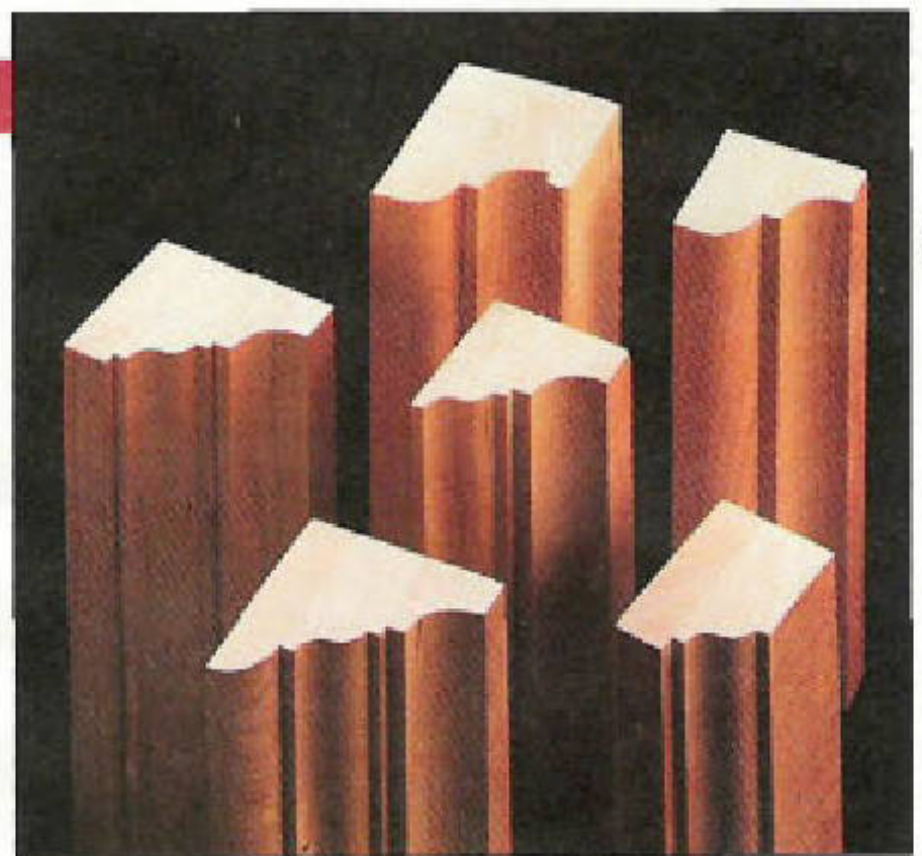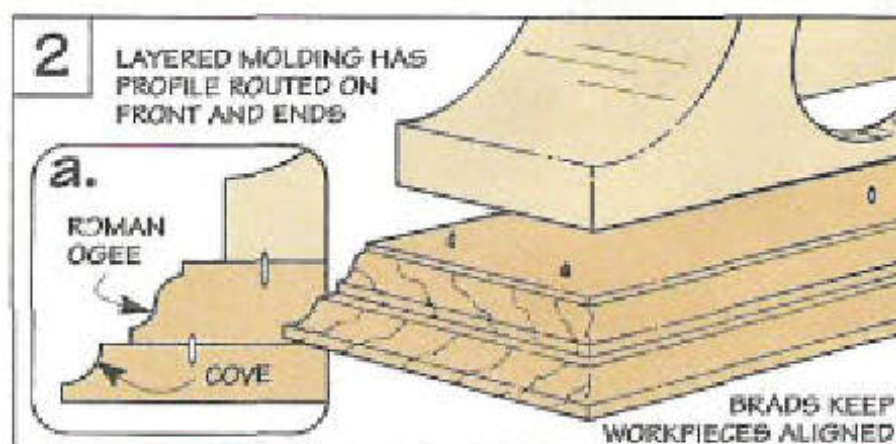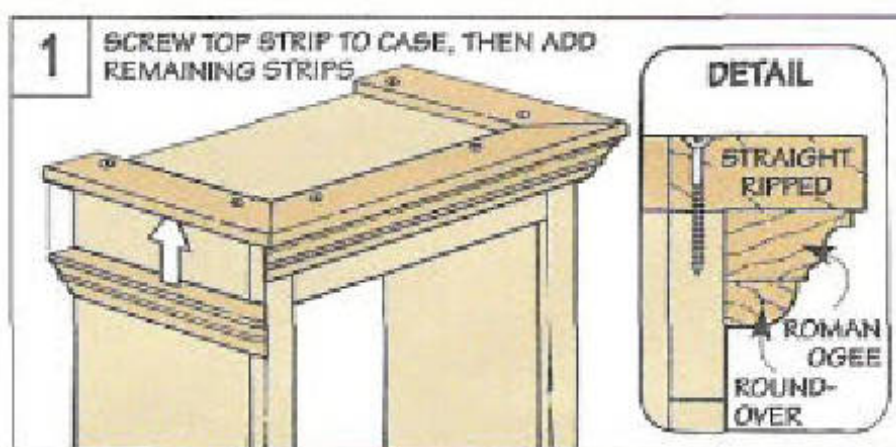# Built-Up Moldings

All it takes to create detailed molding is a router, a handful of bits, and our simple technique.

One of the things that usually catches my eye on a fine piece of furniture is the detail on the molding. But since moldings like this are usually made on industrial shapers and molders, they're expensive and often hard to find.

So I use a simple technique to make these moldings myself. All it takes is a router (or router table) and a handful of ordinary bits.

ADVANTAGES. In addition to being a lot less expensive than manufactured moldings, building your own moldings has another advantage.

You can make them from the same wood you're using for the project you're building. This way, the molding will match the rest of the project perfectly when you apply the finish.
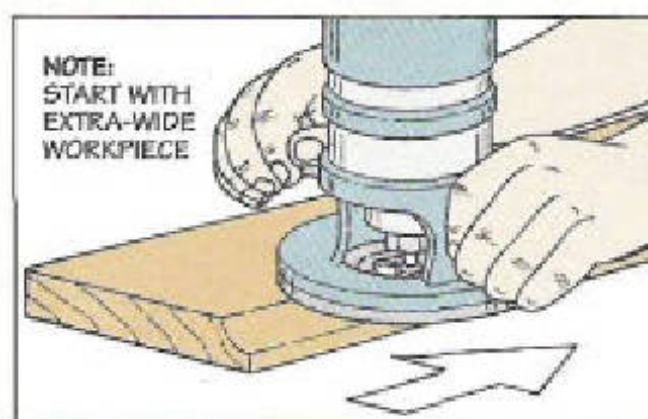
STRIPS & LAYERS

There are two basic ways that you can create these moldings. The technique is similar for both. It's just a matter of "building" them up one piece at a time.

STRIP MOLDING. Strip molding is what I normally apply to the top of casework (such as a large cabinet or grandfather clock), see Fig. 1. I make these by gluing up strips of wood that have a profile routed on one edge. Then the molding is mitered and attached to the cabinet.

To make strip molding, all you have to do is rout the front edge of a board and then rip the strip to width, see box below. (For more on routing profiles, see the article on page 22.)

1 SCREW TOP STRIP TO CASE, THEN ADD REMAINING STRIPS

DETAIL
STRAIGHT RIPPED
ROMAN OGEE ROUND-OVER

2 LAYERED MOLDING HAS PROFILE ROUTED ON FRONT AND ENDS

a.
ROMAN OGEE
COVE
BRADS KEEP WORKPIECES ALIGNED

Step-by-Step

NOTE: START WITH EXTRA-WIDE WORKPIECE

USE PUSH BLOCK WHEN RIPPING NARROW STRIPS

SPRING CLAMP

First: Rout Profile. *For safety, start with an extra-wide workpiece and rout the edge in a left-to-right direction.*
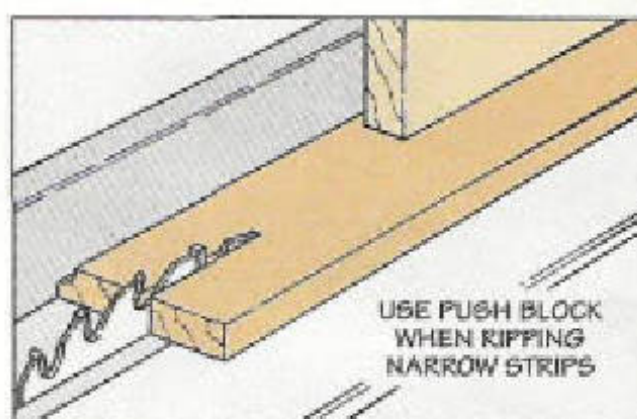
Second: Rip Strip. *With the routed edge against the fence, use a push block to rip the strip to width.*
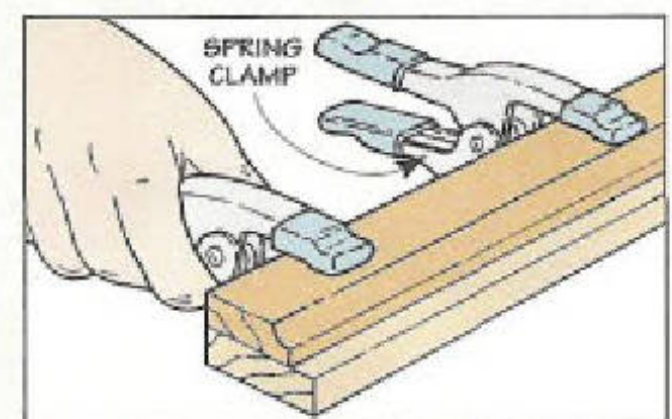
Third: Glue Up Strips. *Now the strips can be glued and clamped together with the back edges flush.*

LAYERED MOLDING. Layered molding is basically a glued-up stack of full-width boards with the profile routed across the front *and* ends of each board, see Fig. 2.

Layered molding is faster to make and easier to install than strip molding because you don't have to deal with mitered corners. All you have to do is cut each layer to finished size and then rout the profile.

Note: When gluing up layered molding, the pieces can become quite slippery and slide around. To keep the strips aligned during glue up, refer to the margin tip below right.
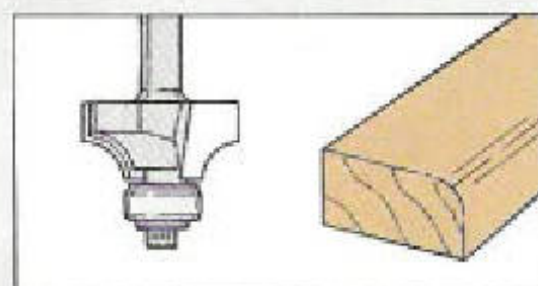
The only disadvantage I've found to layered molding is the exposed end grain. But by sanding the ends several grits finer than the rest of the project, it's less noticeable.

Design Note: As a general rule of thumb, I limit the width of layered moldings to workpieces around 5" or less. Anything wider has a tendency to warp with the changes in humidity.

Building Blocks

Round-Over. *Round-overs come in many sizes. They look best on the top of a molding.*

Cove. *Coves also come in a variety of sizes. It's the profile I use most often on the bottom.*

Roman Ogee. *A Roman ogee looks good in the middle or at the bottom of a molding.*

Straight Cut. *One of the simplest ways to top off a profile is to add a straight-ripped edge.*
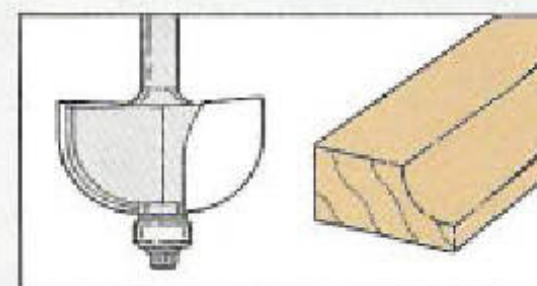
PROFILES

One of the things I like best about built-up moldings is you don't need a whole cabinet full of router bits. For the six profiles shown below, I only had to use four common router bits: a cove bit, a Roman ogee bit, and two round-over bits, see box in upper right-hand corner.
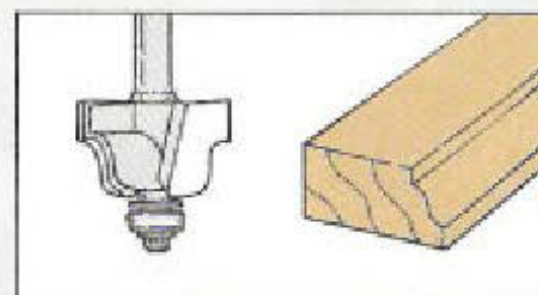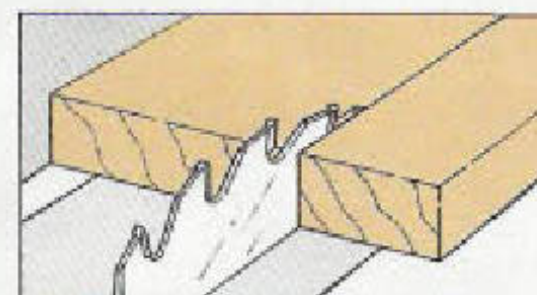
As you're making profiles, try experimenting by rearranging them in a different order to change the overall appearance of the molding. Or change the thickness of the pieces that make up the molding. You can vary the number of strips or layers, or even the bits you use to rout the profiles. The possibilities are endless.

Double Profiles

3⁄4" — 1⁄2" ROUND-OVER
3⁄4" — 1⁄2" COVE

3⁄4" — 1⁄4" ROMAN OGEE
3⁄4" — 1⁄2" COVE

STRAIGHT RIPPED
1⁄2" —
3⁄4" — 1⁄4" ROMAN OGEE
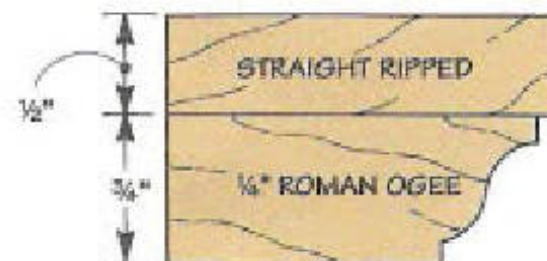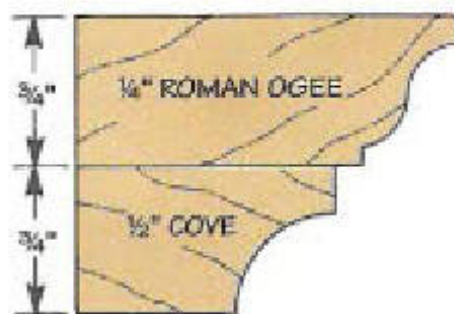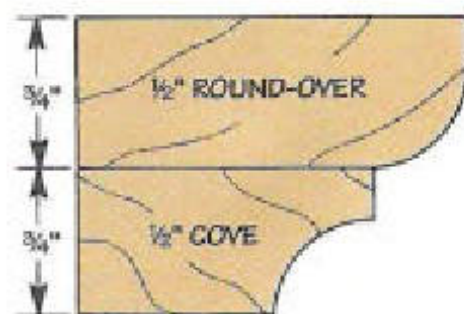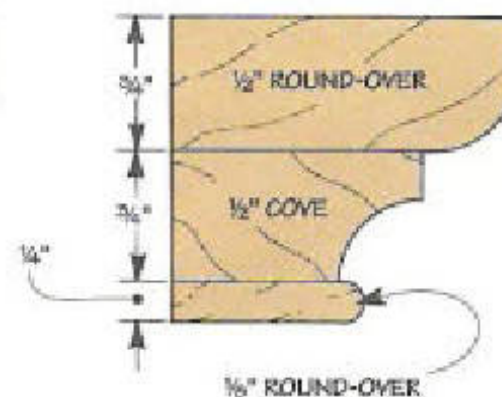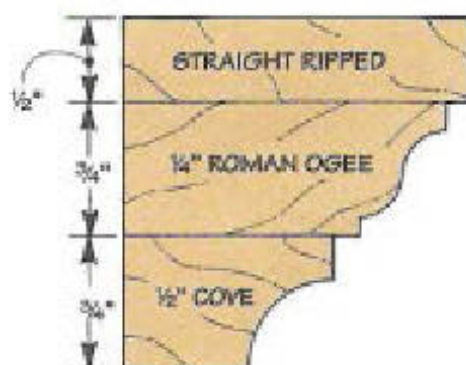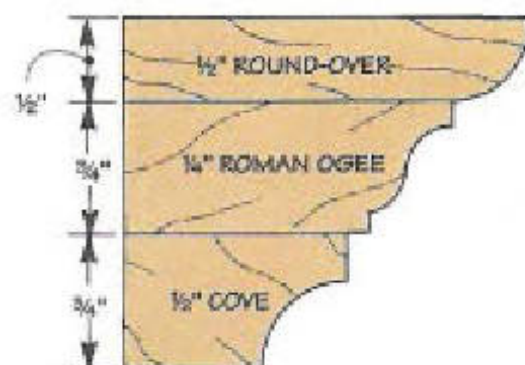
To keep layers aligned during glue up, nail a few wire brads in one of the layers. Then snip off the heads of the brads.

Triple Profiles

1⁄2" — 1⁄2" ROUND-OVER
3⁄4" — 1⁄4" ROMAN OGEE
3⁄4" — 1⁄2" COVE

STRAIGHT RIPPED
1⁄2" —
3⁄4" — 1⁄4" ROMAN OGEE
3⁄4" — 1⁄2" COVE

3⁄4" — 1⁄2" ROUND-OVER
3⁄4" — 1⁄2" COVE
1⁄4" — 1⁄8" ROUND-OVER