Measuring and Marking

Skills · https://thejoinery.club/docs/skill-measuring-and-marking/

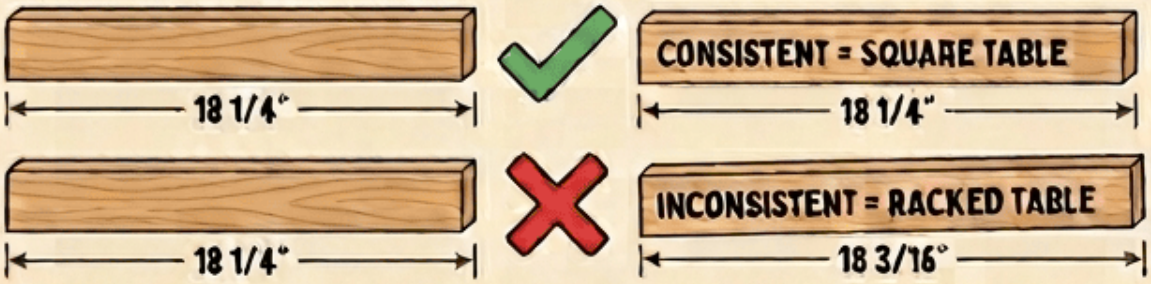
Consistency beats precision. Cut to fit, not to a number.

The most common beginner mistake is chasing the number on the plan instead of the fit in front of you. Parts that should match need to match each other — whether or not they match the drawing.

WOODWORKING MEASUREMENTS: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

1 THE GOLDEN RULE: CONSISTENCY OVER PRECISION

Matching Parts Matter Most



If parts that should be **the same length are consistent,** your project will work, even if they're slightly off the plan's exact dimension.

2 THE EXCEPTION: PRECISION FOR JOINERY



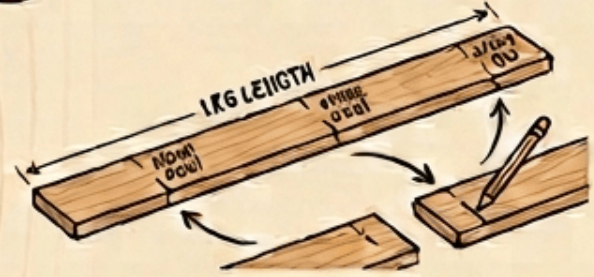
Joints (like tenons into mortises) **must fit exactly. A sloppy joint is a weak joint.** Save your precision for where parts connect.

3 CUT TO FIT, NOT TO A NUMBER



Don't obsess over the tape measure. Use one part to mark the next, or cut them together. This guarantees they are identical and eliminates measuring errors.

4 THE "STORY STICK" TECHNIQUE



Create a **"story stick" from scrap with key dimensions marked.** Use it to transfer measurements repeatedly for perfect consistency without measuring every time.

6 READING DUAL-SCALE TAPE MEASURES



The short version

- **Consistency over precision** — if matching parts are the same length, the project works even when that length is slightly off the plan.
- **The exception is joinery** — a tenon in a mortise has to fit exactly. Spend your precision where parts connect.
- **Cut to fit, not to a number** — use one part to mark the next, or cut them together.
- **Use a story stick** — transfer key dimensions from a piece of scrap instead of re-reading the tape every time.

Where you will use it

Applies from the tool tote onward, and matters most on the side table and the bench. See What to Build Next.

Stuck?

Open office hours run Wednesdays and Saturdays. Bring the project, bring the board, bring the question.

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