



CARVEWRIGHT™

WOODWORKING SYSTEM



TIPS & TRICKS

December 2007

Handy Tips for Everyone!

by Michael Tyler of www.CarveBuddy.com



There's going to be a lot of happy folks joining the CarveWright User community after Christmas! Big, hefty CarveWright packages under the tree this year for a lot of lucky woodworkers!

This month's Tips and Tricks will focus on a some basic things that will come in mighty handy for our "new-carvers".

So, I'm going to cover a short potpourri of beginner's tips, and mention a couple pointers that might be useful for a few of us seasoned CarveWright users as well. Let's get started...

Your manual that came with your machine, and the HelpFile that is included with your Designer software, have a lot of great information and if the instructions are followed closely, you and your machine will be happy. Nevertheless, some important items are sometimes unintentionally overlooked.

One of the most important items (and commonly missed) is that the projects you carve need to be "Under The Rollers". To do that, you need to make your actual project board 7" longer than the "fake" board that appears in the Designer software when you are laying out a project.

Here's some basic tips to help you avoid setup issues for any of your projects...

- 1) Make absolutely sure that your real board size is **AT LEAST 7"** longer than the "virtual" or "fake" board in Designer.
- 2) If a project has a cutpath very close to the ends of the "virtual" Designer board, you will get a false error message, warning you about possible interference with the aux roller and asking if you want to Manual Jig or Auto-Jig when you are uploading the project to your memory card. You should click "Ignore" and **DO NOT** select Manual nor Auto-Jig. A **minimum 1/2"** clearance on the top of the board is the only area you need clearance on for a cutpath. You do **NOT** need any cutpath clearance at the bottom or sides of the board at all. The bit cannot hit anything at those edges when performing a cutout, so you are perfectly safe. This assumes your actual board will have the extra 7" length and that you select "center on length" when you do the project setup at the machine. Here's what the "false error" message looks like...

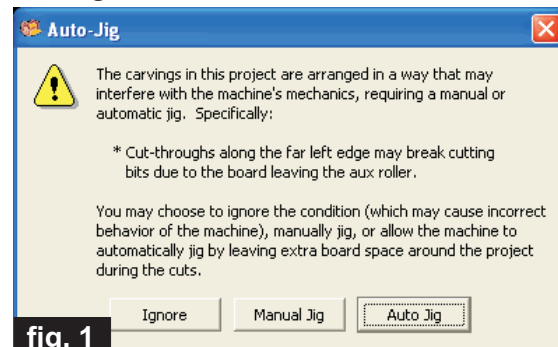


fig. 1

Please visit the manufacturer's website for more information about the CarveWright machines and see the new Pattern Depot at: www.carvewright.com

For More Patterns you can add to your Designer software library, please visit: www.carvebuddy.com

SETUP Tips (cont.)

3) When setting up the project at the machine make certain that you stay under rollers, the project should be Centered On Length, do **not** cut board to size, and if you ever see an option on your LCD display for "fit project" or "resize to fit" (or anything like that) select "NO". Just remember, you don't normally want the machine to resize your projects in any way at all, nor do you want the machine to cut your board to size. Avoid those options, and you'll be fine.

Additional 'little trick' you can use if you want: Of course, **YOU ALWAYS WANT YOUR PROJECTS TO STAY UNDER THE ROLLERS**, but...here's a little 'trick' to avoid ANY resizing option at all...that is to LIE to the machine when you are at the choice of "Stay Under Rollers" .

Because you already know that your project board will always be long enough to stay under the rollers automatically, you can LIE to the machine and tell it NOT to stay under the rollers (you and I know that it really WILL , since your board is at least 7" longer than the actual project to be carved- right?). By telling the machine to "not" stay under rollers, the option for resizing will not occur and you cannot accidentally tell the machine to resize your project. (Again, the project REALLY WILL stay under the rollers as long as your board is at least 7" longer than the actual project carve. Naturally, you will still want to select the "center on length", don't cut the board to size, etc.. during the setup.

NOTE: CarveWright recommends 3/4" clearance at the top of the board for any cutpath, but I've found 1/2" clearance will miss the aux brass roller alright when doing a cutpath, no problem. Use your own judgement!

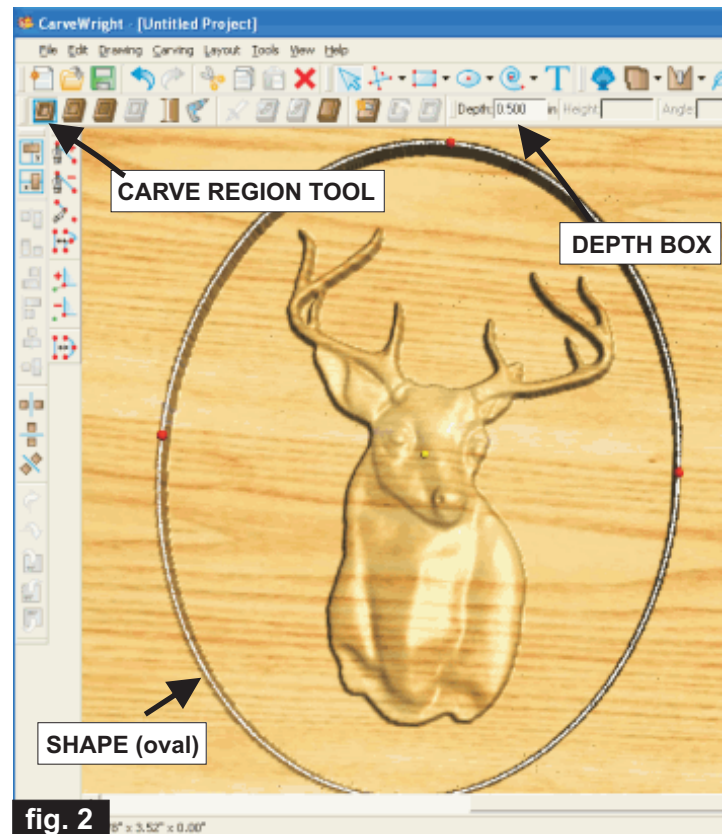
If you follow the setup instructions outlined above, you can be assured of success when carving/cutting your projects. Some may ask, "If I make my board 7" longer than my Designer board, won't that be wasting some wood?". Yes, 3.5" on each end of the board is not used and can go into your recycle pile. There are other methods of setting up a project that eliminate the 3.5" "cutoff" scraps, but that's a more advanced topic. Right now, especially if you are just starting out, it's better to deal with a couple scraps than risk spoiling a project!

How to Make a Carving Appear "Raised" Above the Board's Surface:

This is a fairly common inquiry from new-carvers. It's very easy to accomplish. You simply assign a Carve Region to any shape (rectangle, square, oval, circle or irregular shape, even a pattern!) onto the board surface and place your "design elements" within that region. The region is carved out around your elements and makes them appear to rise above the board surface.

1) Draw your shape and, while your shape is still selected, click the Carve Region Tool. It will create a recessed carve region automatically at .25" deep. You can manually change the Depth just by typing in a new value in the "Depth" box on your screen.

2) Drag a pattern from the Pattern List (click on the Blue Shell icon or select View/Toolbars/Pattern List from the Designer menu to view the Pattern List) into the Carve Region.



3) Now set the Depth of the pattern to at least the same as what you set for the Region. Experiment with both Depth values until you achieve the 'look' you desire. You can create this same effect with text as well.

How to Restore Details After Enlarging a Pattern:

I think we've all noticed that some patterns tend to lose some of their detail at some point after enlarging them on the board. To restore detail, simply increase both the Depth and the Height settings and you will start to see your details come back! **HINT:** If a pattern already has a "deep depth" to begin with, reduce the Depth to a small amount first, before enlarging, then increase the Depth and Height after you've enlarged the pattern in order to bring back the detail again.

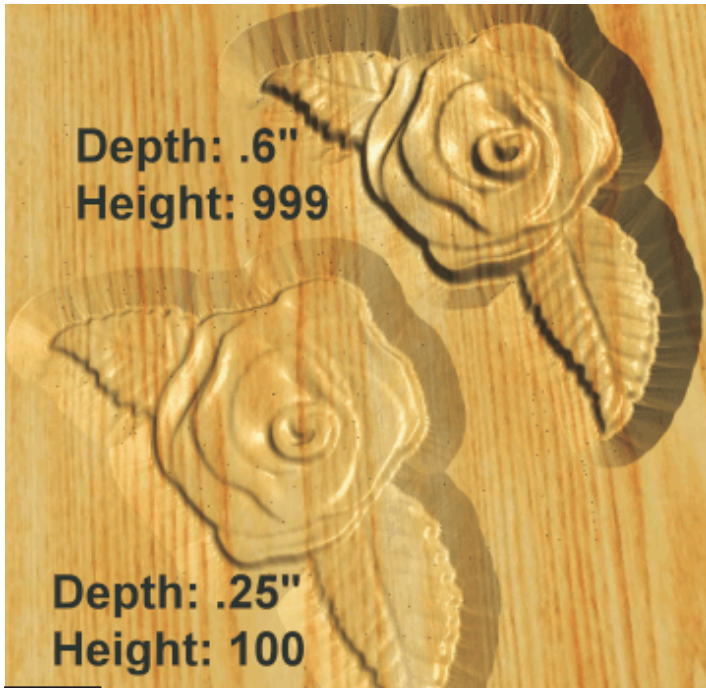


fig. 3

Backing-Up Your Pattern Favorites:

It's always a good idea to back-up important files so that you can recover from "unexpected events" concerning your computer. All new patterns that you create or purchase are put in a Master File called "favorites.mpn". This file is located in one of two locations on your hard drive. Either it is located at "C:\Documents and Settings\yourname\" or at "C:\Documents and Settings\yourname\CarveWright\".

Just copy the "favorites.mpn" file to a CD or to a thumb-drive and keep it in a safe place in case you ever need to restore your favorites.mpn "Master File". (To restore it, just copy that file (from your backup CD or thumb-drive) to the original location as outlined above, after your computer is fixed!

Getting the Best Carve Quality:

Using the "Bit Optimization" feature in Designer can make a dramatic difference in how well your carvings turn out. Most often, choosing "Bit Optimization - BEST" will yield cleaner, more defined detail in your carving projects. To enable bit optimization, select each pattern on the board, then select "Bit Optimization" from the "Carving" menu (or right-click your pattern to access the context menu) and then select the desired optimization level from the "Bit Optimization" sub-menu (i.e., select "BEST").

After you have optimized the bit setting to "BEST" on all your design elements, save your project (as an .mpc file) so you don't have to do it over again. Then, when you upload your project to the memory card, be sure to select the "BEST" setting there as well. You'll be assured of the best possible detail by following these important steps.

Avoiding Board Defects When Laying Out Projects:

This tip came from Jeff Birt, a talented programmer and a moderator on the CarveWright User Forum.

Jeff says if he wants to use a good board that has just a couple knots or minor defects he wants to "dodge", he'll cut the board to an appropriate size for his project, and take measurements of the locations of the defects. He then draws the defect locations and sizes onto the "virtual" board in Designer using circles, rectangles or freeform shapes to represent the defects. That way, he can place design elements on the "virtual" board while laying out his project, and have a visual guide to avoid the defects on the "real" board.

Thank you for the great idea, Jeff!

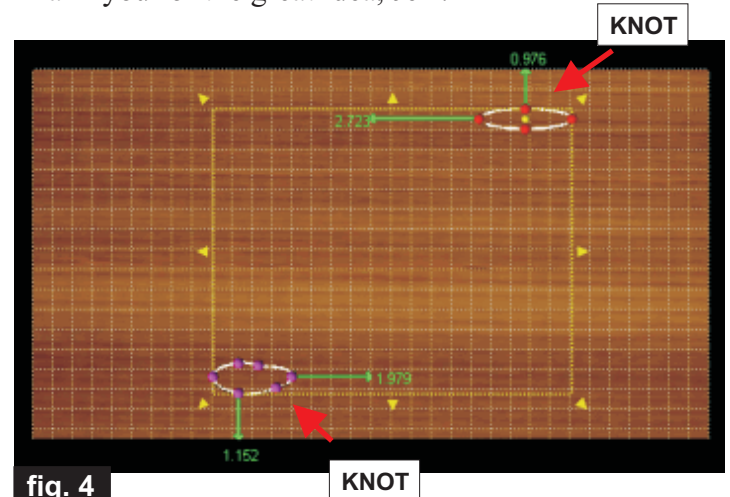


fig. 4

Most “First” Projects Will Likely Only Require the Two Bits Included with Your Machine:

A lot of new carvers think they need to “assign” a bit to every element on their Designer board when creating a layout. Most of the time (95% of the time?) that is not necessary at all. There are two bits that come included with the machine...the 1/16” Carving Bit and the 1/8” Cutting Bit. Those are assigned automatically when you create a “standard” project, so no user intervention is required, and chances are, you won’t need to manually assign any bits.

By default, the 1/16” bit is automatically “assigned” by the software for any elements that are carved. Similarly, if you have created a “cut path” for any element(s) in your design, the software has already automatically “assigned” the 1/8” cutting bit to any cut path you have created. There is no need to assign a bit manually - it has already been taken care of for you.

The occasions you might actually need to assign a bit are when creating projects with special carving/cutting features such as decorative edge routing (ogees, roundovers, etc.) or if you are using the optional CenterLine Text feature (using 60 or 90 degree bits) or some other “specialized” features such as specific bit-depth profile assignments for use with 1/2” V-bits or 1/2” ballnose bits.

For the most part, and especially when first starting out, you need not concern yourself with bit assignments when creating a “standard” design with the normal everyday carving and cutting tasks. Those projects will probably use just the two bits included with your machine.



fig. 5

Use The Handy “Grid” Function:

You may have noticed in one of the previous tips that the board in Designer had a grid of “squares” on the board surface. This is a really nice feature to help you layout objects with a degree of precision. The Grid can be viewed/turned on by selecting “View/Toggle Grid Lines” from the Designer menu. By default, the grid is laid out in 1/2” squares. You can change the size of the grid by selecting “Layout/Snap” from the Designer menu. The following window pops up...

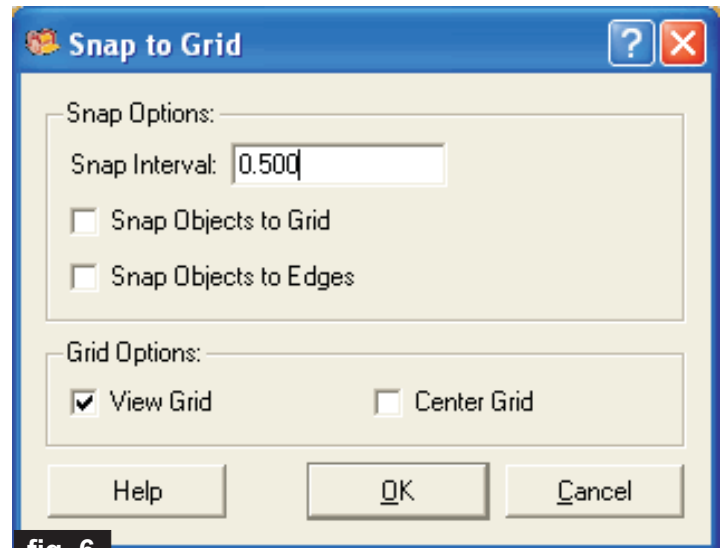


fig. 6

You can set several options here. I usually select “Center Grid” so the grid is equidistant from all edges of the board, and I’ll often type in a new value for the snap interval to change the “square” sizes (.25 or whatever). I’ll also normally select “Snap Objects to Grid”.

After you make your desired settings, click “OK” to return to your main screen and you’ll see the new grid layout superimposed over the surface of the board.

If you selected “Snap to Grid” then all objects you move around on the board will “snap” to the nearest square to help you space and line up objects while laying out your design.

To turn off the snap feature, reopen “Layout/Snap” and deselect the “Snap Objects to Grid”. (You can also turn off the “View Grid” display via this window as well.)

The grid feature is often overlooked by newcomers, so I wanted to alert you to this very handy feature!

Here's some miscellaneous Odds and Ends to Keep Your Projects and Machine Running Smoothly...

Keep Your Machine Clean

When I carve my projects, I stop the machine every half hour or so, by simply lifting the clear cover. (The machine will stop automatically). Then I vacuum out as much of the accumulated sawdust as I can with my shop vac, close the lid then press the green "Enter" button to resume carving exactly where it left off. Some folks don't like to use a shop vac because of fear of static electricity. If you would rather not use a vacuum, then just use a small sand box shovel and an old paintbrush to sweep out some of the sawdust buildup periodically. Long projects generate a lot of sawdust debris, and I don't feel at peace letting it build up on projects that last over an hour.

After the completion of each project, I thoroughly vacuum and remove all sawdust, blast a little low-pressure compressed air to get out the stuff "hiding" in the crevices, and just look the entire machine over for anything unusual before loading another project. Keeping your machine clean is an important maintenance step to keep your machine in tip-top working condition.

Avoid Using "Cupped" Boards

Sometimes I'll hear about someone who is getting a repeated prompt from the machine to "Load Board" when the board is already in the machine. Usually the cause of this is simply that the board they are using is cupped. Strive to use nice, flat boards and you'll probably never see that error!

Check the Edges and Surfaces of Your Boards

Occasionally someone reports that they have torn a sanding belt (the drive belt for moving the board along) and have to order a replacement. The belts are designed to last the life of the machine and should rarely ever need to be replaced. The most common cause of a torn belt is that the user didn't notice a splinter, loose knot, or sticky sap on their board that "caught" one of the belts during a project and damaged it. I always check the edges and surfaces of my boards visually and by rubbing a soft foam sanding block all over the edges and surfaces. If there is a spot that might "catch" one of the belts, the foam block is my "early warning" system - it will "catch" the bad spot for me before putting in the machine!

Keep You and Your Machine "Comfortable"

The CarveWright machines are a combination of a power tool and a high-tech electronic device. You should store and operate your machine in temperature environments that you yourself would be comfortable in. Remember that if you feel comfortable, so will your machine!

Adjust Your Out-Feed Tables

Make sure your out-feed tables are adjusted so that they will not "bump" up your board when it travels out at either end of the machine. If the out-feed tables are not adjusted properly, it could cause slight "stair-stepping" across the carved surface. To adjust, lay a long enough board in the machine so that it extends across both out-feed tables, then raise or lower the tables so that the rollers j-u-s-t barely touch the bottom of your board at each end. NOTE: Boards under 3 feet long don't generally even need the out-feed table support, unless the board is unusually heavy. With "short-board" projects, you can just lower the out-feed tables out of the way if you wish.

Final Tip:

Be sure to Join the CarveWright User Forum! It's the place where we all gather to help each other with questions and answers, share ideas, photos of our projects, and just have a great time together. It is a tremendous resource for anyone who uses the CarveWright machine. Here is the web address for the Users Forum - it's FREE to join!

<http://www.carvewright.com/forum/index.php>

Special thanks to Michael Tyler of www.carvebuddy.com for providing the content for this issue of CarveWright TiPS and TRiCKS.

**The
CarveWright Team
Wishes You All a Great
Holiday Season
and a Merry Christmas!**

