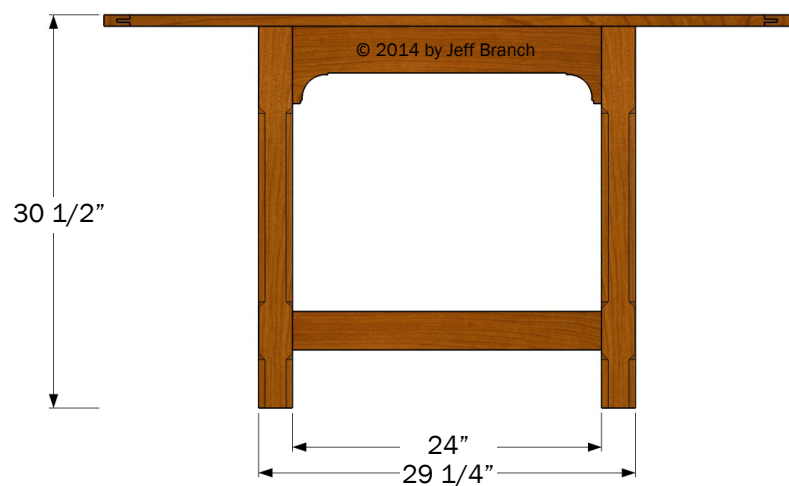


This table is compact, measuring less than five feet in length and just shy of three feet in width. The height of 30 1/2" is what felt right for me. You can easily adjust these dimensions to fit your needs.

Also, the opening for a chair is set at two feet.

Make sure your chairs can accommodate this size. If not, adjust the size of the opening.

I made the original table using pine. The illustrations here show cherry. My recommendation is a hard wood. Over time, the pine has proved to be too soft. The light pressure from signing my name on a piece of paper was enough to forever engrave a copy of my signature in the table surface. Lesson learned.



Cut List

Identifier, Quantity, Part Name	Length x Width x Thickness
Ⓐ 4 Legs	29 5/8 x 2 5/8 x 2 5/8"
Ⓑ 2 Side Apron	24 x 6 x 7/8"
Ⓒ 2 Front/Back Apron	24 x 6 x 7/8"
Ⓓ 2 Side Stretcher	24 x 3 x 7/8"
Ⓔ 1 Center Stretcher	25 3/4 x 3 x 7/8"
Ⓕ 6 Table Top Boards	51 1/4 x 5 1/2 x 7/8"
Ⓖ 2 Bread Board End	33 x 2 x 7/8"
Ⓗ 4 Wood Clips	1 3/16 x 3/4 x 3/4"

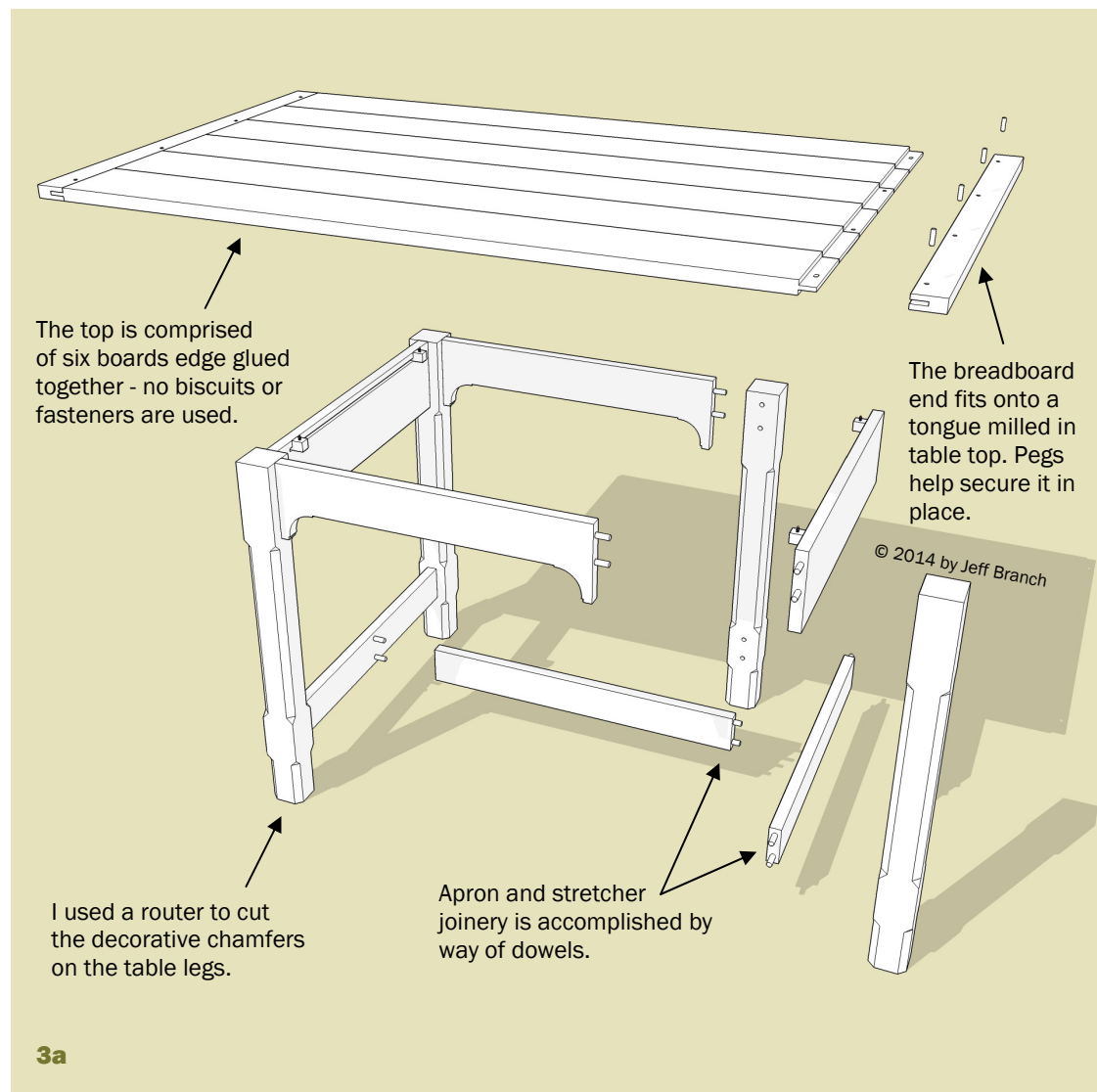
In addition to the components shown above, you will need twenty four 3/8" wood dowels and eight 1/4" dowels for the bread board ends.

Notes

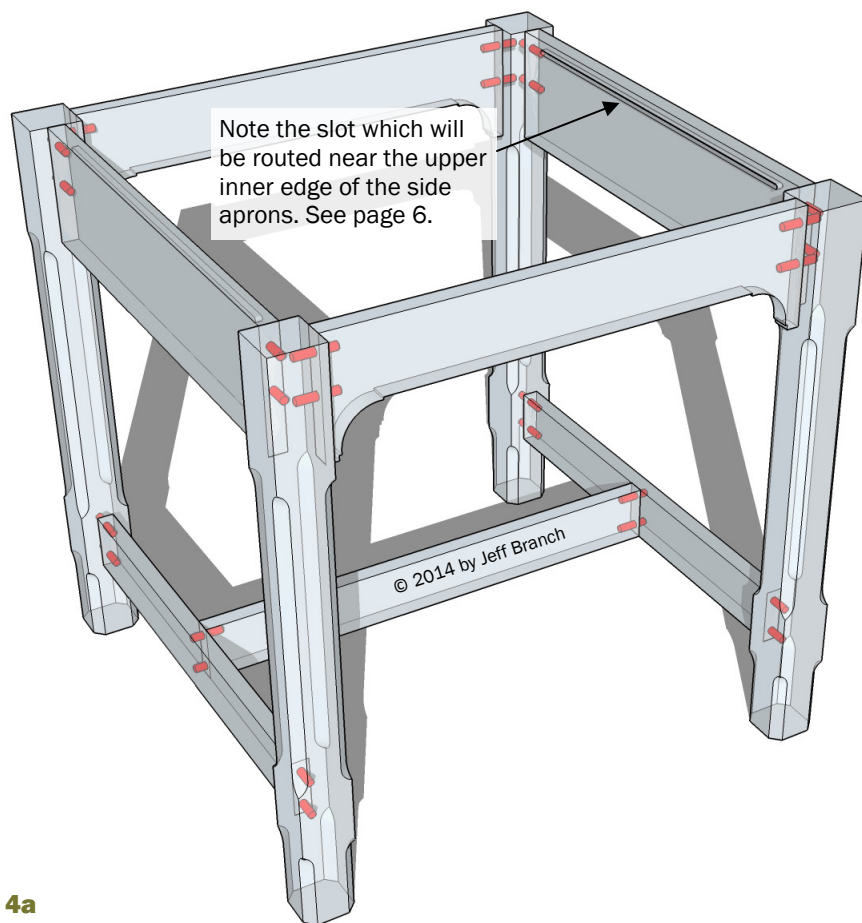
Sand your parts as you proceed through the build. Thoroughly familiarize yourself with the steps required to complete this project. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me via my blog contact page.

Be sure to understand and implement the safety steps found in your tool user manuals.

Never underestimate the potential danger associated with woodworking power tools and hand tools. Be sure to use safety glasses, a dust respirator and hearing protection when appropriate. Make sure you have easy access to first aid supplies. Refrain from woodworking when fatigued and please work safe in the wood shop.

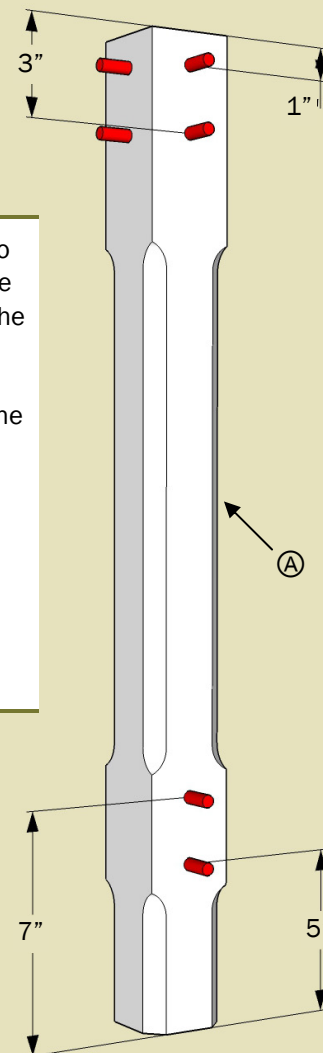


Create the Legs



If we could look inside the legs, aprons and stretchers, we would be able to see the dowel locations (dowels highlighted in red above). The first step in construction is to create the legs and drill holes for the dowels. See “tools for accurate drilling” on page 5.

View of the inside corner of the leg



Cut the legs, part **A**, to final size based on the dimensions given in the cut list.

Note the location of the dowels. Each hole is centered along the length of the leg. Drill $\frac{3}{8}$ " holes $1 \frac{1}{16}$ " deep into the legs.

All of the legs get the same dowel holes.

4b

Create the Legs

The last step necessary to complete the legs is to add the decorative chamfers as shown in illustration 5a.

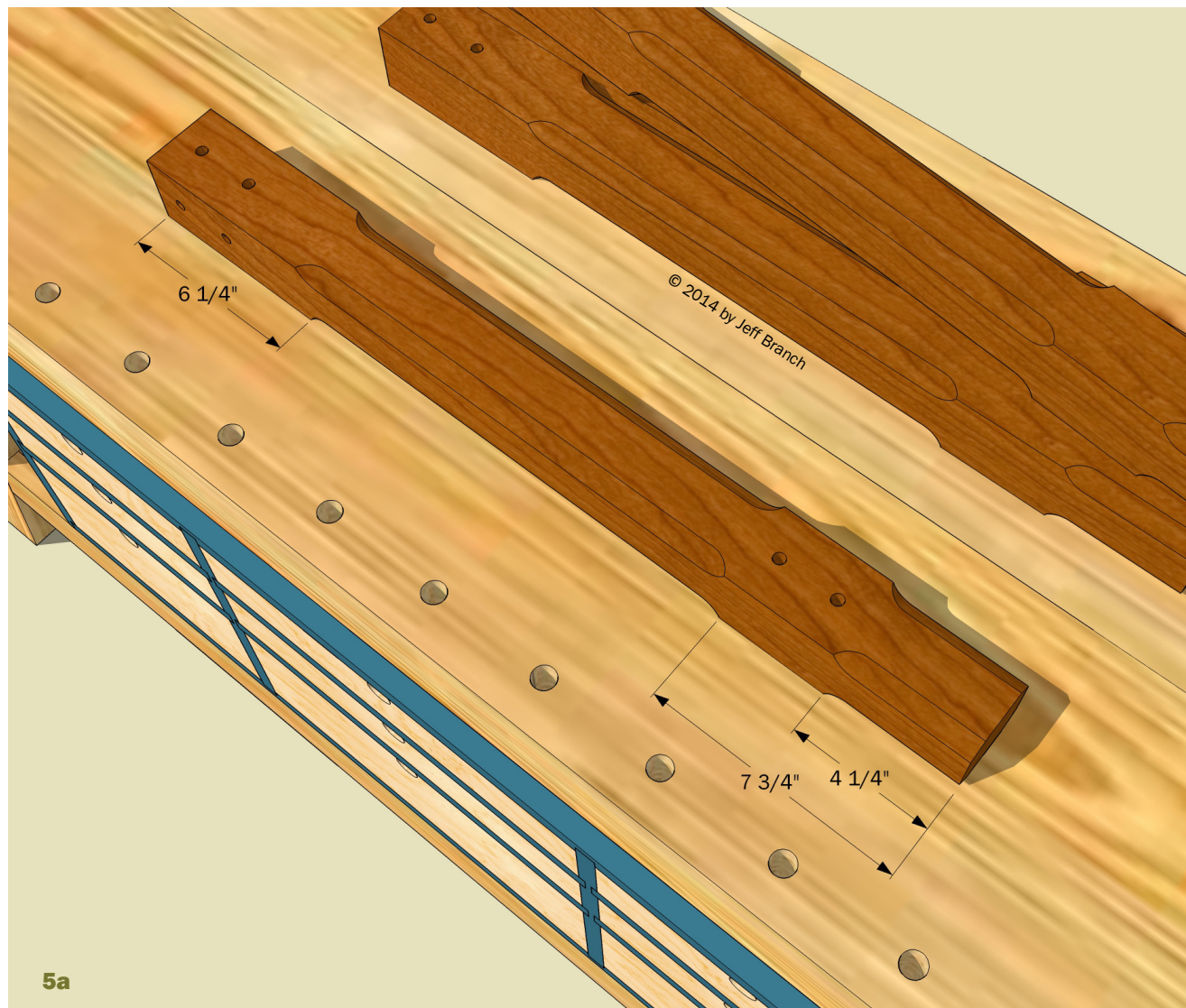
Note the measurements which show the boundaries of the chamfers. Chuck a 1/2" chamfer bit in your router and make repeated passes until you get to a depth which is pleasing to the eye. I cut just shy of the full depth of the 1/2" chamfer bit.

Tools for accurate drilling

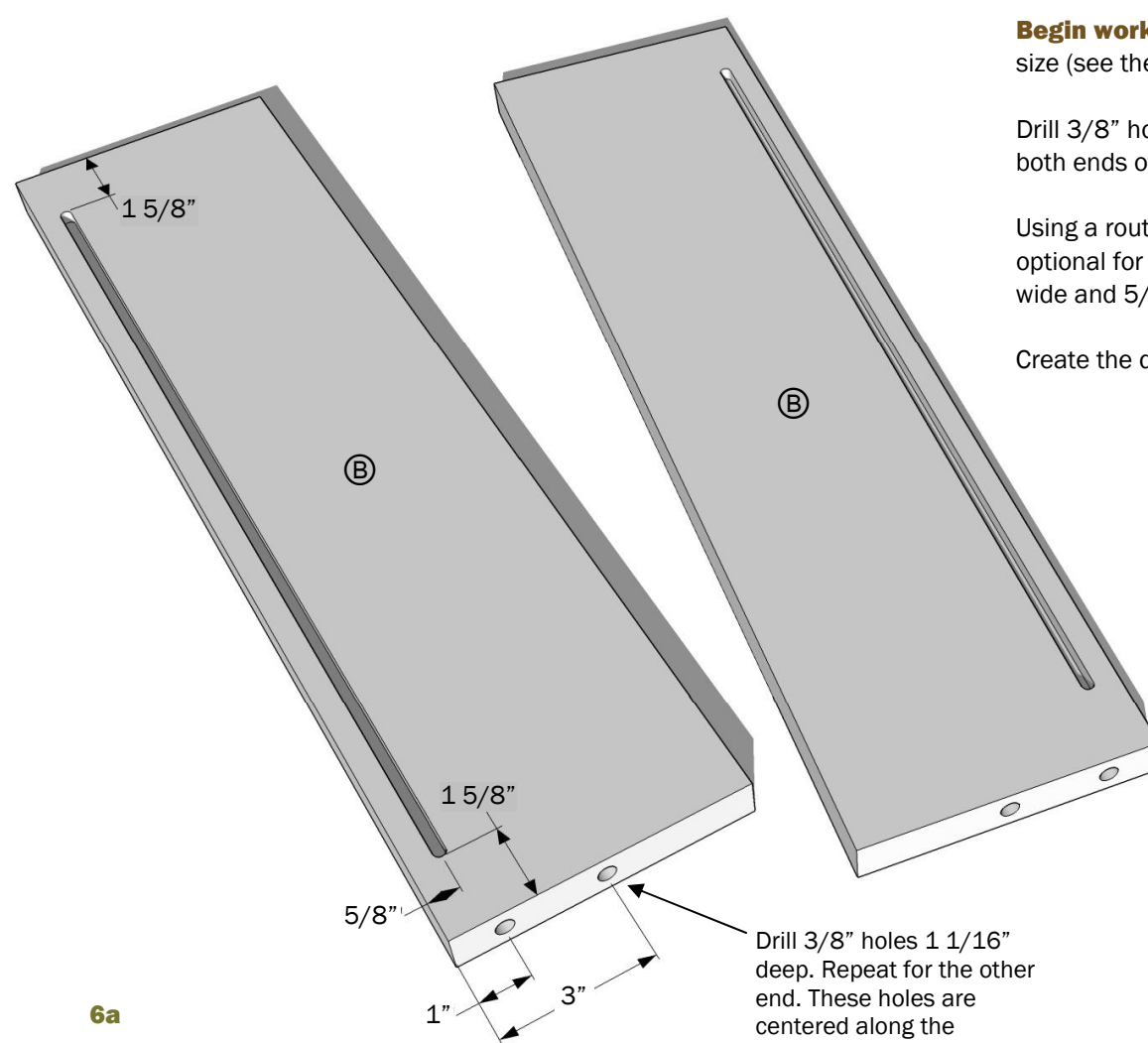
Accurately locating dowel holes is essential for success with this project.

A sharp pencil and a steel ruler which is easy to read are helpful. I used a doweling jig to assist in drill perpendicular holes into the ends and sides of the various table parts. See item 49221 at Rockler.com.

In addition, dowel centers can also help transfer dowel locations to mating parts. See item 27179 at Rockler.com.



Make the Aprons and Stretchers

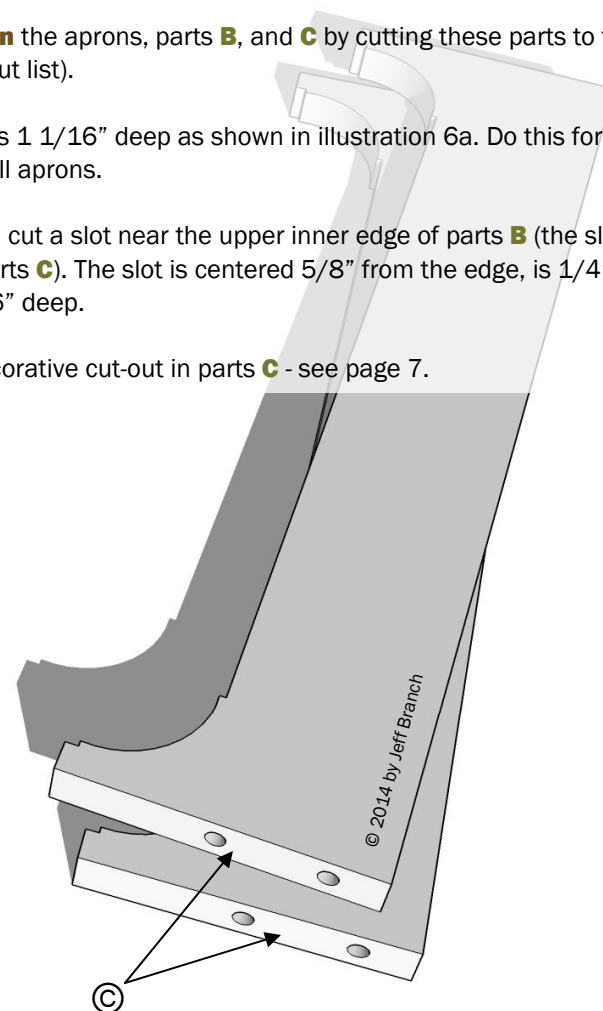


Begin work on the aprons, parts **B**, and **C** by cutting these parts to final size (see the cut list).

Drill $\frac{3}{8}$ " holes $1\frac{1}{16}$ " deep as shown in illustration 6a. Do this for both ends of all aprons.

Using a router, cut a slot near the upper inner edge of parts **B** (the slot is optional for parts **C**). The slot is centered $\frac{5}{8}$ " from the edge, is $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide and $\frac{5}{16}$ " deep.

Create the decorative cut-out in parts **C** - see page 7.

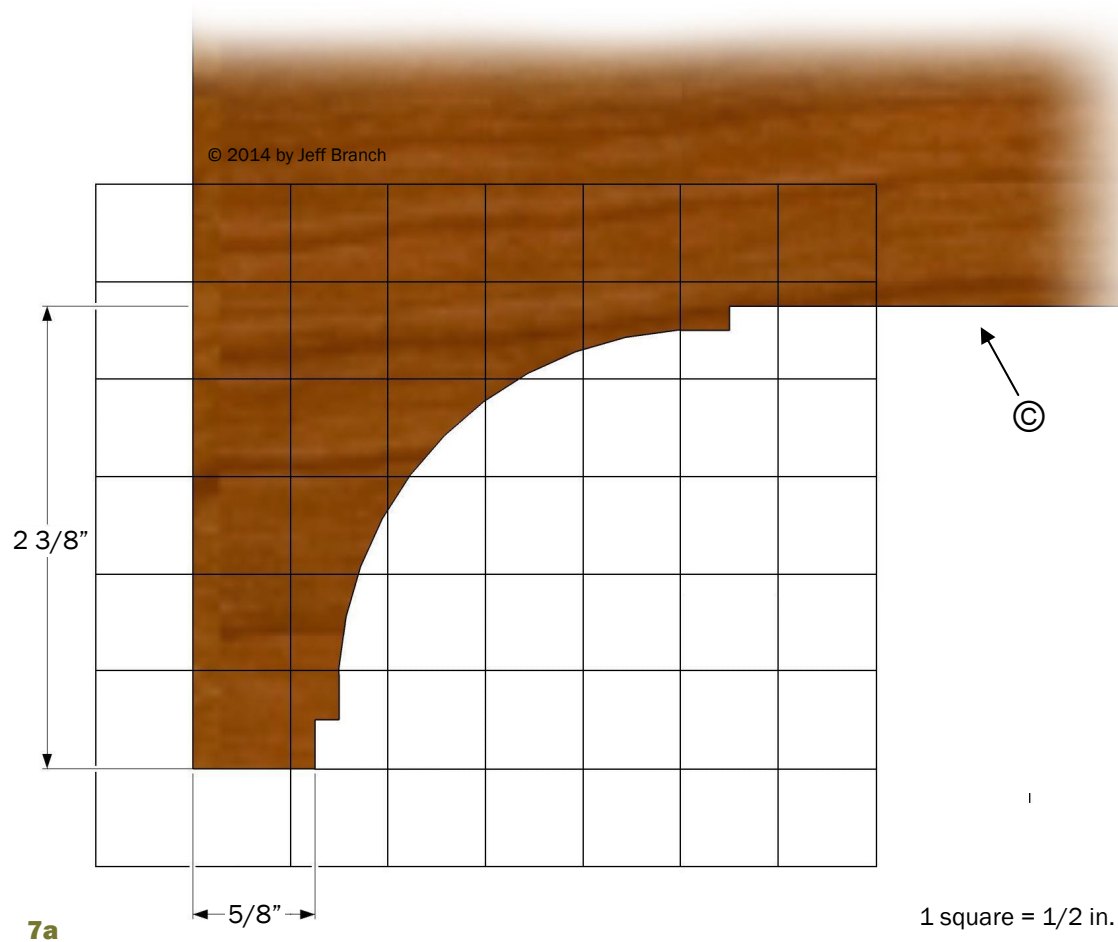


Make the Aprons and Stretchers

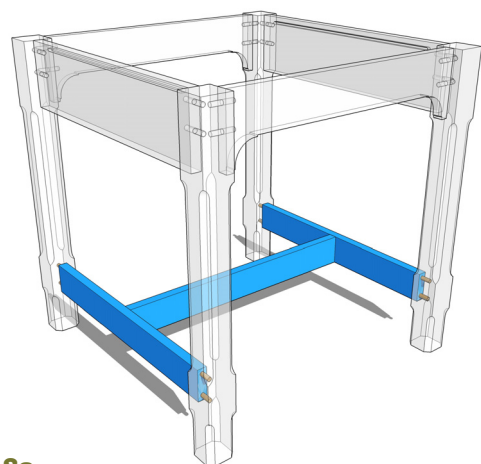
The front and back aprons need a cut-out to provide leg room while dining. These components are listed as parts **C** in the cut list.

Create the cut out following the pattern shown in 7a. This image is a full size illustration. The cut can be accomplished in a variety of ways; by using a jig saw or coping saw would be typical.

Once you have created the cut out, use a rasp or file along with some sand paper to make the profile smooth.



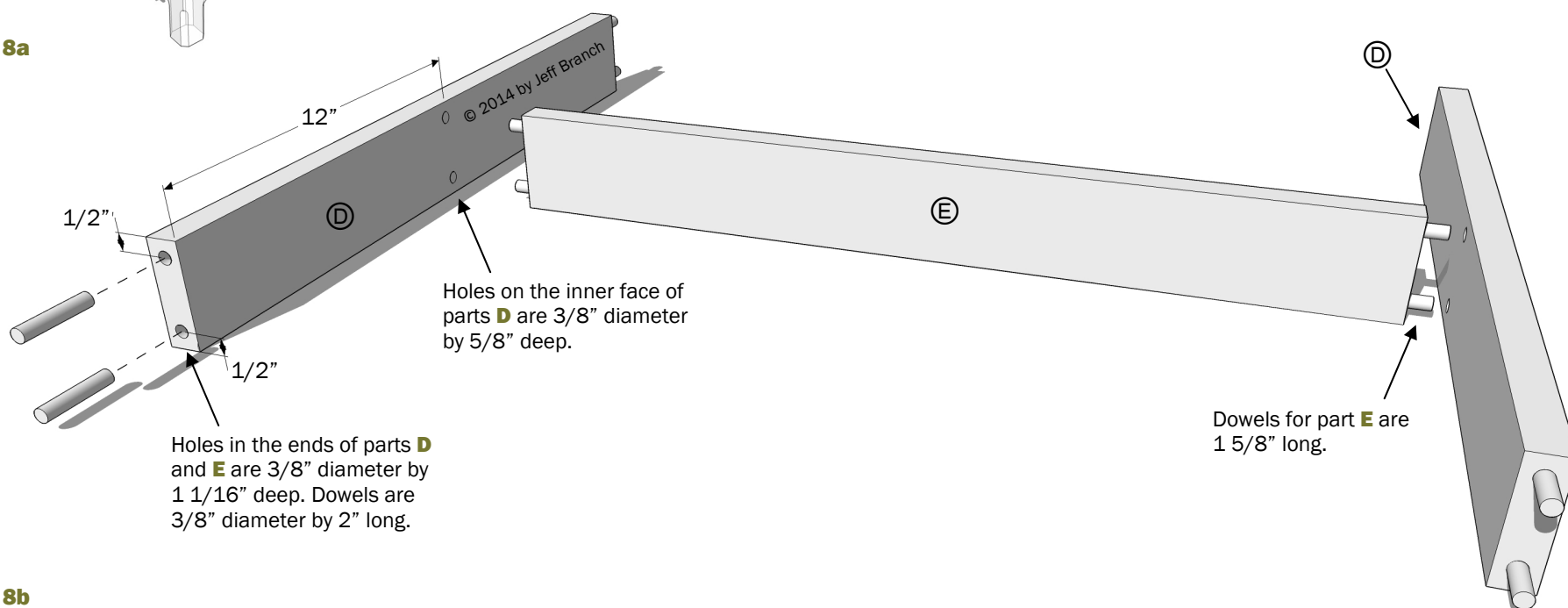
Make the Aprons and Stretchers



8a

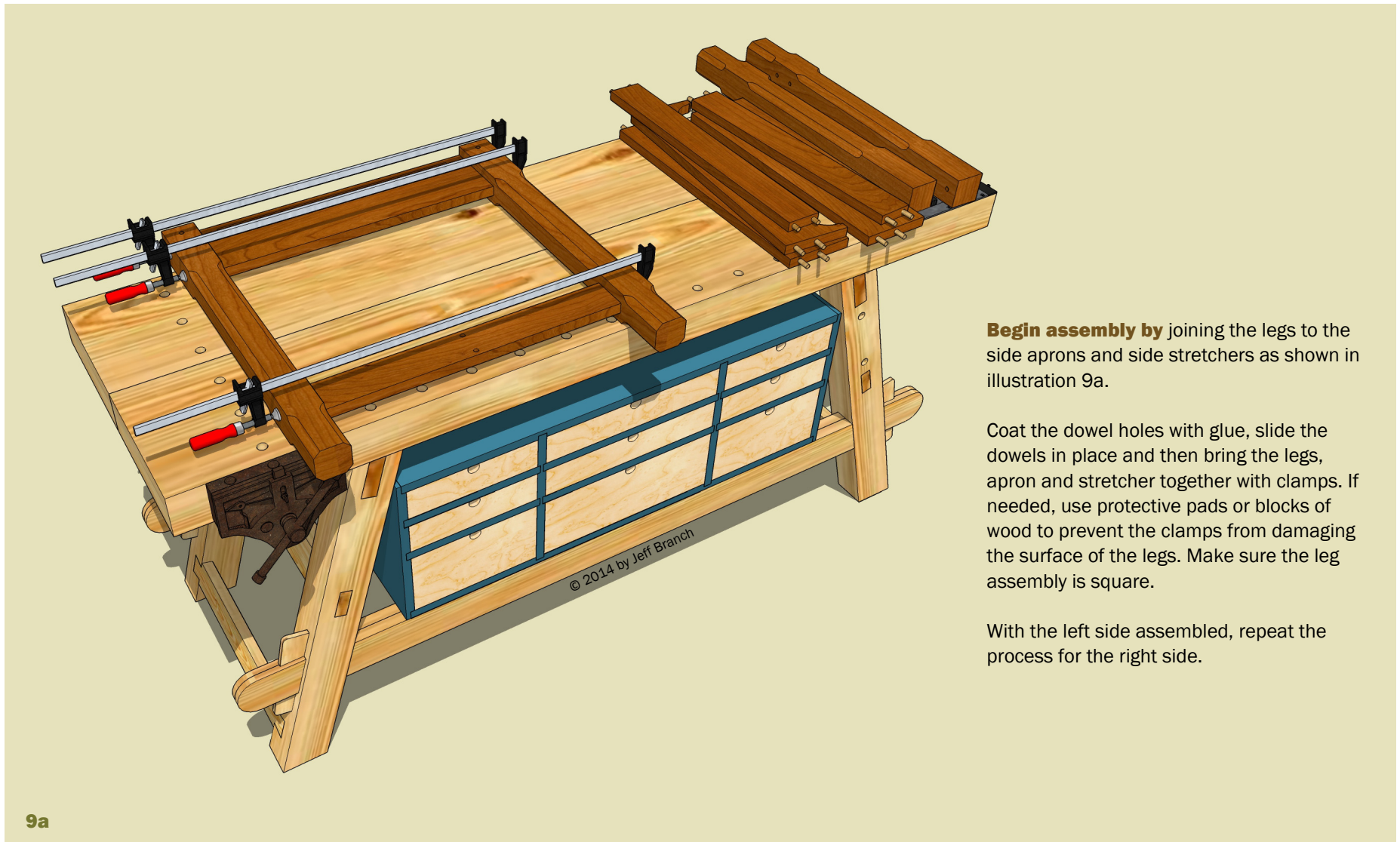
The stretchers are next - cut the side stretchers, parts **D** to size based on dimensions given in the cut list. Do the same for the center stretcher, part **E**. Note the dowel locations in illustration 8b. The holes on both ends of parts **D** and **E** get a $\frac{3}{8}$ " diameter hole drilled $1\frac{1}{16}$ " deep. The holes on the inside face of parts **D** extends just $\frac{5}{8}$ " deep.

All the dowels are $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 2" long except for the dowels used at both ends of part **E**. Cut these dowels down to $1\frac{5}{8}$ " in length.



8b

Base Assembly



Begin assembly by joining the legs to the side aprons and side stretchers as shown in illustration 9a.

Coat the dowel holes with glue, slide the dowels in place and then bring the legs, apron and stretcher together with clamps. If needed, use protective pads or blocks of wood to prevent the clamps from damaging the surface of the legs. Make sure the leg assembly is square.

With the left side assembled, repeat the process for the right side.

9a

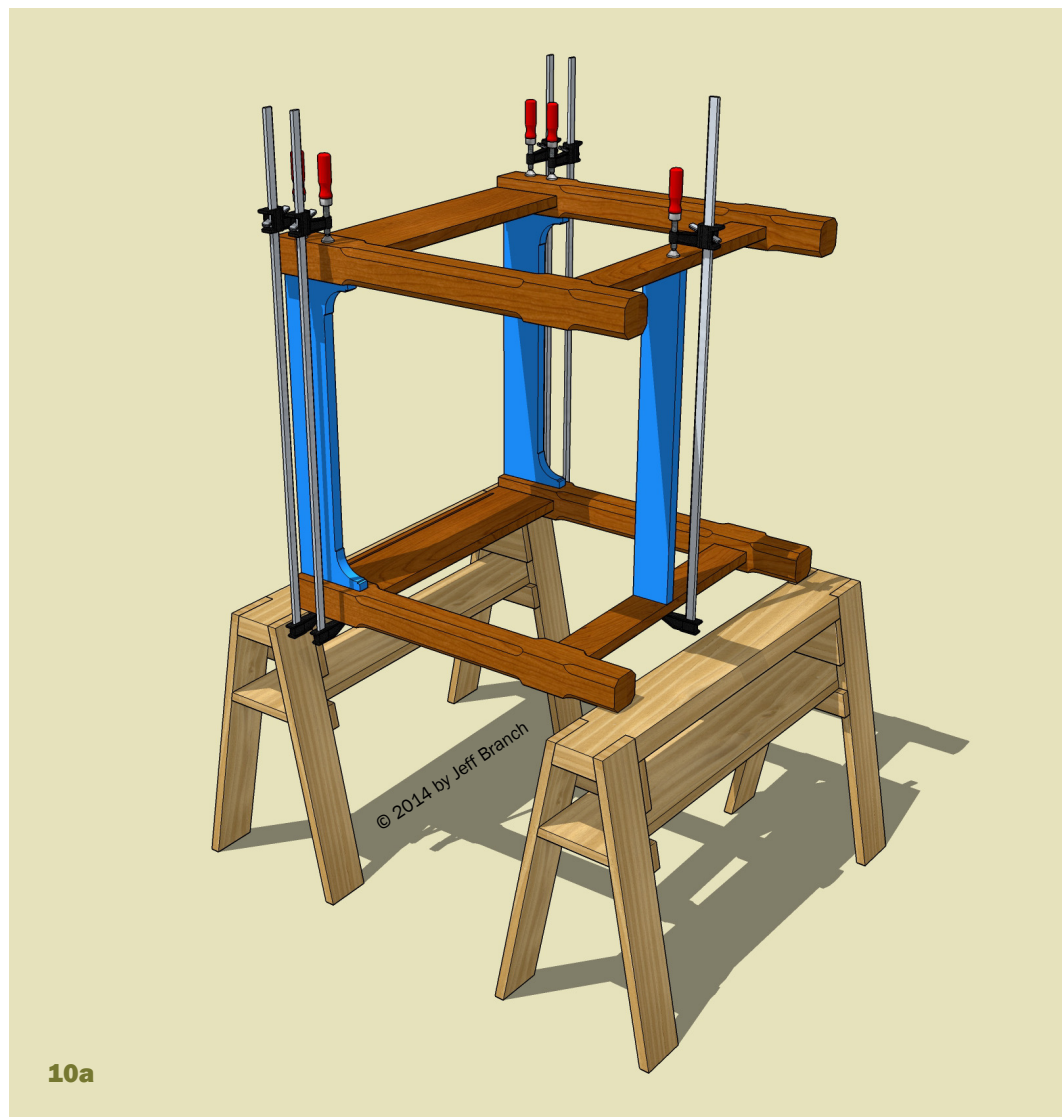
Base Assembly

With the left and right sides completed, it is time to bring the two sides together and create the base.

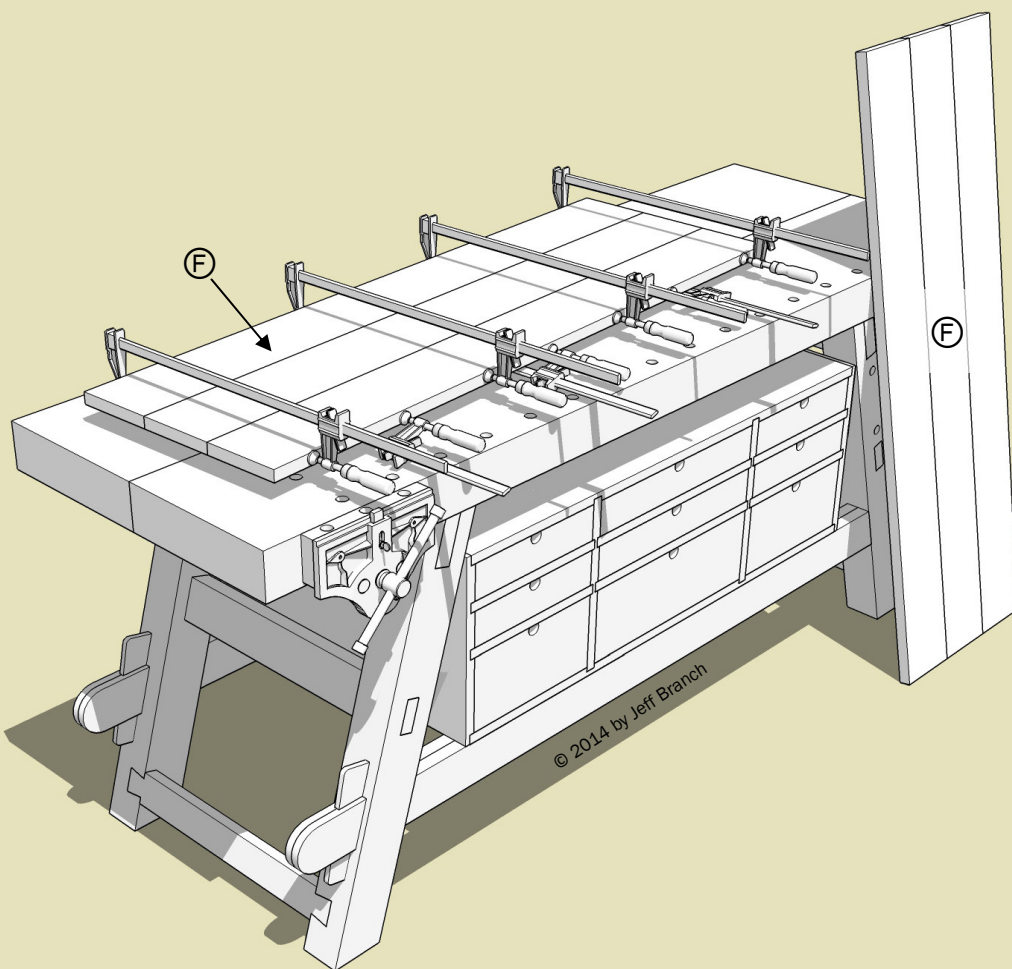
Starting with the left side leg assembly, coat the dowel holes in the legs and side stretcher. Slip the dowels in place. Add glue to the dowel holes in the front/back aprons, parts **C**, and the center stretcher, part **E** (highlighted in blue in 10a). Also, add some glue to the ends of these parts.

Slide the front/back aprons and the center stretcher in place. Add glue to the left side leg assembly and slide it into place. Add clamps as shown. Remove glue squeeze-out and make sure the base is square.

Allow the glue to dry over night.



Create the Top



11a

With the base completed, it is time to turn to the table top. I chose to create the top from a glue-up of six boards.

Depending on the material you find locally, you may need to adjust the number of boards for your table top. Cut the table top boards, parts **F** to final width and glue them together. I left the boards a little long at this point.

My glue-up process was simple: just glue and clamps, no biscuits, domino or other joinery helper.

Illustration 11a shows two glue-ups of three boards. These boards were then glued together to arrive at the final size for the table top. This is just one of several possible ways to glue-up a large panel.

I paid a local cabinet shop \$20.00 to send the table top through a wide belt sander which made the top flat and smooth; money well spent.

Create the Top

Cut the completed top to final length using a circular saw or router and a straight edge as a guide. See illustration 12a for fabrication of the bread board ends, parts **G**, and their corresponding tongues. I cut the tongue first using a router and a straight edge. I then cut the groove in the bread board ends using my table saw.

Attach the bread board ends by drilling 1/4 inch holes as shown. Add glue to the tongues between the inner dowel locations. No glue for the outer area of the tongue to allow for seasonal wood movement. Clamp the bread board ends in place and drive the dowels into their holes. As you tap the dowels, add a small amount of glue prior to driving the dowel flush with the top. Trim dowels with a pull saw as needed.

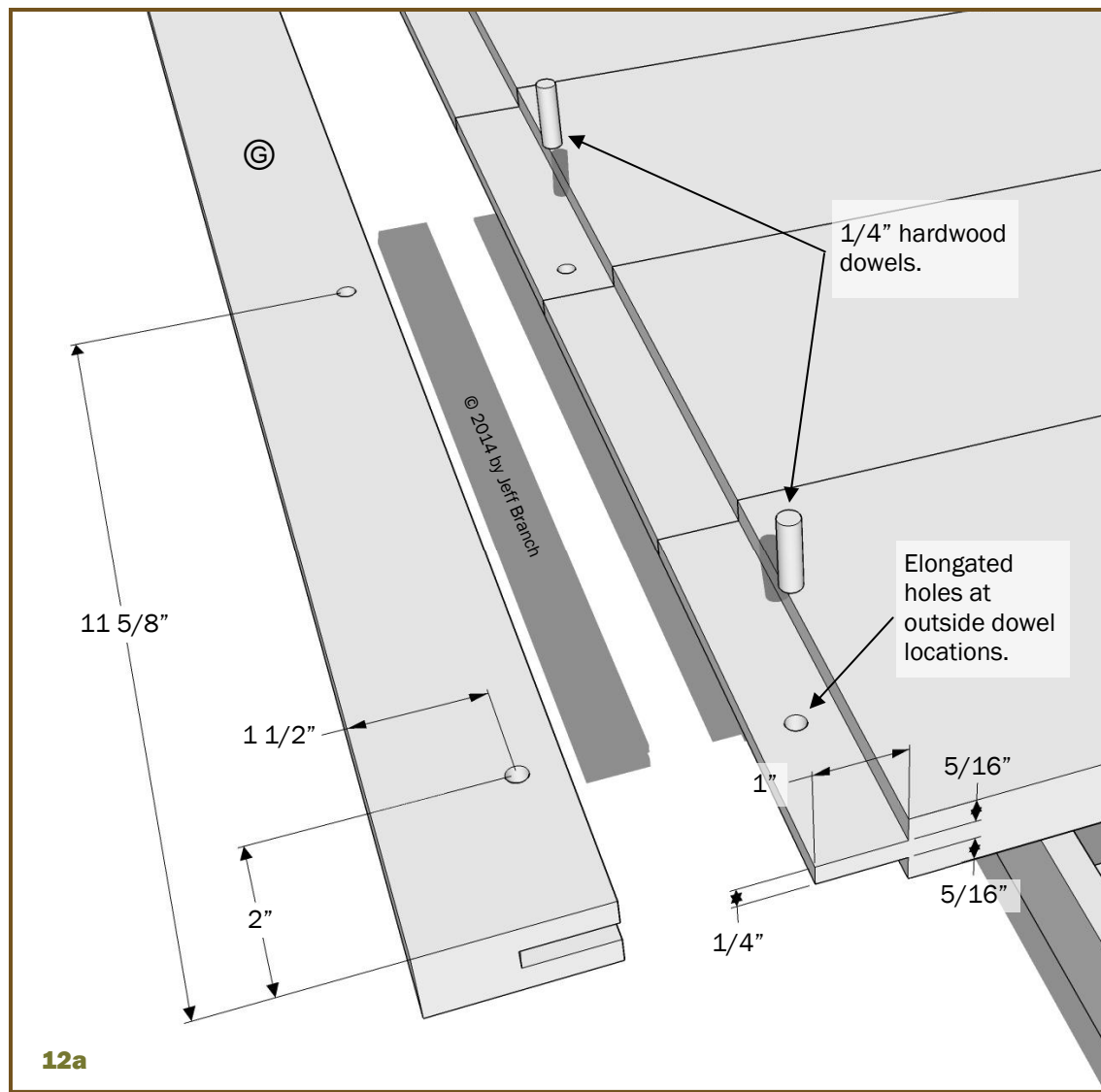
Bread board end techniques

Creating the bread board ends is the most complicated step in building this table. Here are a couple of links to help you visualize the process.

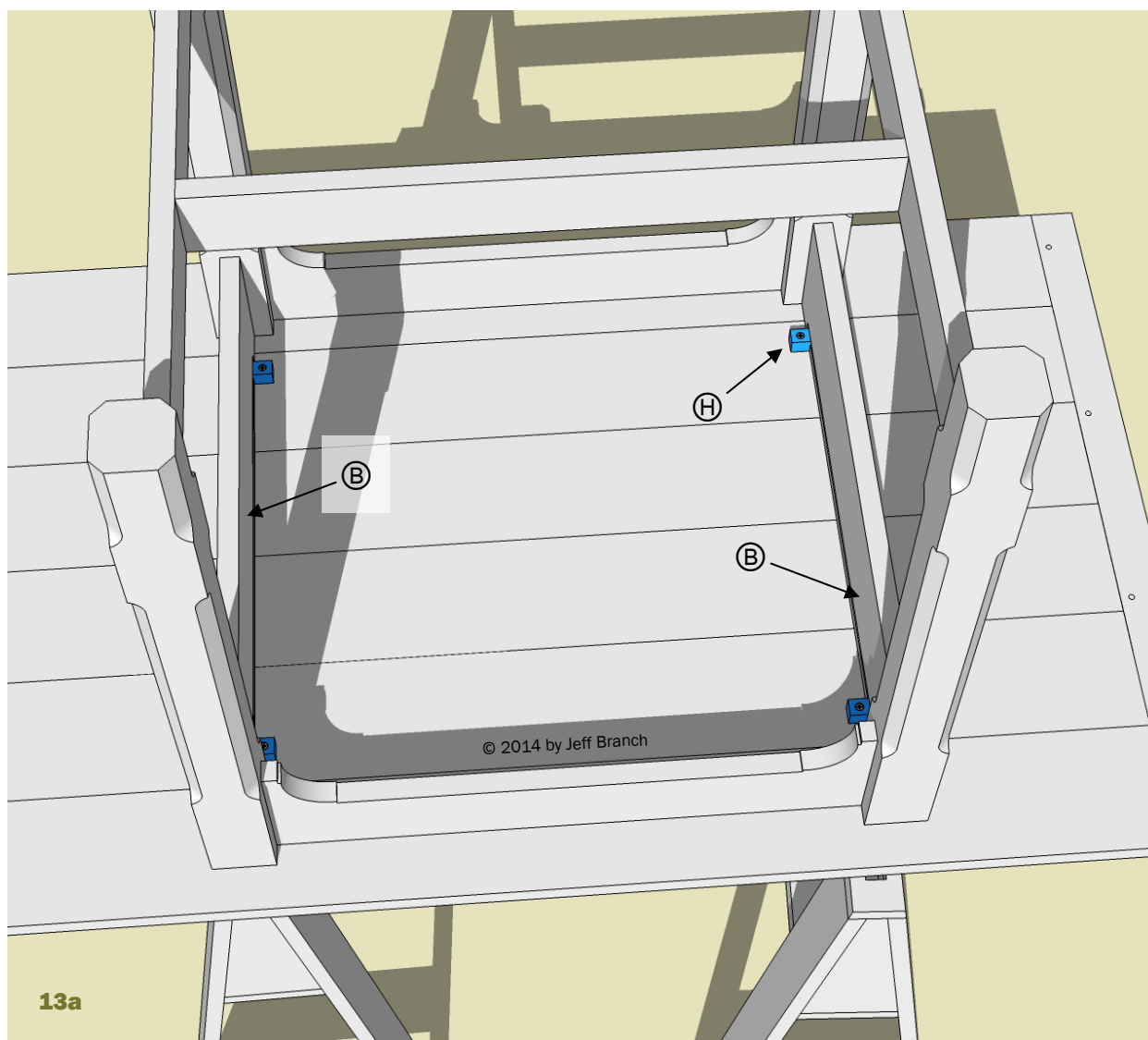
First, here is a video at Fine Woodworking.com showing a very similar process I used. [Click here](#) (this is a members only video, but being a member is worth the cost).

Glen Huey makes more historically correct bread board ends in this video at his website. [Click here](#).

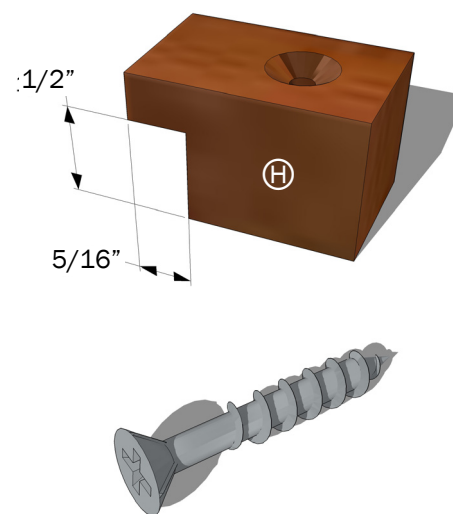
Or, you could take a simple approach and skip the bread board ends altogether.



Final Assembly



13a



13b

With the table turned upside down on your workbench or on saw horses, center the base left to right and front to back, as shown in 13a.

Create four wood clips, parts **H**, based on the size given in the cut list. Form a notch as shown in 13b. Pre-drill and counter bore for a wood screw.

Position the clips as shown in 13a, sliding the notch into the slot routed in the side aprons, parts **B** (see the slot on page 6). Carefully drive a wood screw into each clip securing the base to the top.

Final Assembly

The only thing left to do is to apply a finish. Currently, my finish of choice is a wiping varnish. A good article on this finish can be found at Fine Woodworking.com by [clicking here](#).

In the article, Mike Pekovich is using a wiping varnish on some choice quarter-sawn oak. This type of finish is easy to use and can be a durable finish for a dining table when multiple coats are applied.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Use the contact form at my website and I'll get in touch with you.



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