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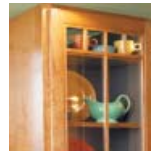
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get an invisible Plywood Edge

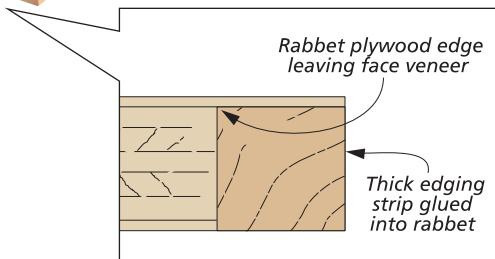
You want to hide the edges of your plywood panels, but you don't want the edging to show. It's not as hard as it sounds.



A thicker edging strip can be trimmed to leave a thin edge. ▼



A thick edging piece glued into a rabbet in the edge of the plywood leaves an invisible seam. ◀



I use hardwood plywood in my projects all the time. It makes the job go easier and the quality of the project better. But there is one drawback to plywood — the exposed edges. To put it simply, the edges of plywood can be downright ugly.

And more often than not, they need to be hidden.

For some projects, I'll simply glue on a 1/4"-wide strip of solid wood, trim it flush and not worry too much if the edging doesn't blend well. But other times, you might want to apply an edge to the plywood that's a little more subtle — an invisible edge. Sound impossible? Well there are actually a number of ways to accomplish this without too much extra effort.

MAKE IT THIN

When your edging is thin enough, it becomes nearly impossible to see. Edging that's only 1/32" to 1/16"-wide won't be noticeable except under the closest examination. And there are several different *thin* options.

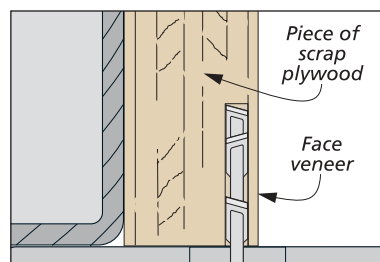
EDGING TAPE. One of the quickest and easiest options for thin plywood edging is adhesive veneer

▲ Heat-sensitive veneer tape can be easily applied to the plywood edge with a warm iron. When trimmed flush, the thin veneered edge won't be noticed.

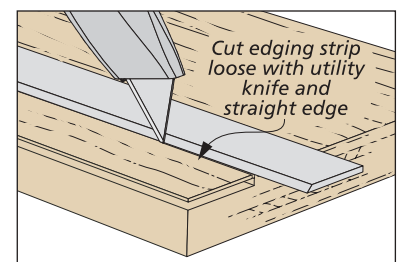
tape that's made specifically for this purpose. It comes in rolls and is made from very thin hardwood veneers. You can find it in most of the common wood species.

There are two different types of edging tape and both are pretty easy to apply. The self-adhesive type works just like sticky tape. It can be applied using nothing more than some firm pressure.

The heat-sensitive type takes only a little more work. It has a coating of adhesive on one side that can be activated with "gentle" heat. All you do to is set it in place and use an iron to apply the heat, as shown in the photo above. Both types of edging tape are made slightly oversized in width. Once the tape is stuck firmly



Edging From Plywood. To make thin edging from plywood scraps, first make a saw cut on the joint line between the face veneer and core.



Cut It Loose. Next, use a sharp utility knife to cut the veneer strip from the plywood panel. The edging will be a perfect match in grain and color.

in place, you trim it flush to the surface of the plywood and you're done.

TRIM IT THIN. Sometimes I want a thin edge that will hold up to a little more wear and tear than edging tape. So in this case I make my own slightly thicker edging, as shown in the upper example at far left.

The easiest way to do this is to start thick and end up thin. By this I mean you apply a thicker edging (about $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick) to the plywood and then trim off the excess on the table saw. A final thickness of about $\frac{1}{16}$ " gives you a little more durability at the edge, but it still isn't thick enough to be noticed.

A PERFECT MATCH. If you want to apply a thin edge and also ensure a perfect match between the edging and plywood face, the two drawings on page 1 show you how. This method uses the thin, face veneer from a scrap piece of the same plywood as the edging piece. When it's glued to the workpiece, you have both a thin edge and one with the same grain and color as the plywood face veneer.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH. Another way to go "thin" with edging takes a unique approach. Here, the plywood veneer provides the thin edge. A thicker edging strip is used, but still creates an invisible edge on one face of the plywood.

The trick here is shown in the lower example and drawing at left. First, the plywood edge is rabbeted

so that only the thin face veneer of the plywood remains on one side. When a thick edging strip is glued tightly into this rabbet, the joint line between the thin face veneer and the edging strip disappears. You end up with what looks like a seamless, solid-wood edge. This technique involves a little more work, but it works like a charm.

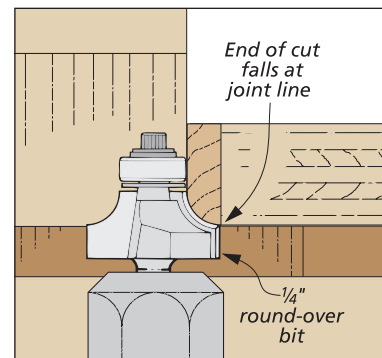
DISGUISE IT

Making it thin isn't the only way to hide your plywood edging. Another strategy involves using a thicker edging piece and then disguising it. The idea is to visually blend the the plywood and the edging piece so that the transition from one to the other won't be noticeable.

I start by gluing a standard $\frac{1}{4}$ "-thick edging strip to the plywood and then trimming it flush to the surface. Then I add a little something extra. A molded edge that easily draws your eye from the edging to the plywood face can successfully hide the joint line or any grain or color difference between the two pieces.

The drawing and the photo above give you the idea. The edges of the routed molding cuts (chamfer or roundover) on the edging strips fall right at the joint line. And if the panel will be seen from both sides, make

▲ A roundover or chamfer routed onto the edging strip will provide a disguise for the joint line.



A Smooth Transition. A carefully routed roundover ending right at the joint line between the edging and the plywood can fool the eye.

a second cut on the bottom edge. You still have edged plywood but you would have to look pretty close to see it. **W**

Shelves: Beef It Up

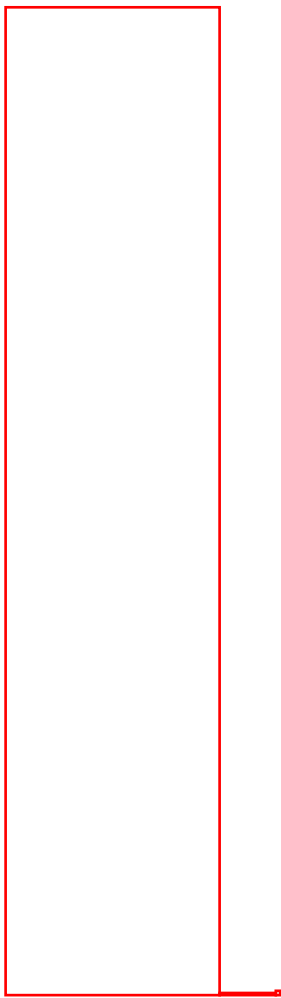
On occasion you not only need to hide the edge of the plywood, but also add some extra strength and thickness. Heavy-duty bookshelves come to mind. So how do you do this and not make it look obvious? Well, a couple solutions are shown in the photo at right.

The first example (top shelf) shows a thick rabbeted strip applied to the plywood that adds both visual thickness and a considerable amount of stiffness. And then notice how I

borrowed the trick shown above to disguise the edge. A simple roundover creates a seamless flow from the plywood panel to the solid-wood edging.

The second example (lower shelf) uses a similar idea but with a different joint. Here I applied a stout piece of edging with a carefully cut splined miter joint. The resulting invisible joint and crisp edge will leave anyone guessing — is it plywood or solid wood?

▲ A thick edging piece carefully joined to the plywood not only hides the "core," but also adds strength.



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