

DESIGN. CLICK. BUILD

Creating Templates for a Complex Shape



By [David Richards](#) | Jan 14, 2009



Get It All!

UNLIMITED Membership is like taking a master class in woodworking for less than \$10 a month.

[Start Your Free Trial](#)



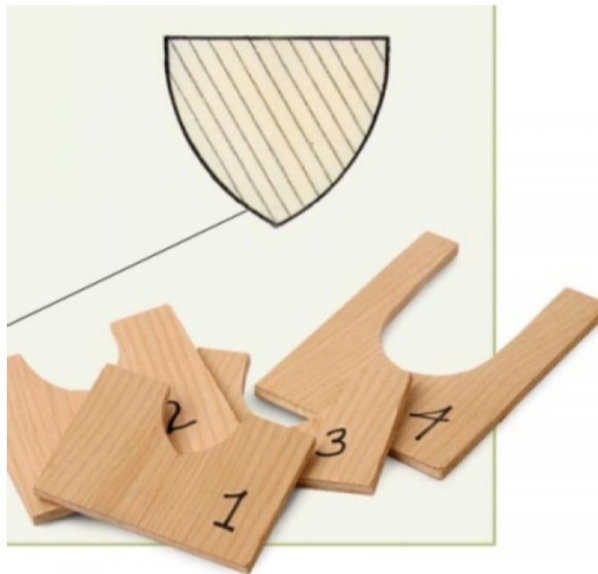
Coffee Table in Mahogany

You have 1 free article remaining. [Start your FREE trial](#)

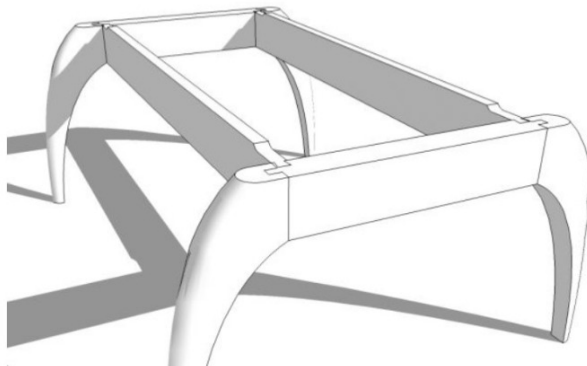
the planer and shaped by hand

After you've worked through creating a complex shape in SketchUp, going to the shop to make it in wood can be another thing entirely. You can, however create profile templates from the SketchUp model to help you shape the wood.

For this example I'm using the leg from Mario Rodriguez's *Coffee Table in Mahogany* in [FWW182](#). I already drew this leg for an earlier [blog post](#) and now I'm working in reverse. I'm going to use a plugin called '[Slicer3.rb](#)' by TIG. Mr. Rodriguez made profile gauges of this sort to allow him to check the shape of this leg as he was working on it.

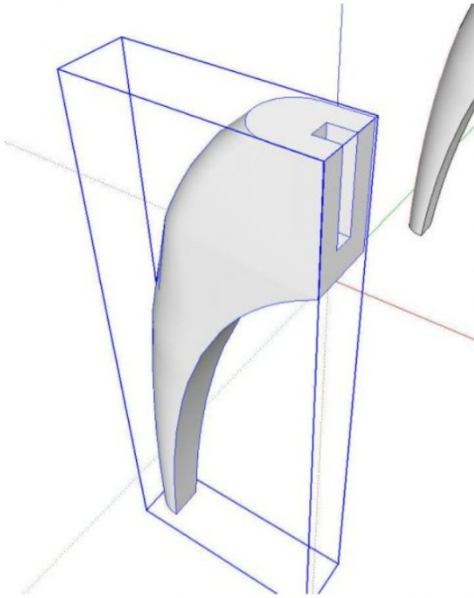


So, here's the base for the table.

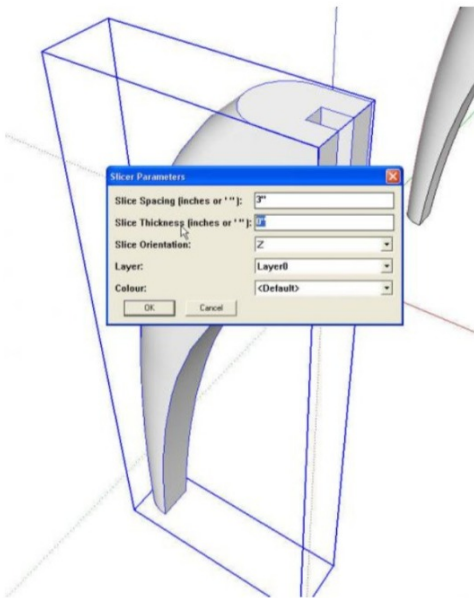




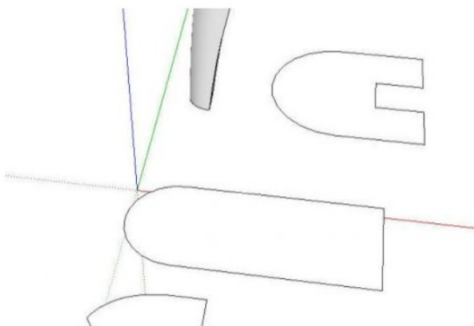
I copied the leg component out away from the model.

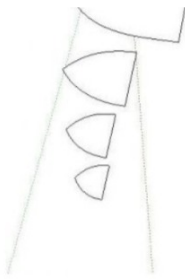


And then I selected Slicer from the Plugins menu. A dialog box pops up which prompts you for slice spacing, slice thickness, slice orientation, layer and color. This leg is 15" tall so I decided on 3" spacing for this example. I set the thickness to 0 and orientation to 'Z'.

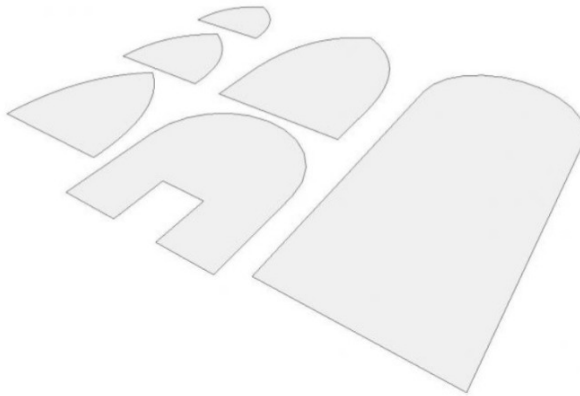


After clicking OK, the plugin asks if the slice spacing should be equalized to which I respond Yes. Then it asks if it should add a number to each slice. I opted for 'No' in this case. Then it asks if the original should remain hidden. I choose 'Yes' and finally it asks if the slices should be flattened. The plugin will put them all on the same plane if desired. I answer 'Yes' which generates a copy of the slices on the ground plane. Before flattening the slices look like this.

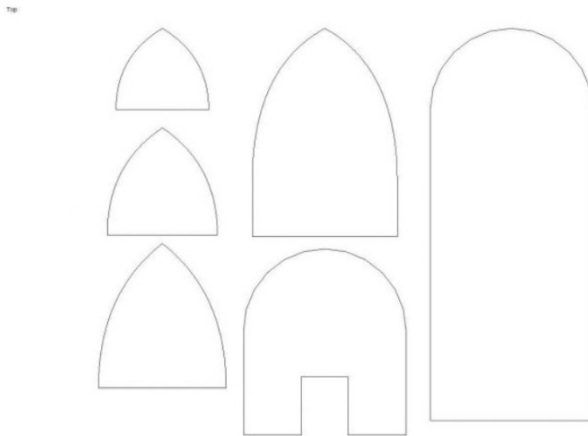




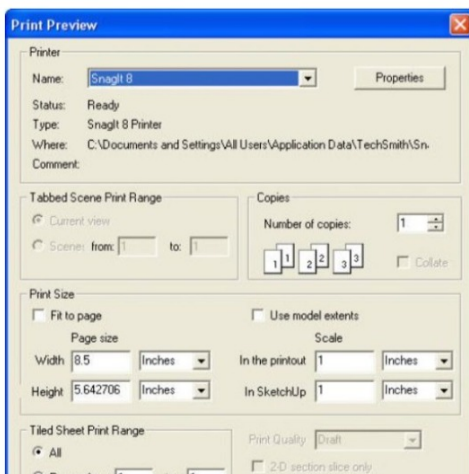
After flattening I rearranged the slices to fit in a smaller area.

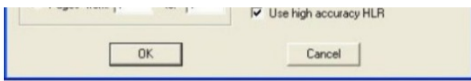


At this point we're ready to set up for printing them as a template. I set Camera to Parallel Projection and set the View to the Top view. I zoomed in to fill the drawing window with the templates.

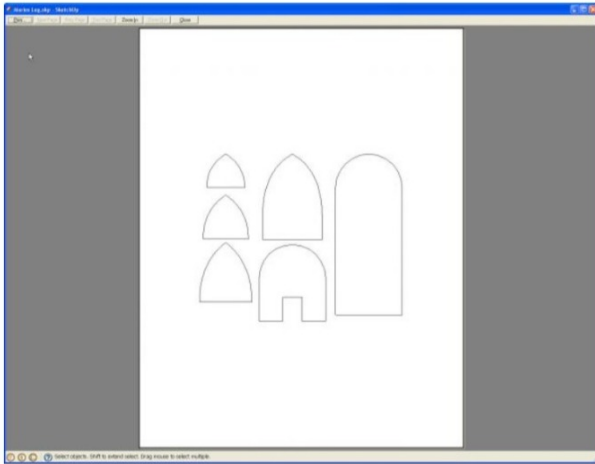


Then go to Print Preview and set things up as shown in the next image. Note that both Fit to Page and Use Model Extents are both unchecked. Make sure that under Scale, In the Printout and In SketchUp show the same values. Also check to see how many pages your template will require. If your templates won't all fit on the same page you might need to do this in several steps zooming in on one or two at a time. In this case there's no trouble though.





Here's the preview image of the printout then. We're ready to print and head to the shop to find some thin template stock.



[Dave](#)

Sign up for eletters today and get the latest techniques and how-to from Fine Woodworking, plus special offers.

Email Address

SIGN UP

This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

[Launch Gallery](#)



View 11 comments

More Design. Click. Build

[View All](#)



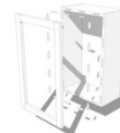
Setting the Angle in SketchUp



The Red Stool in SketchUp



Adding decorative features in SketchUp



Modeling biscuit joints in SketchUp

UP NEXT

Featured Workshop



Queen Anne Side Chair with Dan Faia

With its graceful curves, cabriole legs, and ornamental back splat, a Queen Anne side chair is a bucket list build for many woodworkers. Dan Faia had a very specific Queen...

Featured Projects & Plans



Build a Contemporary Sideboard

Chris Gochnour's sideboard combines usefulness, strength, and beauty in a contemporary case piece

Related Stories



Some projects need more than drawings



Modeling curved and tapered legs in SketchUp



Side chair templates galore



Modeling etched glass in SketchUp

DISCUSSION FORUM

Recent Posts and Replies



[View More](#)

[Create Post](#)

Highlights

Shape Your Skills

when you sign up for our emails

Plus tips, advice, and special offers from *Fine Woodworking*.

Email Address

[Sign Up](#)

This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Shop Talk Live Podcast

[Our biweekly podcast allows editors, authors, and special guests to answer your woodworking questions and connect with the online woodworking community.](#)

Foundations of Woodworking

with Michael Pekovich

All The Tools You Need To Build Your Woodworking Skills

[SIGN UP NOW](#)

[Buy Now](#)

SketchUp for Furniture Design

with Dave Richards

[SIGN UP NOW](#)

Create accurate plans that avoid errors while you build

[Buy Now](#)

Get the latest from *Fine Woodworking Magazine*



[#316-MAR/APR 2025](#)

[Chris Schwarz's Coffin Chest](#)

[Online Extras from FW Issue #316](#)

[Editor's Letter: What is the future of woodworking?](#)



[#315-JAN/FEB 2025](#)

[Get Started in Marquetry](#)

[Online Extras from FW Issue #315](#)

[From the Editor: Asheville underwater](#)



[#314-Tools & Shops 2025](#)

[Pat Moriarty's new shop in an old mill](#)

[Online Extras from FW Issue #314](#)

[Editor's Letter: What is "fine woodworking"?](#)



[#313-NOV/DEC 2024](#)

[Mid-Century-Style Easy Chair](#)

[Online Extras from FW Issue #313](#)

[Keeping Hand-Tool Cabinetmaking Fun](#)



[#312-SEPT/OCT 2024](#)

[Essex County Cupboard](#)

[Online Extras from FW Issue #312](#)

[Editor's Letter: Extra effort is not wasted effort](#)

UNLIMITED membership - Get access to it all

FineWoodworking

Follow



Newsletter

Get woodworking tips, expert advice and special offers in your inbox

This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Membership & Magazine

[Members](#)

[Digital Libraries](#)

[Join Unlimited](#)

[Magazine Subscription](#)

[Magazine Renewal](#)

[Gift a Subscription](#)

[Customer Support](#)

[Privacy Preferences](#)

[About](#) | [Contact](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Careers](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Site Map](#)

[Do not sell or share my information](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [California Privacy Rights](#)

© 2025 Active Interest Media. All rights reserved.

Fine Woodworking receives a commission for items purchased through links on this site, including Amazon Associates and other affiliate advertising programs.

[MORE AIM SITES \[+\]](#)



ACTIVE INTEREST MEDIA