



Wood'n It Be Nice

*the elegance
of wood*

Making Ring Bars for Jewelry Boxes

There are several reasons you don't see lots of ring bars in hand made, custom jewelry boxes. The only realistic option, if you want flexibility, is to make your own. I've seen several techniques, and tried most. None really worked out well in my mind.

Yes, there are commercial bars you can purchase. But if you want the ring bars to match the material used to line the rest of the box, things get even uglier. Rockler sells some premade (and in my opinion overpriced) ring bars in several colors. But if you want the lining and ring bar materials to match, you need to purchase the material, PSA backed, from Rockler as well. That material is only sold in small sheets, so there is typically lots of waste, and again, lots of cost. Woodcraft sells a much better quality PSA backed velvet material from Hafele. It too is expensive, but is on a larger roll and typically results in less waste. But, Woodcraft doesn't sell ring bars. So again, how do you get ring bars that match the lining material, and not go broke?

Oh, and you can buy commercial ring bar assemblies from jewelry store supply stores. And in the manner of Henry Ford, you can choose between black and white. Oh well.

On the following pages, I will explain the technique I have started using. Yes, like most other techniques it is messy and time consuming. But I think the results are more than acceptable, and, I can use exactly the same material for both lining the box and for making the bars, so everything matches.



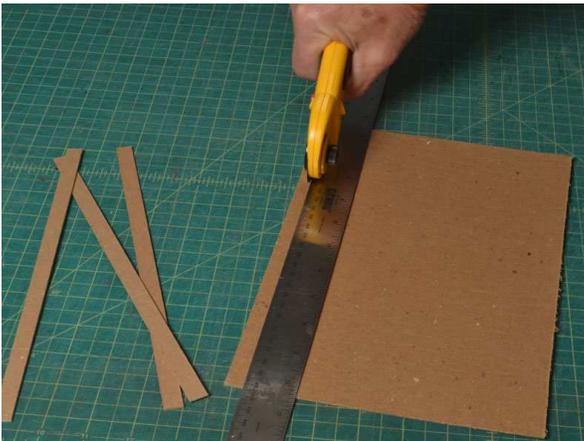


The basic materials for making your ring bars are:

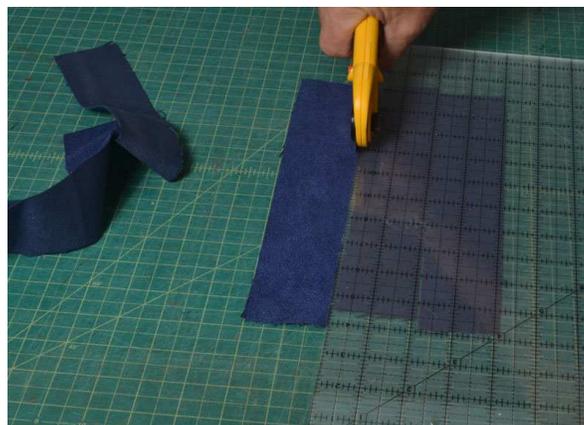
- ◆ 1/2" Super Firm closed cell weather stripping with adhesive back.
- ◆ An assembly jig that you make
- ◆ 3M Super 77 spray adhesive
- ◆ Your selected lining material. I use heavy duty micro-sue upholstery fabric.



I built this fixture for making the bars. The grooves are 1/2" wide x 7/16" deep. I have the spaced 2" on center. They could be farther apart if desired. The fixture is about 10" wide. This allows me to easily make bars up to 8" long when trimmed, which suits my needs. The pen lines are drawn 3/4" from each edge of the groove. These will be used to located the fabric when the bars are being made. My fixture can accommodate several bars, but I found it practical to limit myself to between 1 and 3 at a time.



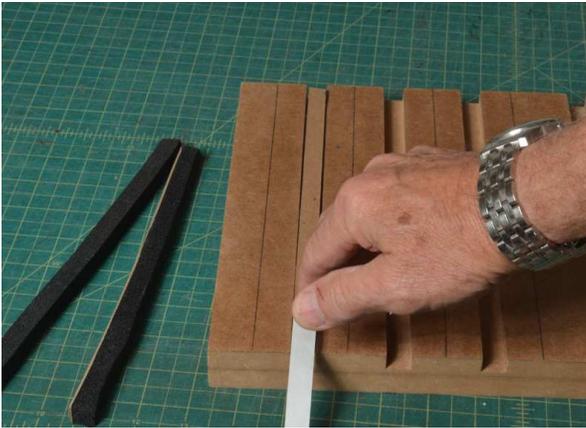
I cut strips of single ply chip board to 7/16" wide by 10" long. (The chipboard is for backing framed pictures and can be found at most hobby and art stores). If you are going to do much cutting of this type, fabric, paper, cardboard, etc., it pays to pick up a self-healing cutting board as I am using. Watch for 50% off sales at JoAnn Fabrics or other similar stores.



Cut strips of fabric to 2" wide x 10" long. The 2" dimension is important. Don't go any wider and no more than 1/8" narrower, or you may have problems in the glue up step. The lining fabric I use is also from JoAnn Fabric. It is a suede like upholstery fabric, which is heavy duty, and has a luxurious appearance and feel. Note that it is also expensive, but watch for the 40—50% off coupons. The fabric is 54" wide, so you don't need a lot to take care of several good sized boxes.



Now cut the weather stripping in to 8" - 10" long strips. You will immediately notice that they retain the curl, so move on to the next step to straighten them out.



Lay a piece of weather stripping in one of the grooves. Then take one of the 7/16" strips of chipboard and slowly remove the adhesive backing paper on the weather stripping, and affix the chipboard backer strip along the center of the foam. This straightens the foam, making it easy to handle. It also serves as a glue surface for the fabric when it gets wrapped around the foam.



Here are some examples of chipboard backed foam, ready for fabric attachment.



Now starts the messy part of this process! Have plenty of newspaper, and it would also be prudent to have adhesive remover, Goof Off, or mineral spirits, primarily to clean your fingers.

Put down some newspaper, and a couple of fabric strips, good side down. Apply an even coat of Super 77 adhesive to the fabric. CAUTION: this adhesive tends to "spit". Any large droplets will soak through the fabric, and leave a dark stain. Keep the nozzle clean and wipe it off with a rag the minute it starts to spit.



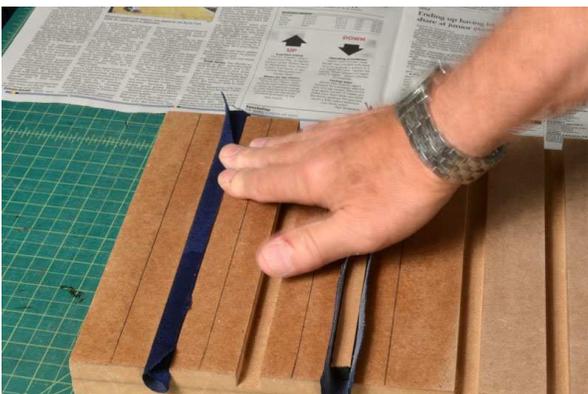
Lay a strip of the fabric centered on the groove. (This is where the lines you drew are handy). Make sure the adhesive has become tacky. Don't rush it. Then take a strip of foam and with the chipboard side up, push it down into the groove, dragging the fabric along with it.



You should end up with a relatively even amount fabric upright on each side of the foam.



Now roll the fabric over and on to the chipboard backing strip on the foam. Roll on side over completely, then roll the other side over. If your strip was cut to 2" you should not have any overhanging fabric, but should have a solid overlap that will adhere nicely.

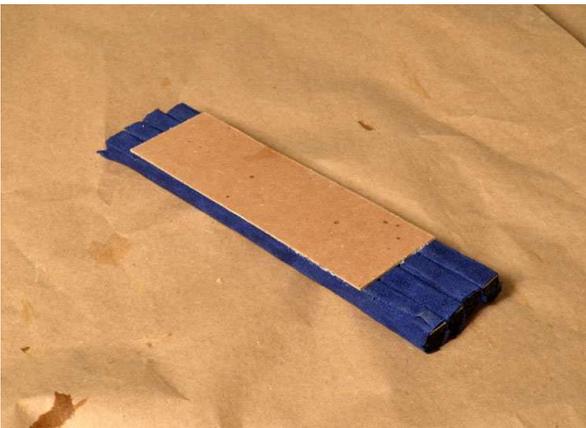




Here are some completed, but untrimmed bars. It will be helpful to trim back the ends as needed so as to have square ends in which the foam and fabric are flush with each other.



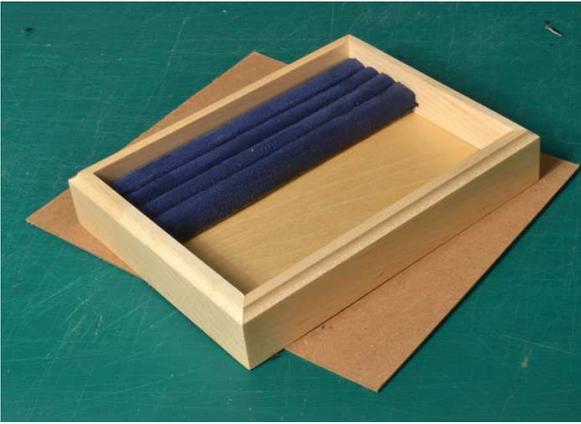
When you decide where you are going to want ring bars in your box, measure and cut a piece of chipboard about 1/8" narrower than, and just as long as the area they are going to be set. In this example, they will take up about half of an open tray in the jewelry box.



Next, glue the appropriate number of bars to the chipboard you just cut. While you can use spray adhesive again, I prefer to use Loctite G02. It is a non water-based adhesive with quick tack, and is a lot less messy at this point than spray. If you didn't trim the ends of the bars before, make sure you have solid, fabric wrapped foam hanging over each end of the backer chipboard.



Using a utility knife, carefully trim the bars back even with the chipboard at each end. Be sure to keep the cut perpendicular. Since the assembly is over 1/2" thick, I find it advantageous to use extra long blades in the knife. These can usually be found wherever tools for body shop work are found. The extra lengths prevents potential interference of the knife body with the ring bar assembly.



The ring bar put in its place. I usually want to add a solid wood cross piece to frame and constrain the bars so they don't get pushed loose over time.



A cross-sectional view of a complete ring bar assembly.



An example of a finished box with ring bars along the right hand side. So nice to be able to match the fabric throughout the piece.