



Traditional mouldings



Anthony Bailey
creates second fix
joinery from scratch

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THE PROJECT



Last month I created a window frame using traditional style glazing bar cutters so this month, it seemed a good idea to consider other typical mouldings that make a room complete. Here, we are talking about skirting, architrave, dado (mid-height mouldings) picture rail and cornice. The last two are not so common these days in modern buildings, but they do help create a more traditional style of room. However, since the same mouldings, or ones like them, can be used when making other pieces, I have included examples of them anyway - a trick for making a plain panel door look more impressive is to fit a bolection moulding that sits around the frame edge, for example. So, there are various ways you can improve and enhance the look of a room and major fitments within it with mouldings.



A selection of the many moulding styles possible using one or more cutters and your router and table

The router is still the most versatile power tool there is. Along with a vast range of cutters, jigs and gadgets - many of which you can also make for yourself - it can help produce high-quality woodwork.

This series is intended to show you what the router can do, while assuming the reader has a general level of woodworking knowledge. We hope to show you the aspects of each project that specifically involve the router and how this great bit of kit can expand your woodworking skills.

Each month we will highlight the jigs, cutters and gadgets you will need to help you get more from this incredible machine. Feel free to send us pictures of your routing endeavours, or post them on the WPP forum at: www.woodworkersinstitute.com

THE JIG



The key to moulding successfully is control of the workpiece, so vibration is eliminated. This prevents chatter, jumping and breakage. The only practical way to achieve this, unless you are machining the edge of a wide board, is to use a tunnel. This is exactly what it says – an enclosing space that matches the stock dimensions, thus preventing any movement except the direction the workpiece is pushed through onto the cutter. It is very safe for the operator as well



The batten or strip of ply fixed to the backboard must press down evenly on square edged stock. Make it wide enough to suit the likely workpiece dimensions, plus the thickness of the side support which we need to make next – with a little spare as well



Mark and screw the side support in place on this board. Both the top and side support must be square to the workpiece



Prepared timber sizes are likely to be around the 50 x 25mm size – even for skirting, as the top moulded section is added afterwards to the separate plain bottom section. You need a decent size fence to work off, so make a backboard for your fence that can be moved up and down to suit the height of the workpiece – offcuts of which are shown sitting underneath



The board that lies on the table and which the side support is fixed to will almost certainly project forward from the router table, so nip the front corners off for operator comfort



Now, both the fence and table supports must be clamped tightly against the workpiece. Check this with offcuts at both infeed and outfeed sides

THE CUTTERS



There are as many cutters as there are styles of moulding. Firstly, cost – set against likely usage – is something to consider as they can be quite expensive. You can buy ready moulded softwood sections, so your choice of cutters might be to create profiles you cannot buy off the shelf, or for moulding hardwoods if you want real wood rather than painted mouldings. Victorian torus or my favourite, Grecian ogee, are favourites for skirtings, with a smaller version for matching architraves. Dado mouldings come in various different styles but are effectively like a large edge moulding, usually with a large central bead. A picture rail isn't necessary these days,

but can be added to give an authentic period look that can be used with paint and wallpaper to give a visual break high up the wall. Likewise, you can create wall frames to create a panel effect. It isn't usual to make wooden cornice except in very large undertakings for bigger period properties. **Left to right: Biscuit slotter for two-part skirting, small Grecian ogee, large Grecian ogee, modern torus, multi-profile, multi-mould, decorative bead, linenfold, and classical cornice cutters**

MAKING IT...



Skirtings can be almost any height, but in modern rooms are anything up to 200mm. And, without exception, the lower portion is a flat board, so we can make that separately with solid timber or MDF – which can be painted or veneered, the latter for a hardwood timber finish to your room furniture



Fit the desired cutter and a breakthrough subfence, if necessary, making a slot to accommodate a bearing if fitted. With the subfence forward of the cutter, switch on and push the fence backwards and machine through until the correct amount of cutter projects for the first pass. Switch off and tighten the fence knobs



Fit the tunnel correctly so it clamps the workpiece tightly. Do a test piece that is long enough to go right through the tunnel, as you will need to pull it from the outfeed end. Some effort is required, but the tunnel plus the subfence will have prevented chatter and tearing. You still need extraction behind the fence or the chippings will not clear at all. Repeat the cut on all required stock



Move the fence back for the second and hopefully final pass. Do a test cut without the tunnel in place, just for the first 50mm or so, and check the result. If the cut depth is correct, refit the tunnel



Now machine again at this setting and you should get smooth, well-formed mouldings without machining defects



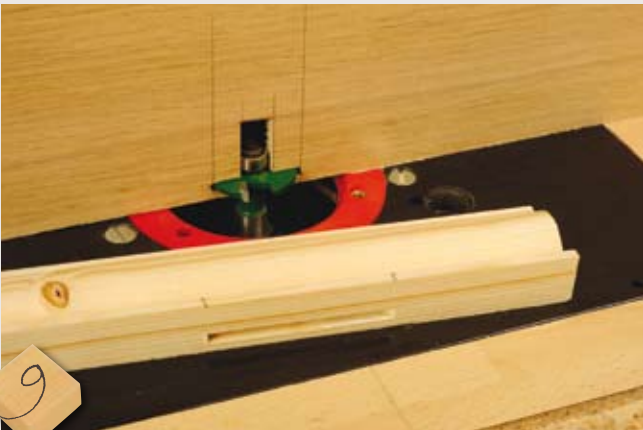
6 However, it can happen that workpieces want to twist where part of the face has been machined away. The way to counteract this is to use a very small support strip, which you can fix to the subfence and table with double-sided tape



7 A dado moulding has two corners missing, so it will want to turn over even more. This time, two support strips do the trick



8 This cornice mould has a limited amount of surface depth missing after moulding. In this case, two strips of veneer are taped together to give anti-chatter support



9 To fit a skirting mould to the flat section, you can cut the sections to length, and then mark and cut the biscuit slots on the router table. A breakthrough fence with lines showing the extent of the slot, plus two marks for each slot 65mm apart on the moulding are needed. Swing the workpiece onto the cutter so the first fence and workpiece marks align, push along to the second set of marks, and swing the workpiece away. It is a very quick, easy operation but ensure the slots don't cut right through the moulding profile



10 I usually cut the lower section length with a square joint on internal corners and mitres on external corners, and then make the biscuit slots. The upper moulded section has both internal and external mitres, of course. And there we are – mouldings, how to cut them, and how to attach skirting board mouldings

Nothing new under the sun

The traditional mouldings we commonly use today are derived from various influences in the past. They have appeared, not just on furniture, but also in architecture and interiors. Influences from diverse periods such as the Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Medieval epochs, can be seen in many places. I find it fascinating to study the mouldings and detail in historic buildings, and even modern ones, that seek to copy those earlier architectural cues. In particular, Andrea Palladio was a Renaissance writer and architect whose carefully observed reinvention of classical Greek and Roman architecture has been a major influence, which can still be seen in many stately homes and major public buildings today. Many of the moulding profiles we use today, such as Grecian ogee, in fact have their origins between 550-400BC, more than 2000 years ago! ■



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Classical architecture has inspired many mouldings