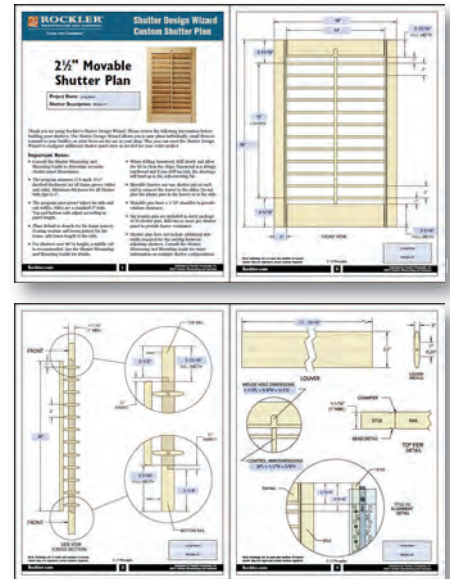


# A Complete Shutter System

By Chris Marshall



*A few mouse clicks on Rockler's website creates a complete set of printable plans for your shutter project. The Shutter Design Wizard is quick, accurate and, best of all, free.*

## The Shutter Design Wizard

Here's a big reason to like this system: there's almost no desk time required for planning or drawing your shutter project, thanks to the free Shutter Design Wizard program Rockler offers on its website ([Rockler.com/shutter](http://Rockler.com/shutter)). Once you've decided between 1/4"-, 2/2"- or 3/2"-width louvers (the only three options), and whether you want the louver slats to be operable or fixed, a guide provides mounting considerations to help you figure out the final width and length you'll want your shutters to be. With a couple more mouse-clicks, you enter these two dimensions into the Design Wizard and hit "Submit." That's where the magic happens: instantly, you receive a full set of printable plans for your project that include drawings (although not to scale), a cutting list, a list of hardware with pricing and another list of optional router bits and jigs if you decide to build shutters completely from scratch. I chose this approach and built mine from cherry so I could try out Rockler's special louver-cutting and shutter beading router bits. The cutting list assumes dowel or loose tenon joints on the stile and rails, but, like me, you can adjust them for standard mortise-and-tenon joinery if you wish. The company offers premilled

*Build movable or fixed-louver window shutters in any size using an innovative online Design Wizard and Jig-It drilling jigs. Our field editor gave the system a try — and a big "thumbs-up."*

When Rob Johnstone called and told me to test a brand-new system for making window shutters, I had never built a shutter before. It made me the perfect "guinea pig" to give the system a whirl. About two days after receiving the box of templates, self-centering drill bits and hardware for

making the 2 1/2" movable louver style shown here, my two shutters were done. It's that quick. If you've thought shutters would be a nice addition to your home but have shied away from the effort involved — or the expense of having them custom-made — this novel approach is good reason to add them to your project list this summer.

lengths of basswood louver slats and sells basswood rail and stile stock if you'd prefer to skip the louver routing process.

You'll also need to buy a template kit specific to the louver style you've chosen. It includes two jigs: a long one for drilling the stiles to accept plastic louver pins and metal clips that attach the louvers and control arms; and a shorter jig with adjustable stops that allows you to drill corresponding pin holes in the ends of the louvers. Three sizes of self-centering drill bits also come with the kit. Pick the one you want and align and clamp your shutter stiles together in the stile jig. The templates are clearly marked, sturdily made and make shutter construction essentially a drilling operation. (Note: for 1¼" fixed-louver shutters, the stile jig is a template for routing short slots that house the ends of the louvers instead of using the pins.) The jig kits sell for \$119.99 or \$49.99.

### Scratch-built Routing Option

I milled my cherry louvers from resawn stock, so I ordered Rockler's louver-profiling router bit and a special beading bit for detailing the edges and ends of my stiles and rails. I was impressed with how cleanly the louver cutter shaped the cherry; I expected some tearout and burning, but the bit produced no defects. These bits enable you to make shutters from any wood species you like, to match trimwork and flooring — a nice advantage.

### Final Thoughts

Rockler suggests drilling at a slow speed to help clear the chips, and it's good advice. The bits did clog now and then. During assembly, installing a series of tiny metal clips to attach a control arm to each louver required patience, but the clips hold securely once pressed into their tiny holes. All in all, it proved to be a quick, fun project. The custom plans coupled with simple jigs deliver great results. I wouldn't hesitate to build more sets of shutters for my home — this new approach makes it easy. Learn more by watching short videos at [Rockler.com](http://Rockler.com).

*Chris Marshall is Woodworker's Journal's field editor.*



*An optional louver-shaping router bit can mill louver blanks from any wood species at the router table. Our author was pleased with its performance. Premilled basswood louver blanks and rail and stile stock are also available if you'd prefer not to build shutters completely from scratch.*



*Louvers mount on the shutter stiles with plastic pins. Two sturdy jigs that come with the kit enable accurate hole drilling in the stiles and louvers with three sizes of self-centering bits.*



*Movable louvers, as shown here, swivel on single pairs of pins inside the shutter frame. A wood control arm and metal clips (not shown) move them all in unison. Fixed-louver options either use two pins per end or are housed in routed mortises instead. The author found that a long strip of tape was convenient for holding the louvers in position during dry-fit and assembly.*