

Rebuilt Desk

You can modify a standard wooden desk obtained at a used furniture shop or yard sale into a good computer desk. This design replaces one set of drawers with the keyboard tray. You cut cable holes into the desk top and add tie mounts for the cables below.

This work can be done with common hand tools and is not much more difficult than simply refinishing the desk.

We have completed the prototype at a cost of about \$40 for materials and \$50 for a used desk. Please e-mail us if you need more details.

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1. Drawings

The drawings above and the photograph are about all you need. The desk you find will not be identical to the one I rebuild so giving exact dimensions is not helpful. One of our other free desks, [The Door and Filing Cabinet Desk](#), uses a drawer that is very similar and you can copy it.

2. Materials

This rebuild desk is made largely of material salvaged from dismantling one set of drawers but does require some additional materials.

1. Plywood:

- 1 -- Fir, .25 inch, A/C, 2x3 feet, -- \$4.00

2. Molding:

- .5 by .75 inch wooden Molding, 26 feet, \$.32/foot -- \$ 10.00

3. Hardware

- 1 pair -- Drawer Glides, heavy duty -- \$18.00 (Must have steel ball bearings)



4. Finish:

- 1 qt. -- Stain -- \$ 5.00
- 1 qt. -- Polyurethane, satin finish -- \$ 10.00

5. Estimate Total Cost \$40.00

This is only an estimate (made in the February 1998). The price may vary in your area.

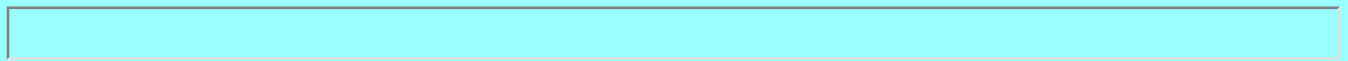
3. Tools

This task was designed to be done using only a few hand tools that a student might have, purchase at reasonable cost, or borrow. These tools are all useful for general around-the-house

maintenance and can fit in a tool box.

1. Electric Drill, 3/8 chuck
2. Bits, 1/8 inch twist
3. Miter Box and hand saw -- under \$20.00 new
4. Tri-Square
5. Screw drivers
6. Coping Saw
7. Hammer and small nail set

You will also need sand paper, paint brushes. etc. It would be nice to have a block plane and a four-in-hand rasp.



4. Fabrication Notes

This is your desk and you can rebuild it to suit your likes and needs.

1. Where to Find a Desk

You can often find old wooden desks at flea market or garage sales. You are look for a good price on a mass produced wooden desk. The top will almost certainly be made of low-value lumber covered with a veneer. This veneer is usually coming off in a few places. The desk having a few of these places are acceptable.

If the desk is made of solid hardwood, it may be of great value. Do not cut up a nice piece even if it is in poor repair. Restorations is possible. Have someone with experience with antiques look at the piece before you start cutting it up.

2. Taking It Apart

Start by unscrewing the top and setting it aside. Choose the left or right hand column of drawers to dismantle. This will depend on your preferences, the place you want to put the desk and the state of repair of the two sides. The large filing cabinet drawer is usually the most valuable.

Knock that side apart but don't beat directly on the wood. Use a block of scrap wood to actuarially hit with the hammer. The glue in old desks usually turns loose with out excessive force.

The drawers may have an interlocking mechanism. Unscrew and remove this device.

3. **Repairing and Modifying the Top**

The top veneer may be raised in humps due to swelling. Carefully cut slits along the grain and remove a small sliver of wood. Work glue under the veneer and clamp it flat, covering it first with plastic and then a block of wood.

Decide if you want [cable holes](#) in your desk. These can be a great help in preventing damage to computer cables where they the top presses against the wall. You can make plugs for the holes or buy grommets for woodworking mail-order houses. The holes are best drilled with a cup saw and mandrel like the ones used to install door knobs.

4. **Modifying the Body**

Cut pieces of scrape wood to fill any exposed mortise holes in the leg. You may want to add a angle bracket to this leg. These will look best if they are let into the wood with a chisel and painted a dark color.

You will probably need cable holes in the inside of the remaining drawer column at the back and perhaps in the bottom.

Cut two pieces of wood and fit them inside the leg area to mount the drawer guides. You may be able to salvage these from the dismantled drawer.

5. **Building the Keyboard Drawer**

The keyboard drawer is a piece of plywood with a wood frame around it. You want it as wide as possible to a low room for both the keyboard and the mouse. The wood from the center drawer will help but a larger piece of plywood is needed and a new front piece.

If you have access to a table or radial arm saw you can easily cut strips of wood to make this shallow drawer. If not you can make one from standard .5 by .75 rectangular molding using a hand miter box.

6. **Monitor Bridge**

You may want to make a monitor bridge from the scrap wood to bring the monitor up to your best eye height.

5. **Finish the Desk**

Hand sand all sharp edges. Spend some time on the front edges of the keyboard drawer so that the edges feel comfortable in you hand. Round the four door corners a little too.

The top is usually simply hand sanded, stained, and covered with two coats of polyurethane varnish. It is easiest to finish the top as a separate piece and install it afterwards.

6. Cabling

[Cabling instructions](#) for making a remote power switch, and cable tie mounts are given in our Web page under 'Freebies'. Make up a good number of cable tie mounts and be ready with mounting screws and tie wraps. The remote power switch is optional but is really needed with this desk.

Determine which leg will be closest to the wall outlet. Screw the remote switch box and surge suppressor to the inside of the top close to that back leg. Route the switch cable up to the monitor shelf.

Install a generous number of cable tie mounts to the back where cables will run. You may also need some at the back of the two upper shelves.

Place each piece of the computer in the Armoire one at a time. Route and connect the cables. Dress the cables neatly up to the back using tie wraps. Do not pull the tie wraps too tightly. The cable should be able to slide back-and-forth a little. Trim off all the tie wrap ends.

You may need a cable tie mount at the back of the keyboard shelf where the cable comes out of the keyboard. Route the mouse cable over to the same mount and secure them together. Place a matching mount on the back directly behind this one.



● Conclusion

Thanks again for using a Woodware Computer Furniture Plans. We very much want to know how you are getting along with your project and would be happy to answer any questions by email.

If you send us a picture of your finished desk, we would be happy to put it on our web page. We need pictures of desk with real people standing beside them.

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