

Making More Realistic Wooden Logs

By John Rumming.

I will show you how to make a more realistic wooden log through this PDF. Most people use dowel to recreate logs, but these are uniformed in size and shape leading to almost identical log look-alikes. The method below is an example of the way I do it for my layouts. My original Bridgetown layout in N scale was a very good example of how well this method works by getting a second place the first time it was displayed at a Model Railway Show in Perth, Western Australia.

Firstly, you will need the following items:



Sharp knife.
Small metal ruler with a 6mm hole in the end.
1m metal ruler with a 6mm hole in the end. *
Marking pen.
6.5mm sheet of balsa wood.
Something to cut the wood on.

* You will only need the 1m ruler if you want to make a single cut the entire length of the balsa wood.



Cut the Balsa sheet so it is a square of 6.5mm x 6.5mm as the left of the picture show. Trim a small amount off the edges to make it into an octagon shape (8 sides) similar to the right hand picture.



Figure 3



Figure 4

Now you start to slide and wriggle the end of the ruler down the balsa wood to make the octagon into a circle. By moving the ruler around as you slide it, it will create random waves that look like trees do. After all, how many trees have you seen that are dead straight? One thing - try and push the wood with your hand from no more than 15cm from the ruler. If you push any further the balsa can break easily. If it is done right, then you can actually get a full piece done nicely.



Figure 5



Figure 6

In figure 5 you can see that I have stopped half way and removed the ruler end. The balsa wood is creating a piece of balsa in front of the ruler that shows that the hole that I am using is slightly smaller than the wood. This is good as it will look better. You will also notice the difference between the end I have done on the top, and the unfinished part at the bottom. Figure 6 shows the finished product. And what about the bits still hanging off? That is what also adds to the realism of this project.

What to do with them.

There are various things that you can do with these. Bridge supports, logs on trucks, cut trees waiting at woodchip plants and many other ideas.



Figure 7

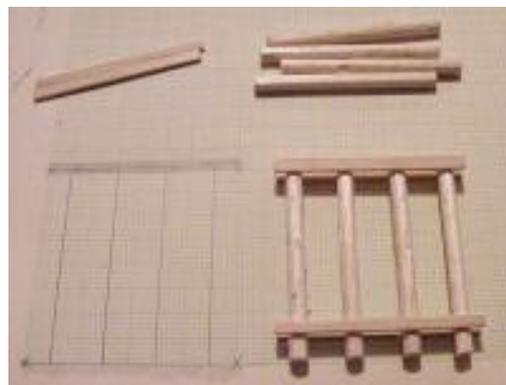


Figure 8

I decided that I am going to build a road overpass with these wood uprights. I sketched a basic plan on graph paper and created a small jig to cut the poles to the same size (Figure 7). I then started to build the uprights according to the plan (Figure 8).



Figure 9



Figure 10

In figure 9, I have completed the upright. Figure 10 shows the completed item after a wash of brown has been put on it. I use Humbol 118 wood brown and dilute it about 1:5 to thinners. Sometimes it requires a thinner mix, so about 1:8 is also acceptable. If you make the wash then try it on a scrap piece of balsa, you will know if it needs to be thinner. The result above can be obtained by doing random pieces first, waiting about 10 minutes then coating the whole lot. This gives the desired effect of various wood colours.

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