

custom  
**WINDOW MAKEOVER**



**Before**



**After**

Windows should be something more than just an interruption in the wall. They should be *part* of the wall: an architectural component and an integral part of a room's decor.

Today's high-end home builders understand this, which is why elaborate window trim is becoming standard fare in their new homes.

For existing homes, by simply changing the casing from a plain brown wrapper to something with depth and detail, you can transform the entire setting of your home.

Regardless of which style you choose — contemporary, traditional, or Craftsman — the techniques we used to create the treatment are essentially



Add a distinctive look by using muntin bars on your windows.

the same: cut moldings to length, glue together into subassemblies, and nail in place. Some of the moldings, like the fluted side pieces and rosettes in the traditional window trim, are right off

the rack at the home center. Others are made by routing a profile on the edge of a board. Upgrading your window trim using this method doesn't involve a big mess, large expense, or huge amounts of time. In fact, you should have little trouble trimming several windows in a single weekend. And chances are good that you already have the tools you need in your shop.

And don't be afraid to add your own personal touches to the windows, like the easy-to-apply muntin bars shown in the *Photo* above. Or even extend the trim style to the rest of the room with matching baseboards. You can find more information on these additional projects online at [WorkbenchMagazine.com](http://WorkbenchMagazine.com).



**CONTEMPORARY** Add a simple frame and a coat of paint to your existing trim for a clean, contemporary look.



**TRADITIONAL** A mix of off-the-shelf and shop-made moldings bring out a more traditional sophisticated style.



**CRAFTSMAN** Red oak trim pieces, decorative curved brackets, and faux pegs create a Craftsman look.



## GO FOR A CLEAN, CONTEMPORARY LOOK

It's hard to imagine a quicker way to add contemporary flair to a window than this simple makeover. You don't even have to remove the old window trim. Simply make a mitered wood frame in the shop, and then slip it over the existing trim.

**Frame Stock** — The first step is to get the frame stock for your window (or windows). We used poplar because it's a dense, closed-pore wood that machines and paints well. Look for S4S boards (surfaced on four sides) in the board aisle at the home center. You'll need  $\frac{3}{4}$ "-thick boards for the frame stock.

So how much stock do you need? That's easy to figure out. Just measure the height and width of the window opening, as shown in the *Sizing the Frame Illustration* on page 4. (Note that the "window opening," which is indicated by the dashed lines, is equal to the distance between the outside edges of the existing trim.)

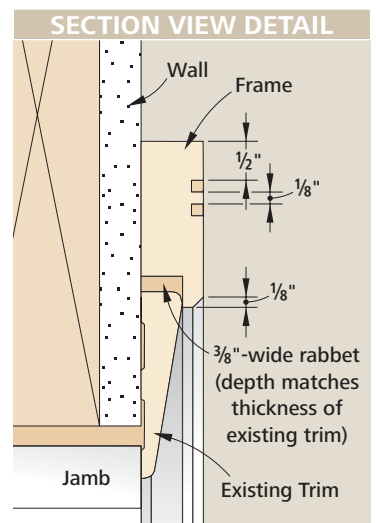
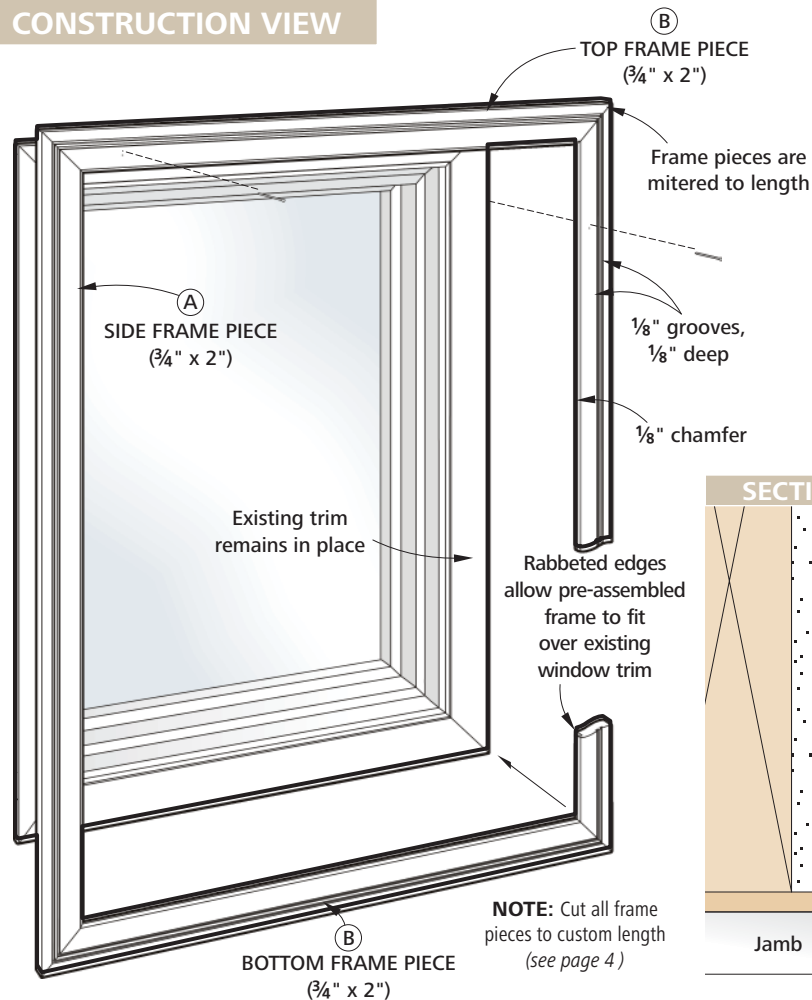
Once you have the dimensions of the existing trim, use the formulas provided to determine the lengths of the new frame pieces (A, B). Rather than cut them to exact length, though, make them about 1" longer than needed. This will give you extra material if you need to recut one of the miters.

With the pieces cut to rough length, just rip them to final width (2", in our case).

**Ready for the Rabbets** — The next step is to cut a rabbet in each frame piece (see page 4). These rabbets will allow the frame to fit over the window trim. They're wide enough to give you a "fudge factor" in case you need to make slight adjustments in the position of the frame (*Section View Detail*). As for the depth of the rabbet, it matches the thickness of the trim.

A table saw makes quick work of cutting these rabbets (see page 4). Using a standard combination blade, you can do it in just two passes.

### CONSTRUCTION VIEW



The first pass is made with the workpiece standing on edge (see the Box on page 4). For this cut, raise the saw blade  $\frac{3}{8}$ " to establish the width of the rabbet. Then set the rip fence to control the rabbet depth. (Remember, the depth matches the trim thickness.) Now set the workpiece against the fence, and make the cut.

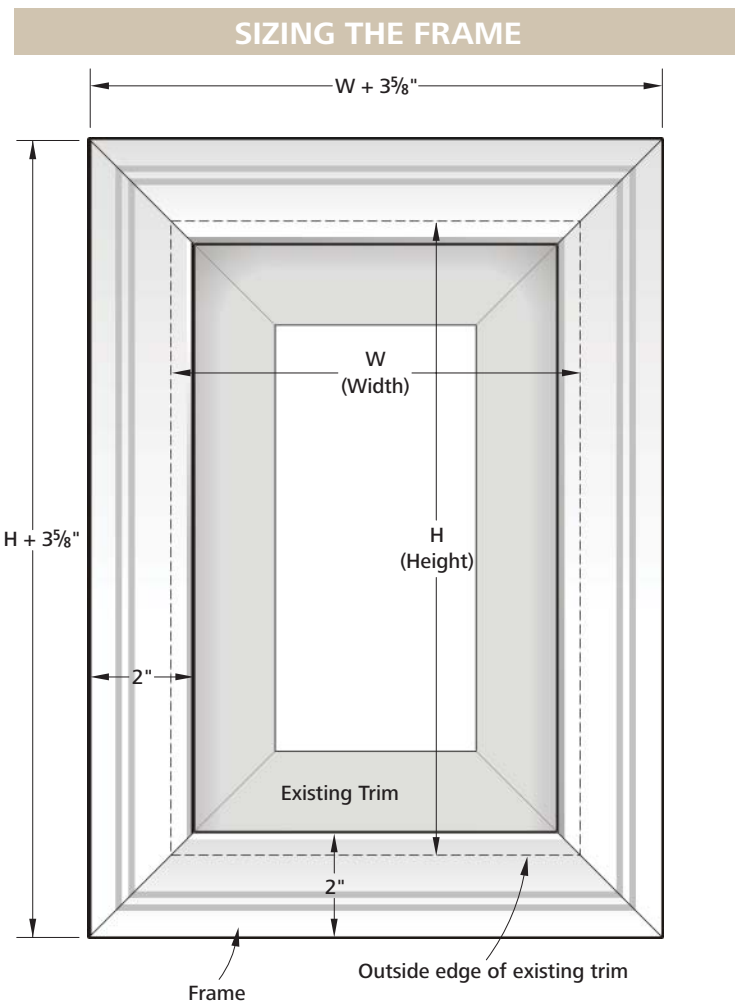
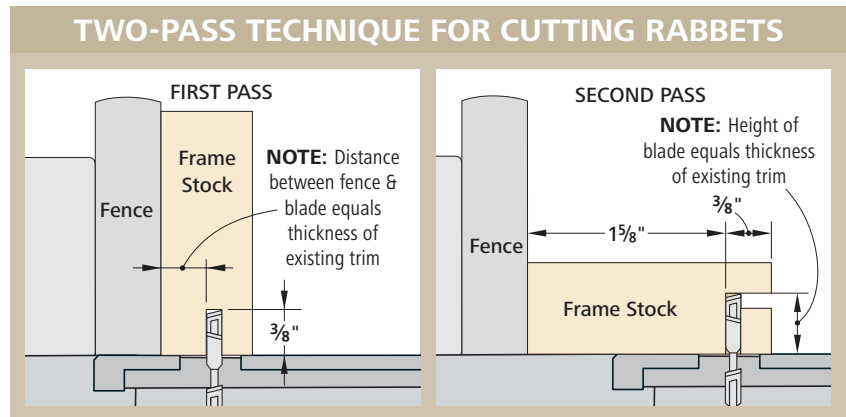
For the second pass, the workpiece is flat on the table saw. Raise the blade to cut into the kerf made by the first pass. Then reset the fence as shown, and make another pass to complete the rabbet.

Once that's done, there are a couple of decorative details to take care of—two grooves in the outside face and a chamfer on the inside edge (Section View Detail). To make these, cut two saw kerfs in the face of each frame piece. Then tilt the blade to  $45^\circ$ , and bevel-cut the inside (rabbeted) edge.

**Miter to Length** — Now it's just a matter of mitering the frame pieces to length. You can use the table saw or miter saw to do this. Just make sure the tip-to-tip length matches the lengths

of the frame pieces that you calculated earlier.

**Assemble the Frame** — The only shop work that's left is to glue the frame together. You'll find that the miter joints will tend to slip out of alignment when you clamp them. One way to prevent that, though, is to use the clamping tip on page 10. When the glue dries, pin the corners of the frame with finish nails. Then just paint and install the frame, as shown in Figs. 1 and 2 below.



To install the frame, set it over the existing window trim, so the reveal is even all around. Check for gaps (Fig. 2) before nailing the frame in place.



For uneven walls, shim the frame. Score and break the shims, then caulk gaps.



## SET A SOPHISTICATED TONE WITH **TRADITIONAL TRIM**

The traditional-style trim around this window is much more elaborate than the trim on the contemporary version. Nevertheless, it's surprisingly easy to make and install.

As you can see in the *Construction View*, the key elements of this window treatment are two fluted moldings (A) and a pair of decorative rosettes (B). You can get both items off the rack at most home centers.

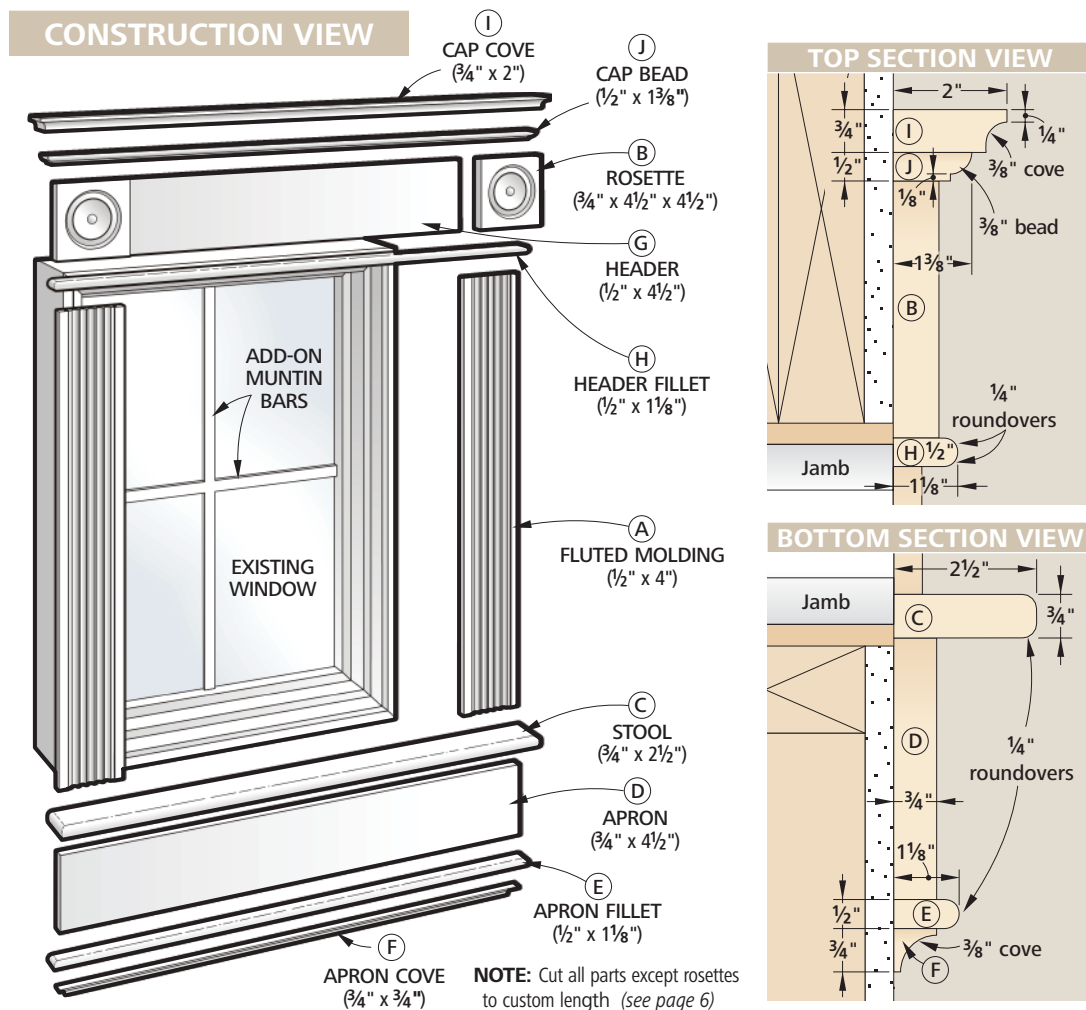
In addition, you'll need to make a few moldings. A horizontal stool (C) and a wide apron (D) define the bottom of the window. And a small fillet (E) and cove molding (F) create a transition from apron to wall. At the top of the window, a header (G) connects the two rosettes. Another fillet (H) underneath this assembly and a two-piece cap (I, J) on top completes the trim.

For this makeover, you'll need to remove the existing window trim with a pry bar. Slipping a putty knife between the trim and the wall prevents the pry bar from damaging the wall.

**Size Up the Situation** — The next step is to establish the size of the new trim pieces. The thickness and width of these pieces are detailed in the *Construction View*. As for lengths, those are determined by the height or width of the window opening (*Sizing the Trim Pieces*).

One thing to note here is that the "window opening" we're referring to is the inside opening, or distance between the window jambs. These jambs are represented by the dashed lines in the *Illustration* on page 6.

Using the height and width of the opening as starting points, you can figure out the lengths of all the trim pieces. Notice that we've also taken into account a 1/4" reveal around the inside edges of the opening. The reveal, which is the distance the trim is set back from the exposed edge of the window jamb, adds visual interest. Plus it makes for an easier installation because you don't have to get the trim perfectly aligned with the edge of the jamb.



**Make the Moldings** — Now it's just a matter of making the moldings. Here again, we used poplar for these. Its workability makes it an especially good choice when it comes to routing the end and edge profiles on the moldings. You can find both the 3/4"- and 1/2"-thick poplar boards you'll need at most home centers.

With boards in hand, rip the moldings to width and crosscut them to length. Then, using a table-mounted router, rout the decorative profiles on the ends and edges of the moldings (*Section Views, page 5*). The shop tip on page 9 will ensure good results when routing the moldings.

**Assembly & Installation** — With the moldings complete, glue and nail the upper and lower sub-assemblies together. (The side pieces — which are simply cut to length — go on separately.) Then paint the trim and install it from bottom to top, as shown in the *Photos* below.

## No-Pain Window Panes

An easy way to create the look of individual glass "panes" is to add muntins to the inside and the outside of a window. These are 3/8"-thick wood strips with the ends beveled to fit against the window sash.

We attached the muntins with a special automotive tape. This tape is super-sticky, so be sure the muntins are positioned correctly as you press them into place. We laid out the muntin locations with the blue masking tape shown here. (For more info, go to [WorkbenchMagazine.com](http://WorkbenchMagazine.com))

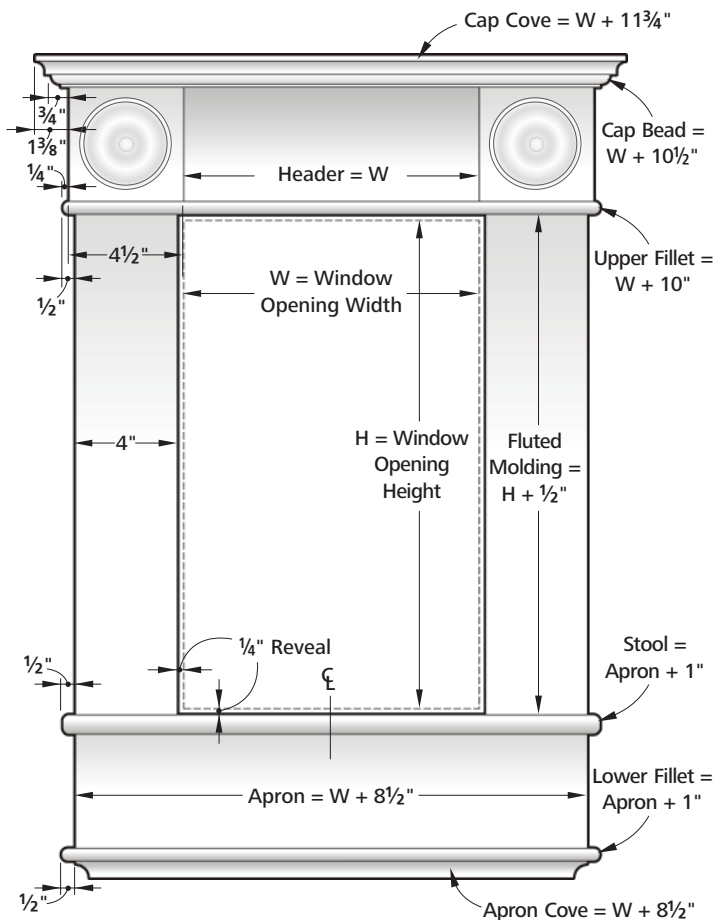


### AUTOMOTIVE TRIM TAPE

Used for adhering trim to cars, this weather-proof tape is available at auto parts stores.



### SIZING THE TRIM PIECES



**NOTE:** Dashed lines indicate window jambs



Center the lower sub-assembly on the width of the window, and nail it in place. Note the small reveal between the window jamb and stool.



After installing the fluted side moldings, set the upper sub-assembly in place. Center the rosettes over the sides, and then nail the assembly in place.



## CREATE A CUSTOM CRAFTSMAN WINDOW

If your taste runs toward Craftsman style, this window makeover will certainly appeal to you.

Made from straight-grained red oak, this version features an apron (A) and stool (B) that define the bottom of the window (*Construction View*). Curved wood brackets (C) add visual interest and help support the stool. Resting on top of the stool is an upside-down U-shaped frame with a hardwood cap (D). Faux “pegs” (E) and thin strips of wood (F) decorate the frame. And as before, applied muntins divide the window glass.

Here again, you’ll need to remove the existing window trim for this makeover. Take care to avoid damaging the wall or window jamb.

**Sizing Considerations** — Once that’s done, the next step is to determine the size of the various trim pieces. The *Construction View* below details the thickness and width of the pieces. Note that the header is thinner than the sides of the frame to create some architectural “depth” at the top of the window.

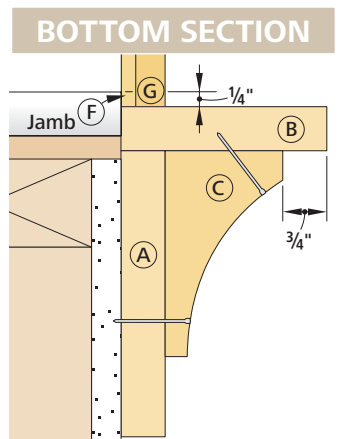
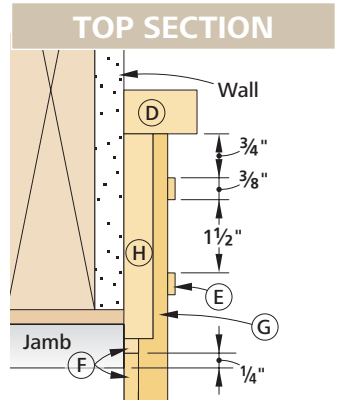
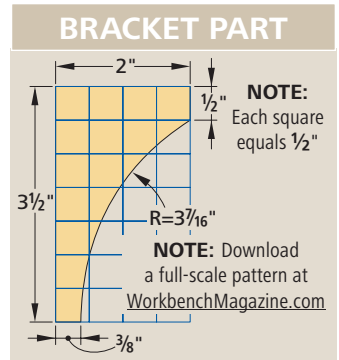
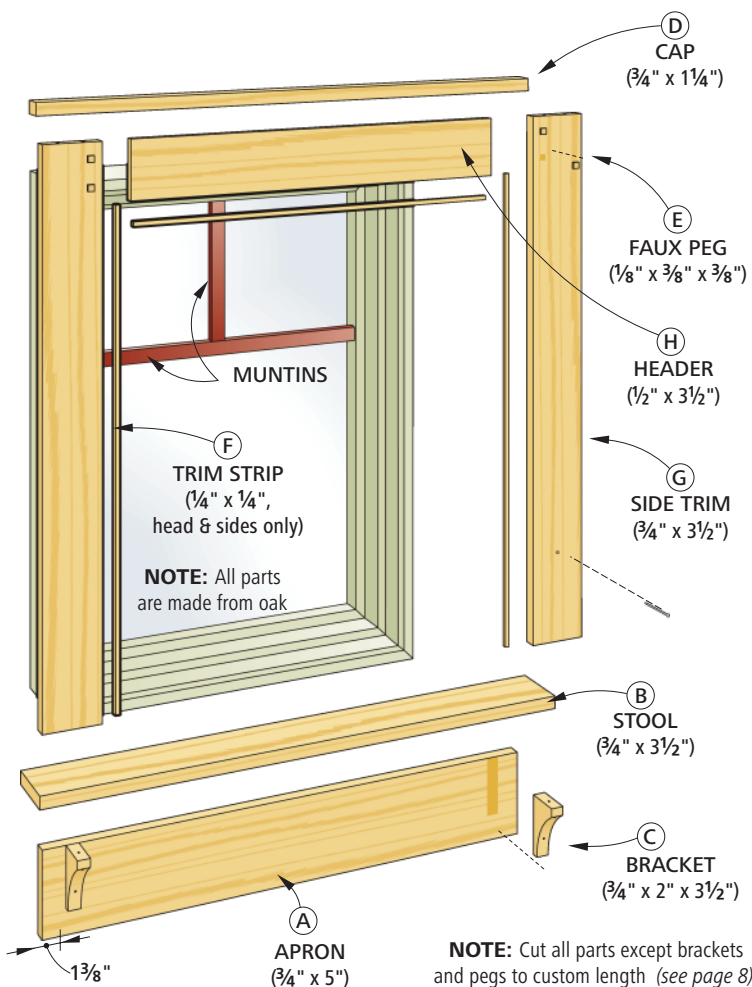
As for the length of the trim pieces, that depends on the height and width of the window opening. After measuring the size of the opening, calculating the lengths is a snap (*see Illustration on page 8*).

**Material Matters** — Once you’ve figured out the sizes of all the trim pieces, make a parts list, and then head to the home center for the material. You should be able to get what you need in the board aisle at most home centers. We found some nice-looking S4S oak boards (surfaced on all four sides) in both 1/2" and 3/4" thickness.

**Simple Construction** — After rounding up the stock, construction is pretty straightforward. It’s similar to the traditional version in that you’ll be cutting pieces to length on a miter saw, gluing them together into sub-assemblies, and then mounting the assemblies to the wall.

It’s best to start with the lower sub-assembly and then build from there. Simply crosscut the apron and stool to length. Then lay out and

### CONSTRUCTION VIEW



cut the curved brackets to shape using a jig saw or band saw (*Bracket Part View*).

Next, glue the apron and stool together. Then attach the brackets with glue and nails to complete the lower sub-assembly.

As for the upper sub-assembly, glue the sides (G) and header (H) together first, making sure they're flush with each other in back. These are end-grain glue joints, so they have little strength. But gluing and nailing on the cap will add plenty of rigidity until you get it mounted to the wall. To complete this part of the project, glue the decorative trim strips around the inside edges of the frame, and then add the faux pegs (*Sidebar, right*).

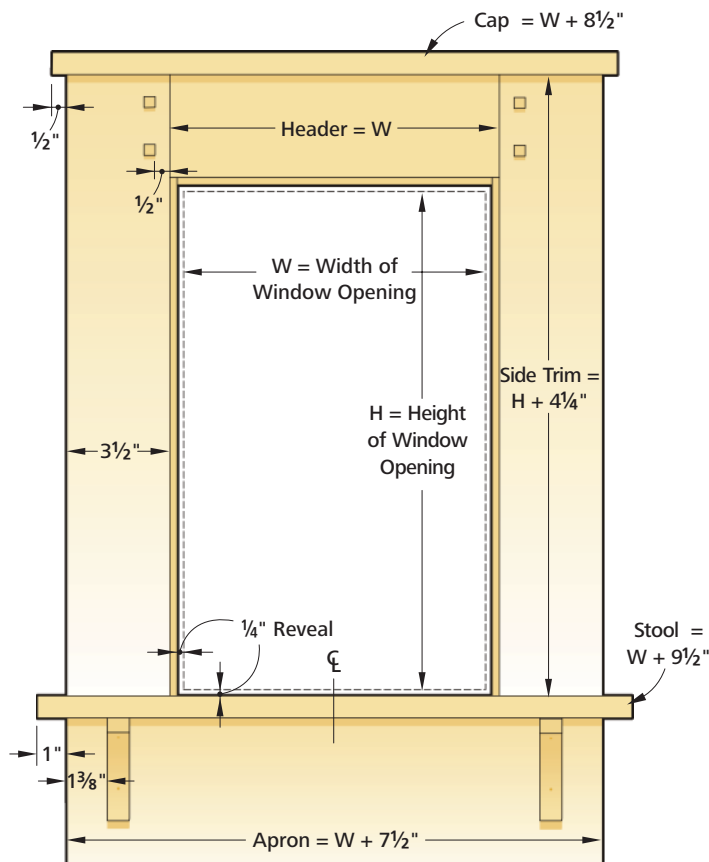
**Two-Step Installation** — After applying a finish to the trim (and painting the jamb, in our case), installation is an easy two-step process as shown in *Figs. 1 and 2*. 🛠️

## Perfect Peg Placement

The "pegs" on this window trim are thin slices of wood that get glued in place. To make sure the pegs align with each other (and to avoid making a glue mess), lay out their locations on a strip of tape. Then cut openings in the tape, and glue on the pegs.



### SIZING THE TRIM PIECES



**To** install the Craftsman window trim, center the lower sub-assembly on the width of the window. Then fasten it in place.



**Now** set the U-shaped upper sub-assembly onto the stool. Be sure to check that there's an even reveal on both sides, and then nail it to the wall.

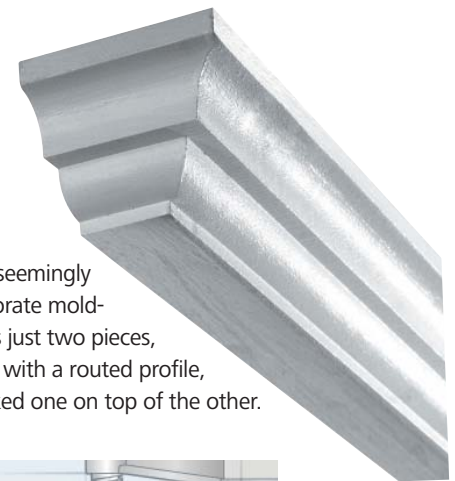


## FANCY MOLDING FROM Built-up Stock

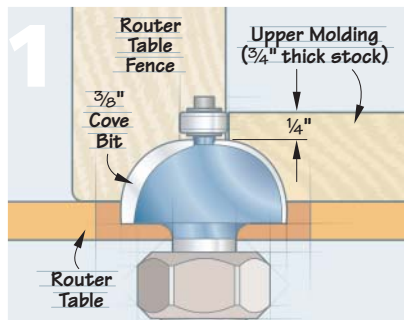
The upper trim for the “traditional” window treatment looks complicated, but it’s easy to make by routing a profile on two pieces and then stacking the pieces together. By making the lower piece narrower and shorter than the

upper piece, you can create the attractive “reveal” between the pieces that’s seen in the *Photo* at right.

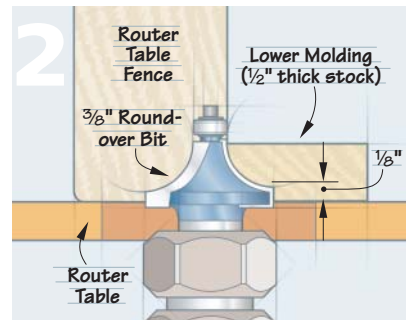
To make the molding, just cut the two pieces to size, and rout the ends and edges as shown in the *Illustrations* below.



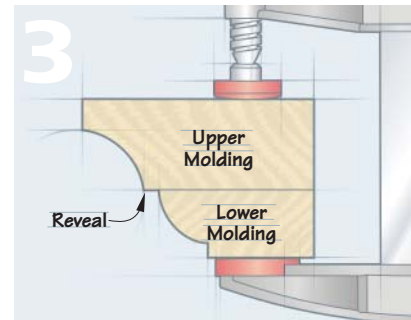
This seemingly elaborate molding is just two pieces, each with a routed profile, stacked one on top of the other.



**Rout** the ends and edges of the upper molding with a  $\frac{3}{8}$ " cove bit on the router table.



**Switch** to a  $\frac{3}{8}$ " roundover bit, and then rout the ends and edges of the lower molding.



**After** routing both pieces, glue and clamp them face-to-face to create the finished molding.

## Handsaw Crosscut Guide

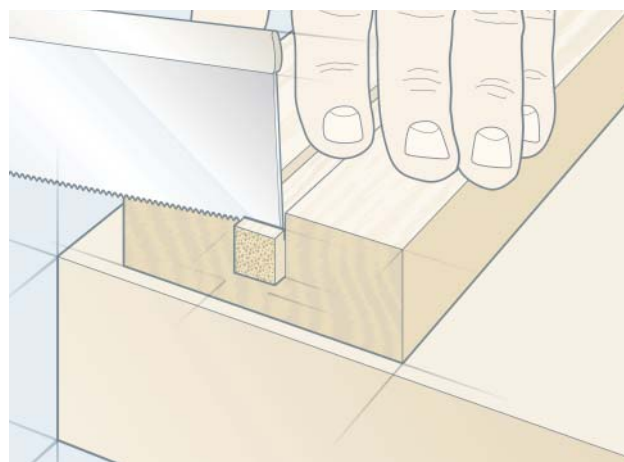
On the Craftsman-style window trim we applied small decorative pegs near the top corners.

I cut each peg from a long wood strip. But doing this on a table saw or miter saw would be overkill, so I used a small guide and a handsaw to make the cut.

The guide is just a 2x4 block with a groove that holds the workpiece in place

while you make the cut. To use it, slide the workpiece, so it extends past the end of the guide the desired amount ( $\frac{1}{8}$ ", in this case).

To get a square cut, hold the saw so the side of the blade is against the end of the guide. Drag the saw teeth across the workpiece to define the cutline. Now complete the cut, keeping the blade against the guide.



## THREE EASY STEPS TO CLAMPING Mitered Frames

The contemporary window trim option features a frame joined with mitered corners that get glued together.

Now, gluing up the mitered corners of a frame can be tricky, especially if you're working alone. It's difficult to keep the miter joints aligned while trying to tighten the clamps.

To make it easier, I use two pairs of pipe clamps and a three-step process.

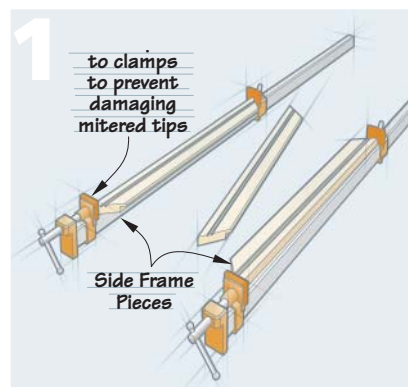
**Start with Two** — Begin by clamping two opposite sides of the frame (see Fig. 1 below). Light pressure is all that's needed here. You don't want to damage the fragile tips of the miters. In fact, it's a good idea to attach rubber pads to the jaws of the clamps to prevent any damage.

To get ready for the next step, set the clamps

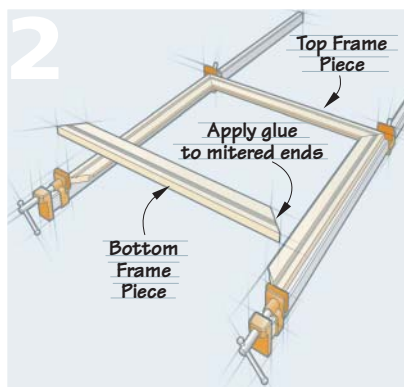
so they're the same distance apart as the length of the two unclamped pieces. Use one of those two pieces to check the spacing. Don't worry here about being too exact, though. You can reposition the assembly later if you need to.

**Add the Rest** — The second step of the process is to apply glue to the mitered ends of the remaining two pieces and slip them into place to complete the frame. They should fit right into position between the two pieces that are already clamped (Fig. 2).

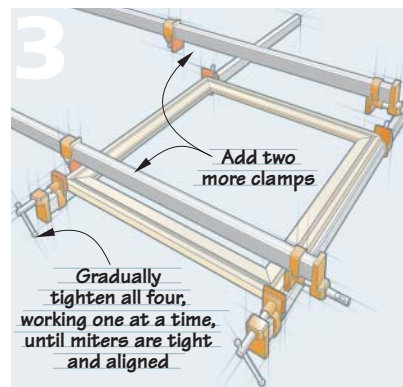
**Add Clamps** — To finish up, position two more clamps across the frame (Fig. 3). Tighten the clamps, gradually adjusting one at a time, until all four miter joints are perfectly aligned and drawn tightly together.



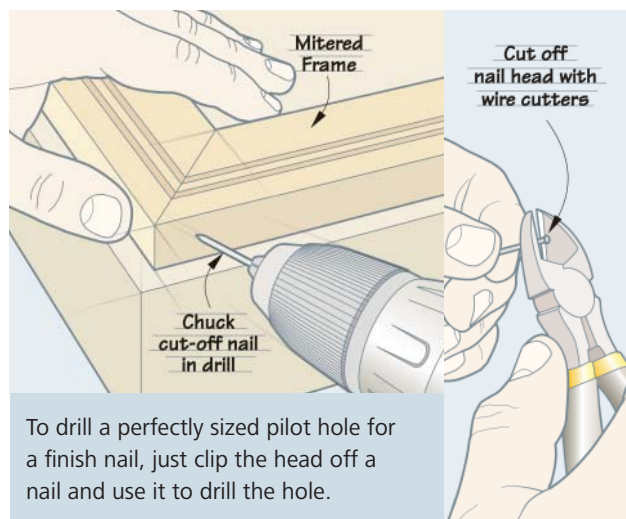
**Place** the two side frame pieces into bar clamps, and apply light clamping pressure to the tips of the miters.



**Apply** glue to the ends of the top and bottom frame pieces, and slip them in place, making sure the faces are flush.



**Position** two more clamps over the frame, and slowly tighten all four clamps to draw the miters into alignment.



To drill a perfectly sized pilot hole for a finish nail, just clip the head off a nail and use it to drill the hole.

## Drill a Perfect Pilot Hole

The mitered joints on the contemporary-style window frame shown above may look great, but they don't offer a lot of holding power. To add some strength, it's a good idea to drive a nail into each joint.

The trick is driving the nails into the edges of these frames without splitting the wood. Ordinarily, I would search through my drill bits to find one that's just the

right size. But then I realized I had the perfect "bit" right in my hand: the nail itself.

To use a nail to drill a pilot hole, first clip off the head with a pair of wire cutters (Inset), and chuck it into a drill with the tip facing out. Then drill each pilot hole in the frame, using the nail just as you would a standard drill bit (see Illustration, left).