Iron on Edge Banding Application

Tools and Supplies

Working with iron on edge banding isn't hard and doesn't require any specialized tools or skills. Most of the tools you will need can be found in almost any home. You will want a standard household iron, an edge trimmer or standard utility knife or razor knife. We suggest you dedicate an iron for this purpose only as you may get some glue "squeeze out" when applying the edgeband. A small travel size iron offers better control than a standard iron.

Getting Started

Whether the edges to be covered are MDF, plywood or particle board, be sure that any deep saw marks are smoothed and any voids filled. Your iron should be set on a medium heat setting. A high setting is not necessary because the hot melt adhesive on the edge banding has a low melting point. The possibility of scorching the surface of the edge banding is also significantly reduced at this lower setting. Cut your edge banding about ½" longer than the edge to be banded. Also note that rolled edge banding has finger joints, or splice joints, typically every 4'-6'. A little pre-planning will help you to work around these joints if they are too noticeable or happen to be in a high visibility area. Starting at one end, position the edgeband with one hand and apply heat and downward pressure with the iron. We recommend doing 4" to 6" first and allow it to cool which will take approximately a minute. Now that the adhesive has cooled you have effectively "anchored" the strip which will make it easier to apply the remainder of the strip. Now you can move the iron steadily along the length of the edge while applying downward pressure with the iron. Normally you will exert enough pressure with the iron but you should check to make sure all the surface area is firmly sealed down. If you discover loose spots or edges that may want to curl up then you can re-heat the area and immediately apply pressure with a wood block, veneer scraper or flat edge tool to ensure a proper bond. Always apply the edgeband on the most visible surfaces last. By applying the most visible surfaces last you will ensure that any adjoining edges that butt up to this edge will be covered or over-lapped and therefore will be less visible.

Trimming the Edge Banding

Edge banding can be trimmed with a sharp utility or razor knife, a sharp wood chisel or a commercially available flush trimming tool. Good results can be achieved with any of these methods. To trim the excess length from a strip of wood edge banding simply cut with a utility knife or razor knife back to the panel end. Cutting across the wood grain like this is best accomplished using 2 or 3 scoring cuts instead of cutting through with one heavy stroke. This will help avoid any grain tear out, especially with coarse grained woods like red oak, hickory,

white ash and some others. For trimming the excess from the edges use a sharp knife edge or sharp chisel held at a slight angle, not perpendicular, to avoid gouging or scarring the adjoining surface. For best control use short strokes with your knife or chisel blade. Don’t be concerned if you leave a little excess as this will be taken care of in the final step. If you are using a flush trimming tool press the edge of the tool firmly against the face of your panel and slide it along the edge to trim the excess edge banding. Working with the grain direction instead of against the grain will produce a cleaner cut with minimal grain tear out.

Finishing Up

To give your project that finishing touch use a sanding block with 120 grit abrasive. Sand any excess edge banding with this block skewed at an angle to produce a slight beveled edge. Run your fingers along this edge to check for any sharp edges or loose grain that could snag and tear out. Allow 24 hours before staining or finishing.