

Routing with Denis

Routing course RW0: Fundamentals of hand-held routing

The router is, without doubt, the most flexible power tool you could own. Its use is not intuitive and new owners need to be started off on the right foot if they are to realise the potential of this machine. Existing users need to learn what they are missing. This course is designed to fulfil this need.

The secret of router use is understanding the many ways there are to safely and efficiently guide the router in relation to the piece of wood being machined. Some routing can be done freehand. Guiding the base of the router against a straightedge is the way to trim dead-straight edges and make other straight cuts such as rebates and dados. The supplied fence is another way of guiding the router in a straight line in order to cut grooves and flutes. Bits with integrated bearings allow a variety of curved and other special cuts. Pattern bits and guide bushes open up the exciting world of pattern routing and provide an efficient and accurate way of duplicating components. Pattern routing is the basis of inlay work. A simple pivot and trammel attachment allows the cutting of perfect circles, arcs, holes and rings.

The course starts by discussing safety aspects. Next we examine the anatomy of a modern plunge-router and learn how to make the various adjustments. The rules for cutter insertion are covered along with advice on cutter maintenance. Then the fun starts: each of the above ways of guiding the router is explained and then demonstrated and you repeat the exercise. Practical applications of each method are then discussed. The importance of jigs to routing success is introduced. The distinction between using the router as a cutting tool and a trimming tool is made. Correct use of the body (grip, stance, waist movement etc) is dealt with. The importance of tactile feedback is emphasised.

A number of the exercises use a pattern bit (a straight bit with a shank-mounted bearing). It is recommended that you purchase such a bit so that you can practice at home what you have learnt. Another specific item on sale is a crosscut trimming and dado/rebate jig. Other router and general accessories such as C-clamps are also available.

Course details

Level: Introductory

Prerequisite: Before purchasing a router and investing in router training power tools such as a drill/driver, jigsaw and orbital sander should be purchased and some skill in their use acquired on simple woodworking projects. An appreciation of why woodworkers need to fashion joints and a familiarity with terms such as groove, rebate, dado and mortice and tenon is required.

Date and time: At this stage only one-on-one courses are offered. Courses are run on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 09h30 to 13h30. Attendance may be extended to four students: family members or woodworking buddies. Students must be 16 years or older. As COVID is still very much a problem students must be fully vaccinated.

Venue and course fee: See my website for a map. The fee is R750,00 per attendee: it includes light refreshments, all materials used, extensive full-colour post-course handout and post-course technical support .

Audience:

1. New owners of a router who want to start on the right foot.
2. Existing router owners who have done some routing but realise they are not fully exploiting the tool.
3. Woodworkers thinking of buying a router might attend this course before finalising their decision.

Note: This course covers hand-held routing only. Course RW8 is an introduction to using a router table. If you already own a router we will use this for the hands-on exercises. If you don't already have a router I will provide one. Advice on choosing a router will be given.

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