

# How to Veneer a Sunburst

Dazzling tabletop,  
step by step

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Veneer can replicate solid lumber, but if you use it only for that purpose, you are missing out on some dazzling design opportunities. One of the most spectacular of these is to arrange consecutive sheets around a center point. Known as a sunburst, this pattern is ideal for circular tabletops. It creates interesting concentric patterns, and the tapered shape of each segment draws the eye from the perimeter toward the center.

If you try this with solid stock it will fail, either from radial splitting caused by shrinkage or from cupping caused by expansion. I'll show you how to work with veneer to create a beautiful sunburst tabletop, from laying out the pattern to cutting and installing the segments. I'll also show how to install a simple border that frames the sunburst. But I don't stop there. For an ornate scalloped edging that will take a sunburst to another level, turn to Master Class (pp. 88-92).

Crotch veneers create stunning effects and are the traditional choice for sunbursts, but plain sliced veneers also yield interesting results. Cross-grain figure works, such as curly and fiddleback, but bird's-eye and burl tend to understate the sunburst effect. For this tabletop, I chose a blistered cherry veneer with an African satinwood border.

## Choose an even number of segments

An accurate layout is critical to success. The first step is to decide upon the number of segments in the sunburst pattern. This may be dictated by the size of the veneer sheets you have. The key to good results is to assemble the pattern in small sections first and then join those sections. In this 12-piece sunburst, the