

# building the TOP

All the table lacks now is a top. And as you can see in the photo at left, the top for this table is not your standard, everyday, glued-up slab table top. The inlaid tile center adds a bit of a wrinkle to the construction, but the good news is it's not the least bit difficult and it looks great.

**THE FRAME.** The solid frame that surrounds the tile is just more of what you've done before — mortise and tenon.

The two long rails are mortised to accept the tenons of the two short rails. It's pretty simple. I got started by cutting the two *long top rails* (F) and the two *short top rails* (G) to size from 1"-thick stock. Detail 'a' shows what you need to accomplish in the next step. Begin by cutting a mortise in the long rails. Then cut matching tenons on the short rails. Once the joinery is complete, you can glue the frame pieces together.

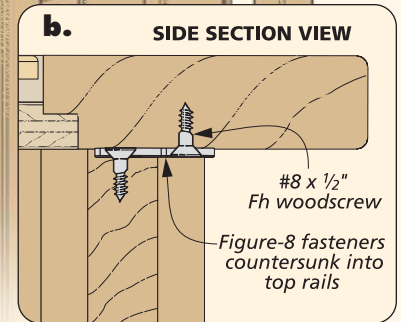
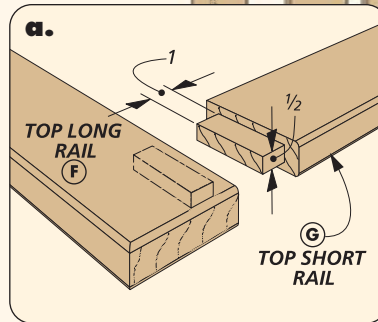
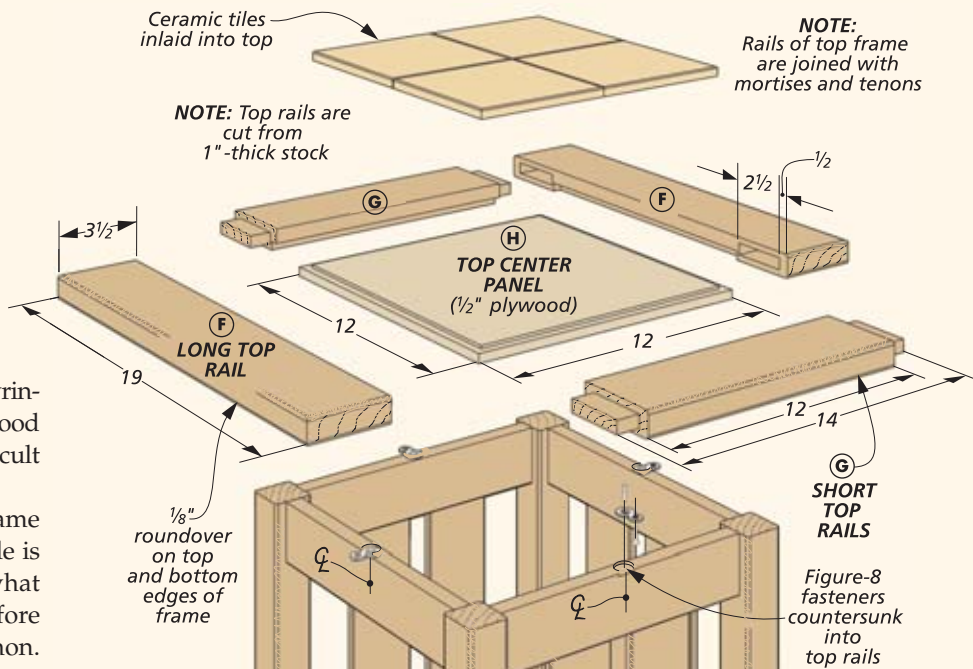
**ROUND THE EDGES.** Once the frame is assembled, take it to the router table to soften the top and bottom edges with a  $\frac{1}{8}$ " roundover.

**ADDING THE PANEL.** Next you need to add a center panel on which to set the tile (How-To below). This requires rabbeting the lower, inside

Ceramic tiles inlaid into top

**NOTE:** Rails of top frame are joined with mortises and tenons

**NOTE:** Top rails are cut from 1"-thick stock

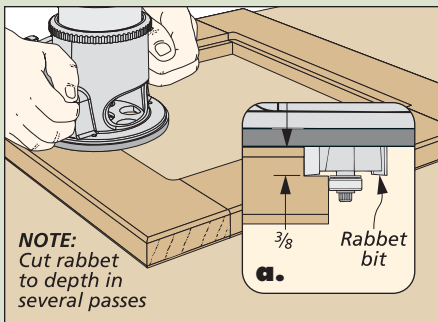


edge of the frame to accept the plywood *top center panel* (H). But there's a little more to the process that needs some explanation.

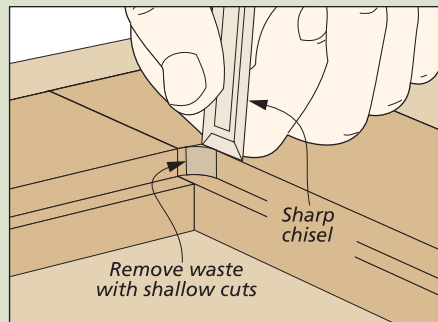
In short, when you set the tile, you want it to sit flush with the surrounding frame. I used four standard-sized ( $\frac{5}{8}$ "-square) tiles but the catch is that different

brands and styles of tile can vary in thickness. This means you need to custom-fit the panel so that the recess matches the thickness of the tile you choose. This just involves cutting a second rabbet on the plywood panel. If you just follow the step-by-step below, you shouldn't have any problems.

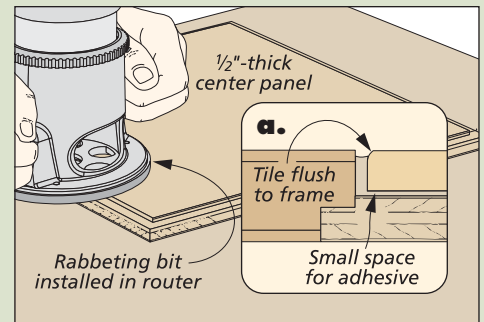
## How-To: Fitting the Center Panel



**Rabbet the Frame.** Get started by using a hand-held router with a rabbeting bit installed to cut a  $\frac{3}{8}$ " x  $\frac{3}{8}$ " rabbet around the bottom, inside edge of the frame.



**Squaring Up the Corners.** Next, I set down the router and picked up a sharp chisel to carefully square the rounded corners left by the rabbeting bit.

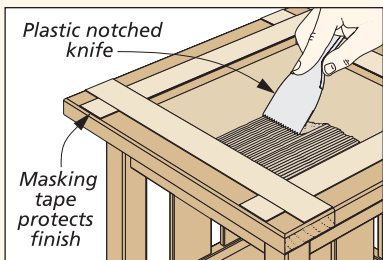


**Rabbet Panel.** After sizing a panel to fit the frame, adjust its height by rabbeting the top edge. You want the "tile" recess to match the tile thickness plus space for adhesive.

**ATTACH THE TOP.** Once you've glued the panel in place, the top can be attached to the table base. The metal "figure-8" fasteners that I used made this an easy job (left drawing). One fastener counter-sunk into the center of each top rail, as shown in detail 'b,' will hold the top tightly to the base.

### TILE SETTING

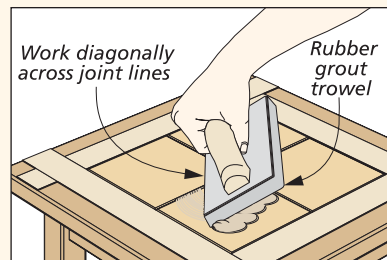
Before getting started on the tile, I went ahead and applied my finish.



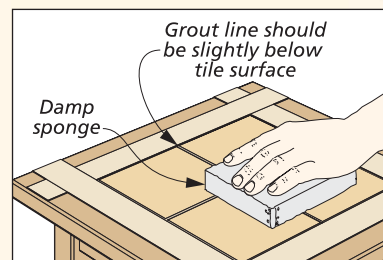
**Spread Adhesive.** First, tape off the frame. Then use a small, notched knife to spread the tile adhesive.

This way the wood is sealed from any stray adhesive or grout and I won't have to worry about keeping the stain and finish off of the tile and grout later on. Then to protect the finish, I carefully taped off the frame area around the center panel.

Setting the tile in the top isn't a difficult job, it just takes some basic know-how. The technique I used is fairly traditional, but also pretty easy. The boxes below give you the basic step-by-step approach. **IV**



**Grouting.** Once the tile is set, mix a small batch of grout and work it into the joints with a grout trowel.



**Clean the Surface.** Finally, use a damp sponge to clean the excess grout from the joints and surface.



You can simplify the tiling process a bit by picking up a tube of pre-mixed grout. ►

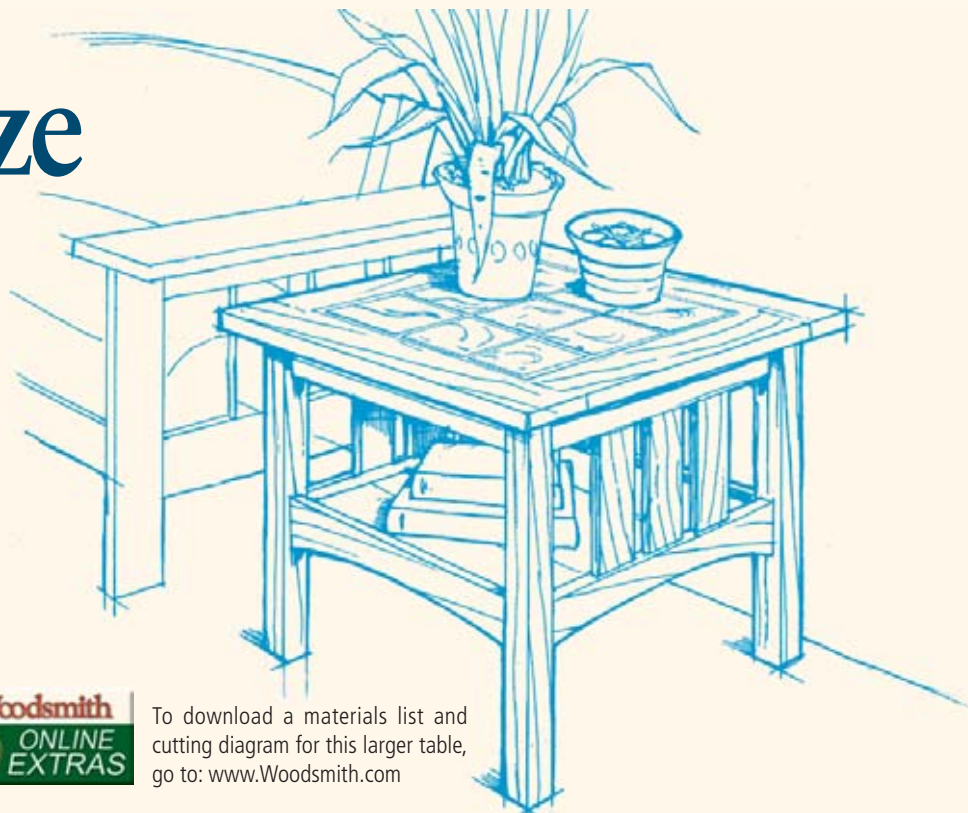
### ONLINE EXTRA video workshop

To see a step-by-step video of how the Tile-Top table is built, go to: [www.Woodsmith.com](http://www.Woodsmith.com)

## DESIGNER'S NOTEBOOK

### same table Larger Size

The simple design of this table allows you to easily modify the size and create a table with maybe a different purpose, but an equally attractive appearance. If you take a look at the drawing at right, you'll see that all I did was make the square footprint of the table slightly larger. Instead of two vertical slats between the rails the table now has three. All of the joinery and construction techniques stay exactly the same.



To download a materials list and cutting diagram for this larger table, go to: [www.Woodsmith.com](http://www.Woodsmith.com)