



Cheery Cherry Toy Chest

A challenging classic that will last a lifetime

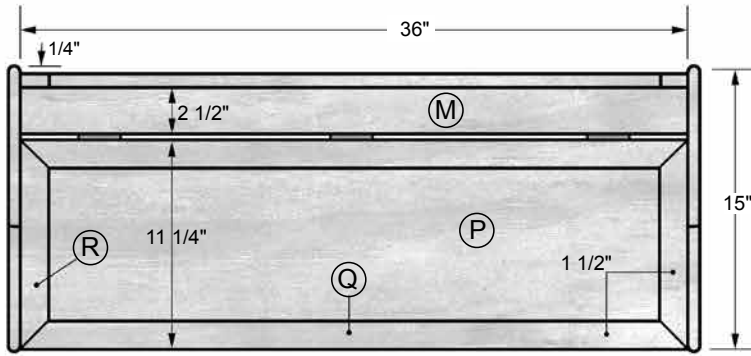


We call this a toy chest—but it's a book case, a knickknack box and a fun place to sit and read. And when your kids are grown, it makes one heck of a fine entry bench.

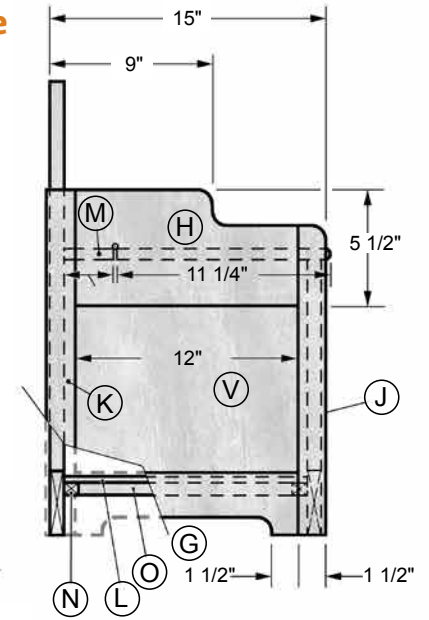
This is one of the more challenging projects in the book. It involves biscuit joints, sunken panels and cutting tight curves. Plus, it's made from cherry—a mistake in this material costs three times as much as a mistake in pine! So, if you're a beginner, consider sharpening your chops on a couple of other projects before digging into this one.

We show two versions of the finished chest. One with cherry plywood panels; another with panels

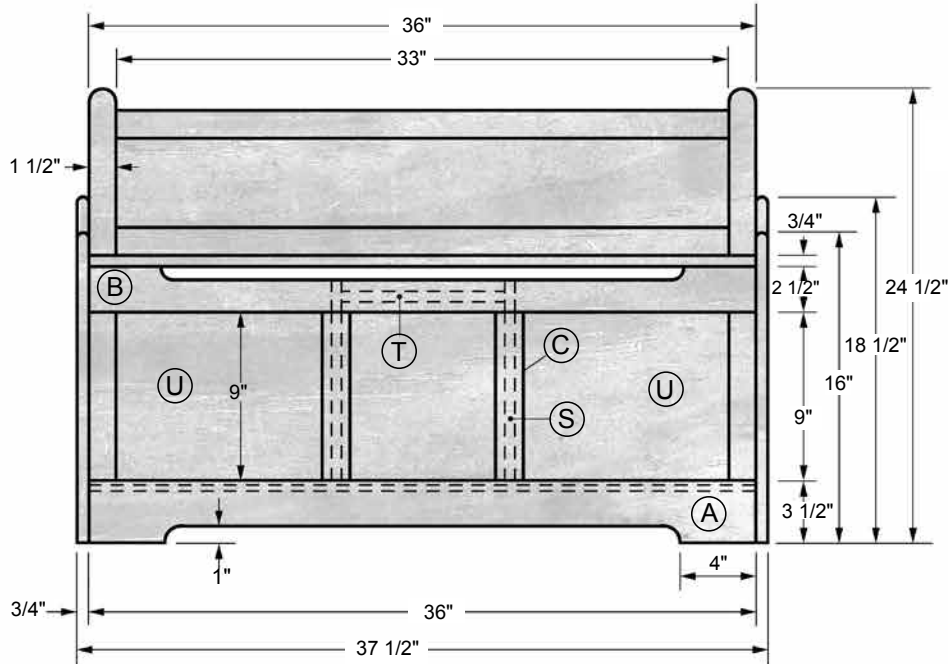
Top



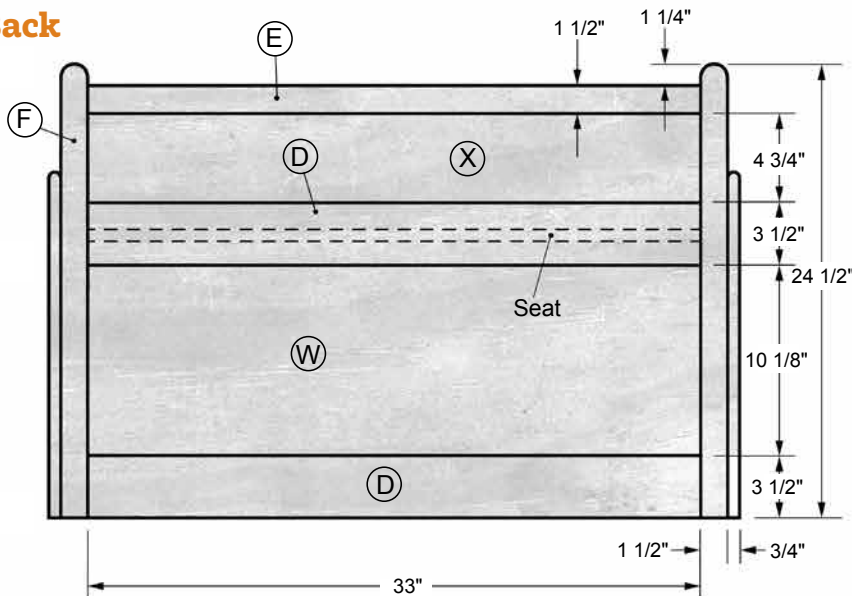
Side



Front



Back



Materials List

Material	Qty
3/4" x 3/4" x 8' cherry	1
1 x 2 x 8' cherry	3
1 x 3 x 8' cherry	1
1 x 4 x 8' cherry	1
1 x 6 x 4' cherry	1
1/4" x 3/4" x 8' cherry	1
1/4" x 4' x 8' cherry plywood	1
3/4" x 4' x 8' cherry plywood	1
1 1/2" hinges	3
Soft close hinge	1

painted by children's book author, Nancy Carlson (find out more at nancycarlson.com). We encourage you to have fun decorating your flat panels in your own unique way.

How to Build It

The main chest consists of four frames. Building them takes a fair amount of work, skill and focus, but once they're constructed you're over halfway home. All the parts are made from standard width lumber, so you won't have any ripping to do. We used cherry, but any softwood or hardwood will work just as well.

Cutting List

Part	Dimension	Qty
A) Front bottom rail	¾" x 3½" x 36"	1
B) Front top rail	¾" x 2½" x 36"	1
C) Front stile	¾" x 1½" x 9"	4
D) Back bottom & mid rail	¾" x 3½" x 33"	2
E) Back top rail	¾" x 1½" x 33"	1
F) Back side stile	¾" x 1½" x 24½"	2
G) Side bottom rail	¾" x 3½" x 12"	2
H) Side top rail	¾" x 5½" x 12"	2
<i>I) Note: To avoid confusion, no "I"s included in parts lists</i>		
J) Side front stile	¾" x 1½" x 16"	2
K) Side back stile	¾" x 1½" x 18½"	2
L) Chest bottom	¼" x 13" x 36" plywood	1
M) Top lid support	¾" x 2½" x 36"	1
N) Long bottom support	¾" x ¾" x 36"	2
O) Short bottom support	¾" x ¾" x 11½"	2
P) Lid center core	¾" x 8¼" x 32⅞" plywood	1
Q) Lid long frame member	¾" x 1½" x 35⅞" *	2
R) Lid short frame member	¾" x 1½" x 11¼" *	2
S) Inner divider verticals	¾" x 13" x 11½" plywood **	2
T) Inner divider top	¾" x 13" x 8½" plywood	1
U) Front panel	¼" x 9¾" x 11⅝" plywood	2
V) Side panel	¼" x 10¼" x 12⅝" plywood	2
W) Back panel	¼" x 10⅝" x 33⅝" plywood	1
X) Back rest panel	¼" x 5½" x 33⅝" plywood	1

*Indicates long point to long point
 **Cut to fit

Begin by using a miter saw to cut parts A through K to length. Make the curved cuts on the bottoms of parts A and G, as well as the rounded armrests on part H. Build the four frames (Photo 1) using glue, biscuits and clamps (for additional information on biscuit joiner basics, see "Riley's Rocking Chair" and visit YouTube.) Use a router with a ⅜" rabbeting bit (Photo 2) to cut the ¼" deep rabbets on the insides of the frame openings (except for the middle opening of the front panel.) These recesses hold the flat panels installed in Photo 8.

Next mark the locations of the biscuits used to join the frames to one another. Use clamps to temporarily hold the parts in position (Photo 3) and mark the centers of the biscuits. Note the front and back panels are inset ¼" in from the ends of the side panels; use a scrap piece of ¼" plywood to establish that inset. Cut the slots as shown in Photo 4. Adjust the biscuit joiner fence to cut the center of the slot ⅜ inch back from the "inset" line. Test fit your frames as shown in Photo 5. If everything aligns, apply glue to the biscuits, slots and edges of the frame and clamp them together.

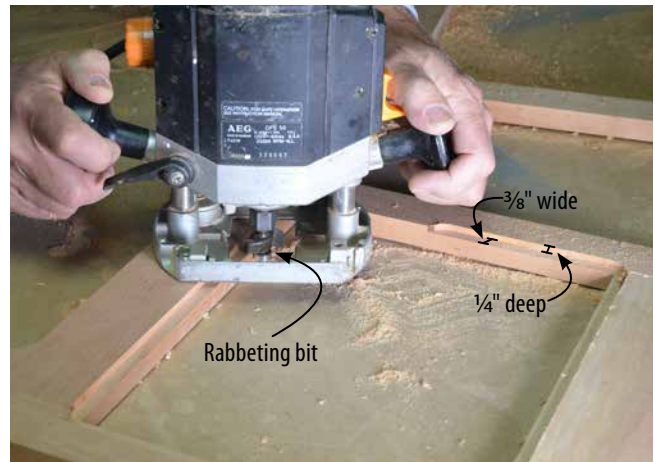
Glue and screw the lid support (M) to the back of the chest (Photo 6.) Install the bottom supports (N,O), then use glue and brads to secure the bottom (L) in place as shown in Photo 7.

Cut the flat panels (U, V, W, X) to size, then round the corners as seen in Photo 8. Use glue and ½" brads to secure the panels into the openings. Install the vertical dividers (S), divider top (T) and trim pieces as seen in Photo 9. (Note, the flat panels have been removed for clarity.)

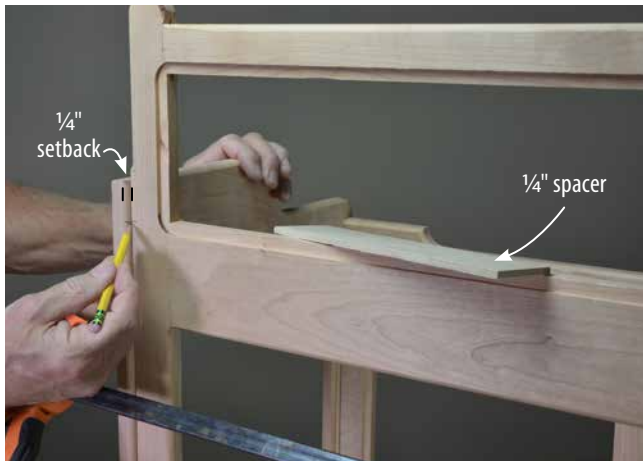
Build the lid (Photo 10.) Use biscuits to secure the perimeter pieces (Q, R) to the plywood core (P) and to one another at the corners. Install the hinges and lid support (Photo 11.) Apply your finish of choice then step back and admire your work—and the joy this toy chest brings.



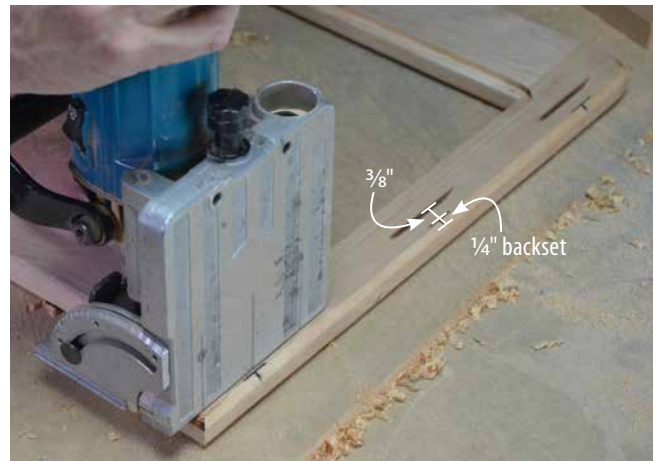
1 BUILD the front, back and side frames using glue and biscuits for joinery. These four frames create the main structure of the chest.



2 ROUT $\frac{1}{4}$ " deep recesses in the backs of the frames to receive the flat panels, using a router and a $\frac{3}{8}$ " rabbeting bit.



3 MARK the locations of the centers of the biscuits on the panels. The $\frac{1}{4}$ " plywood in the foreground is used to establish the side panel setback shown.



4 CUT slots in the side pieces for joining the front and back panels. Again account for the $\frac{1}{4}$ " setback when cutting your slots.



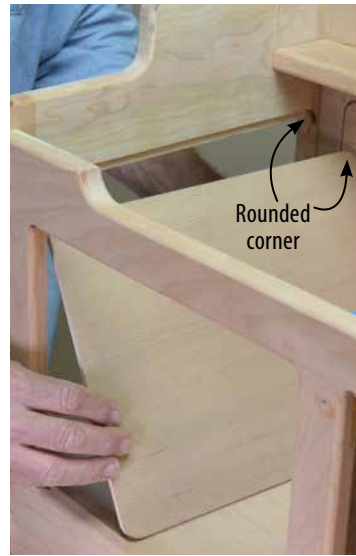
5 TEST FIT the panels, then secure them to one another using biscuits and glue. Use lots of clamps; you shouldn't have to use nails or screws.



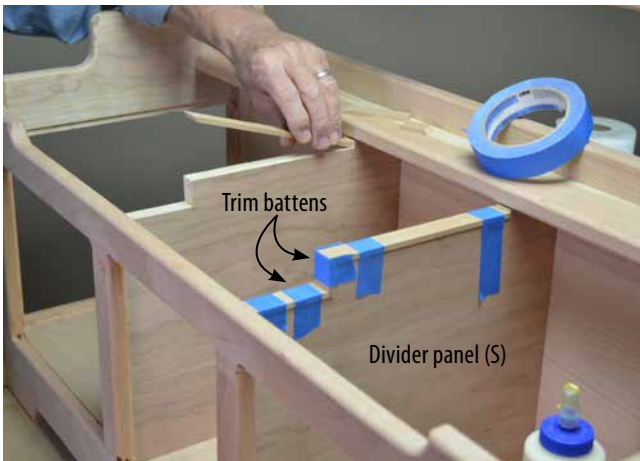
6 GLUE and clamp the lid support (M) to the back panel. Secure the ends to the side panels with 6d finish nails.



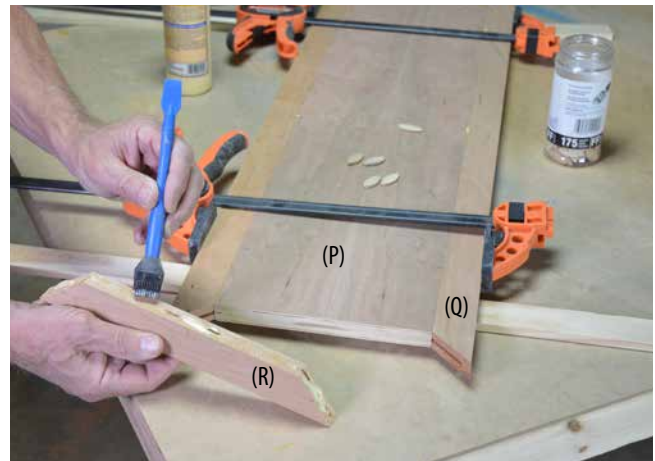
7 INSTALL the bottom, securing it to the $\frac{3}{4}$ " x $\frac{3}{4}$ " bottom supports with glue and $\frac{1}{2}$ " brads.



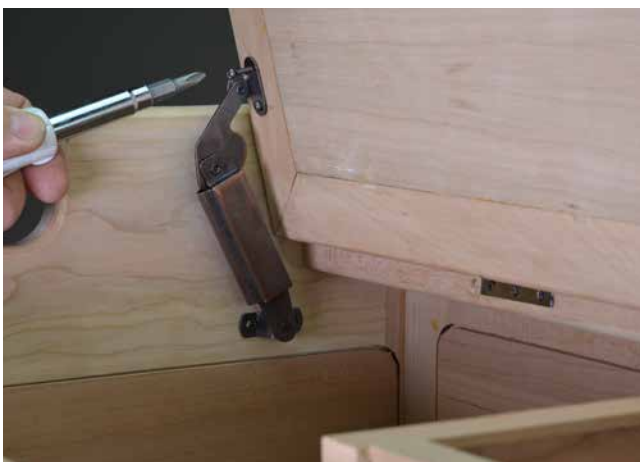
8 TEST FIT the inset panels. Fine tune the size as needed, then secure them into the opening with glue and $\frac{1}{2}$ " brads.



9 INSTALL the partitions that create the sides of the bookcase area. Tape the $\frac{1}{4}$ " cherry battens in place, then secure the tray to the partitions (T) with finish nails.



10 BUILD the lid. Picture frame the $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood with strips of solid cherry wood, using glue and biscuits.



11 SCREW the hinges and closer mechanism to the lid and chest. The closer has slow moving spring action to help protect little fingers.

The Right Finish for Cherry

The easiest finish to apply is a rub-on poly or Danish Oil. But solid wood, $\frac{1}{4}$ " plywood and $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood each accept finish slightly differently. If you want to create a more uniform look you can make "story boards" using scrap pieces of lumber and plywood. These allow you to compare finishes and how they look on various types of materials. This can all be complicated by the fact that cherry naturally darkens when exposed to sunlight. We wound up applying sanding sealer, followed by two coats of Cherry Danish Oil.