

# Making wooden rings

Making wooden finger rings can be fun, as **Michael T Collins** discovers

‘I want to make a wooden ring for my sister,’ were the words of my young ‘Padawan’, Wes. ‘It’s simple,’ he said, as he proceeded to explain how we could do it on the lathe. I pointed out that, while my turning skills are pretty good when it comes to big stuff such as table legs, candle sticks and bowls, tiny finger rings were a whole different story.

We mulled over the idea of taking a piece of wood, boring a ring-sized hole down the length and turning the outside. However, I imagined the pieces falling apart as we got closer and closer to the right thickness.

The other downside to this method is that the grain in the ring would be running perpendicular to the ring and therefore would offer no structural strength, meaning that any sharp tap could break the ring.

We could build a block of alternating woods and grain orientation – but we would still be faced with the prospect of turning.

We really needed an alternative method and a sandwich.

## Making a sandwich

**1** The first step is to re-saw several strips of differing species of wood into wafer thin sheets – in this example they are 3mm thick. The species I used were yellow heart, purple heart, maple, and black walnut. In fact, a variety of any contrasting coloured hardwood will work.

**2** Once sliced cut the pieces into squares and arrange each layer so that the grain is running at right angles to each other. This creates the plywood effect and greatly adds to the ring strength.

**3** Using a waterproof glue, sandwich the pieces together and firmly clamp. A 75 x 75mm sandwich will produce about five size M rings.

## Cutting/sizing the ring size

**4** With a Forstner bit of the appropriate ring size, drill holes leaving about 6mm to 9.5mm space between holes. You want the final ring to be at least 3mm.



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**5** Roughly cut out the holes using a fret saw.

## Sanding the outside of the rings

**6** To get the rough shape of the ring, sand the outside of the ring with a belt sander, with 320 grit paper.

**7** Alternatively you can sand by hand – this will allow more finesse and the ability to add features such as facets. Note that I have a towel under the sandpaper – this gives a cushioning effect and allows for the rounding of edges.

## Sanding the inside of the rings

**8** If you opt for using a spindle sander go easy and be very careful – it’s amazing how much an oscillating spindle sander will remove. And keep those knuckles out of the way.

**9** I opted to roll a piece of sandpaper and rotate the ring, working up to 320 grit paper.

## Finish

**10** For finish I went with Danish oil, it’s an easy finish to apply and waterproof. To add lustre spray with a gloss finish.

**11** Apply light sanding between coats and support in such a way as to not mar the finish. I hung them on a 3mm dowel to dry and then buffed them with furniture polish.

**12** And there you have it – a very simple way to make an elegant statement.

## Variations on a theme

I have created one ring by staining the edges before gluing, this would work best on similar coloured wood.

Another idea – how about making larger rings for napkins? And remember, they do not have to be round. ■

## Save those scraps

Generally the advice is to have a regular clearout of anything too small. However, anything exotic or interesting – perhaps with an unusual grain patterning – is worth keeping for small projects such as this. I have a smaller size storage box just for small pieces that I think could be useful one day... Ed.

