



When you are **working with heavy boards**, sharp blades and machinery that can sever a limb or finger, it's important to be vigilant and avoid making mistakes that could endanger your health or even your life! You should make the following woodworking safety rules an integral part of your woodworking hobby.

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Woodworking Safety Rules to Follow

1. Wear goggles or **safety glasses** whenever you are **using power tools**, and also when sanding, chiseling, hammering or scraping overhead. This is especially important if you wear

contact lenses. Put on **ear protectors** when you use noisy power tools; some power tools operate at noise levels that can damage your hearing.

2. Take care that loose clothing or hair does not get caught in tools; keep long sleeves rolled up and remove any jewelry. Keep tools where small children can't reach them.

3. When you're sawing, sanding or using substances that give off noxious fumes, wear an appropriate **face mask**. Oily rags can burst into flames spontaneously, so be careful how to store or discard them.

4. Keep your blades sharp. A dull blade requires extra force, which could cause it to slip and cause an accident.

5. Always use the right tool for the job. If you have tools that have chips in the metal parts or cracks in wooden handles, repair or discard them.

6. Never saw, shape or drill anything that isn't firmly secured. Don't take your tools for granted!



Avoid Overtaxing Yourself

7. Don't work with tools when you are tired; that's when most accidents happen. Nor should you work with tools if you've consumed alcohol – alcohol can distort your judgment. You can celebrate after you've finished your project! Never smoke around inflammable products, such as stains and solvents.

Accidents happen through fatigue, bad judgment, inattention, taking chances and horseplay. Other causes are unsuitable clothing, poor instruction (not reading manuals), defective equipment, missing guards, **poor lighting** and insufficient working space.

8. A very important step towards avoiding personal injury is to familiarize yourself with a new tool before using it. Read the manual and do a "dry run" with the tool unplugged. Use a tool or machine only for its intended purpose.

9. If a job requires two people, don't try to do it alone; wait until someone is available.

10. Unplug power tools before changing parts or settings. Study the user manuals and understand how they should be properly used.

11. See that you fully understand how to use the table saw fence settings and the recommendations on how to make cuts using feather boards, fence straddlers, push sticks, push blocks and safety guards.

Pay Attention and Focus

12. The most powerful tool in your workshop is your brain – use it well. Thinking your movements and cuts through before you take action can help save both your fingers and your wood. Focus your attention on your actions. Looking up to speak to a visitor or watch the TV can result in your hand contacting the blade. Always wait until you have finished the cut before taking your eyes off the blade.

13. Bear in mind that your woodworking is just a hobby. When you feel frustrated or rushed with a project, take a break. When you rush to complete a job is when mistakes happen. If your saw is resisting a cut, stop and see what's wrong.

14. An improperly-seated throat plate or a misaligned rip fence can sometimes cause a board to get stuck in mid-cut. Forcing the board in such situations can cause kickback or contact with the blade. Take a moment to evaluate the situation and determine what's causing the problem.

Allow the power tool to stop running. People often overlook the fact that a spinning blade can

still do a lot of damage, even with the power switched off.

Tidy Up!

15. Keep your workshop clean. A cluttered workshop is an accident waiting to happen.

Keeping a clean shop will help you avoid tripping hazards. Designate a place where your hand tools are to be stored; sort screws, nails and other small hardware items in containers.



16. Sweep up dust and shavings at the end of the day. Airborne dust and fumes from solvents could be potential health and explosion hazards. Take care to ensure good ventilation and install only **explosion-proof vent fans**.

Just as you should be informed of correct safety procedures to follow, it helps to be aware of the most common mistakes beginners make when starting with woodworking projects.

Common Woodworking Mistakes

17. By far the most common mistake made in any DIY project is: neglecting to read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for any material or tool being used. Other often-made mistakes include: taking for granted the safety measures that are outlined for a project, and lack of proper project planning.

18. Do not neglect your machinery and tools. See that they are regularly cleaned and maintained. Ensure that blades are kept sharp and metal surfaces are kept free of rust.

Here are steps you can take to complete your projects successfully and safely:

Follow the Golden Rule of measuring: “Measure twice, cut once”. Allow yourself plenty of time for each step.

Know your plan. If it’s a pre-made [plan that you downloaded](#) or purchased, make sure that you know the steps you need to take to finish your project. However, don’t be too rigid; be ready to adjust your plans if necessary to finish the piece in a way that’s easiest for you.

Measuring Your Wood

Make layout marks on your wood using a marking knife or [woodworking pencil](#). You must be able to see your markings clearly if you want to complete the piece correctly.

For uniformity, use the same tape measure throughout your whole project. [Tape measures](#) are, unfortunately, not made to be precision measuring devices. Avoid using the hook on the end; try to start at the 1-inch mark but remember to subtract that extra inch to get your correct measurement. If you do use the hook, use it for ALL the measurements.

Don’t cut out all the parts at once, even though it might seem like a good idea. Beginners often make this mistake – don’t become one of them!. The main reason is that *there could be mistakes in the plan or pattern*. It happens. If you cut all the parts first, and there is more than one mistake, you will have a lot of expensive firewood on your hands! Rather tackle your project in stages.

Another problem is with wood “movement”. After cutting, the wood can warp because of changes in temperature and humidity. This will affect all of your joineries. Just another reason to consider dividing your project into stages.

Speaking of joinery, in the next post, you can read about the different [types of wood joints and their uses](#).

You’ll find some good woodworking safety tips in this video: