

# Toddler's Rocking Horse

## Materials List

**Seatboard** (1),  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 10 x 17", any stock or hardwood-faced plywood  
**Rockers** (2),  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 4 x 15", any stock or hardwood-faced plywood  
**Head** (1),  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 9 x 11", any stock or hardwood-faced plywood  
**Seat brace** (1),  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 2 x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", any stock or hardwood-faced plywood  
**Handle** (1),  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 5" dowel  
**Sealer**  
**Wood finish**  
**India ink and brush**, or other marker  
**No. 8 x 1 $\frac{1}{4}$** , **No. 8 x 1"** flathead wood screws  
**Glue**  
**Wood plugs or wood putty**

## Tools

Coping saw, band saw, or saber saw  
Hand drill or electric drill  
Several grades of sandpaper

## Level of Difficulty

Easy

## Length of Time Required

Afternoon

## Safety Precautions

Safety goggles

Hand-built wooden toys are a blessing in more ways than one. Not only do they give a lot of pleasure to the builder, but their sturdy simplicity can be enjoyed by generations of children as the toys are passed down, rich with fond memories. This project is one of the classic exam-

ples of such a keepsake. To a child, of course, it is simply fun.

The toddler's rocking horse can be made entirely with hand tools, and it takes only a few hours' work and a little time for paint and glue to dry. It can be constructed of almost any wood—hardwood, softwood, or hardwood-faced plywood—you happen to have left over from some cabinet or furniture building. No matter what wood or mix of woods you choose, be sure to follow the instructions regarding the direction of the grain so as to ensure the rocking horse's durability. Choose close-grained wood that won't splinter for this toy.

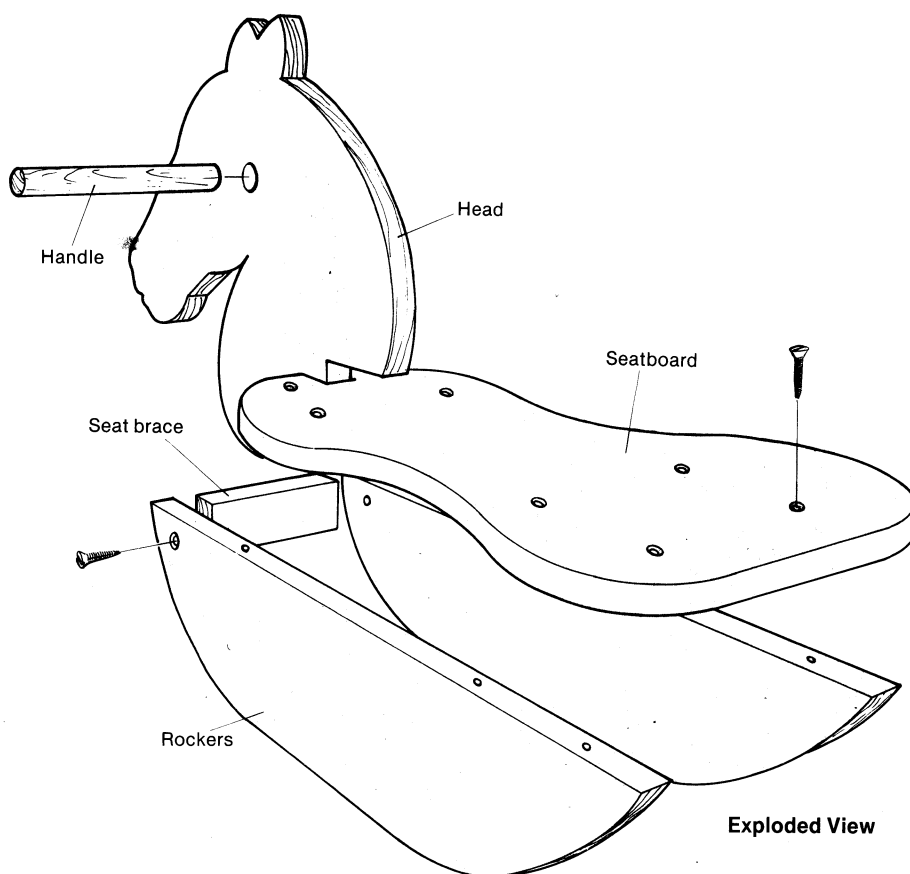
## STEP 1 Cutting the Pieces

Enlarge the squared drawings of the rocker, seat, and head, and transfer the patterns to  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch stock. Mark the rocker and seat patterns so that

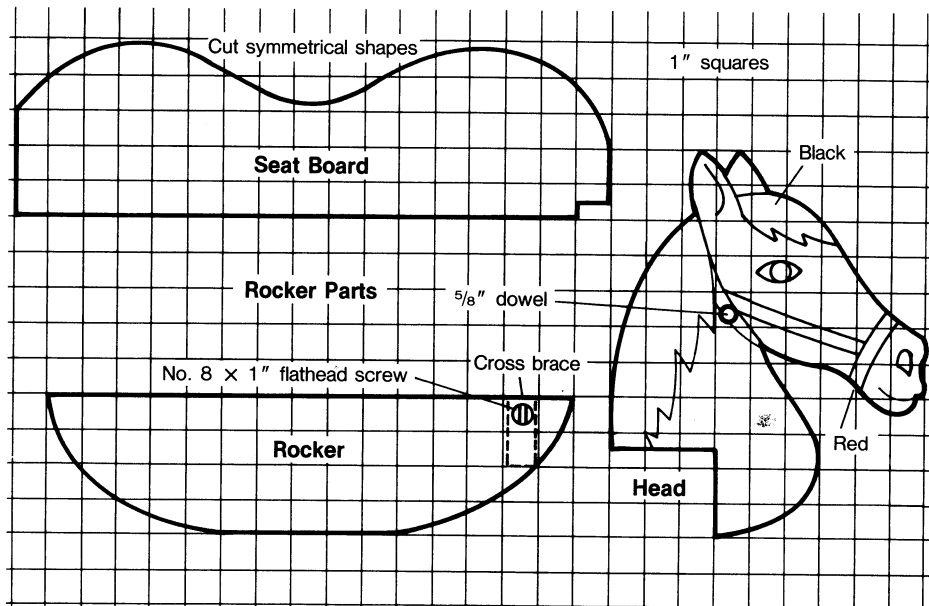
the grain of the wood runs along their length. If you are using solid stock for the head, mark the pattern so that the grain runs up and down the head; if you are using softwood stock for the seat and rockers, use hardwood-faced plywood for the head. When the pieces are marked, cut them to shape with a hand coping saw, saber saw, or band saw. Mark the positions of the screw holes on the two rockers and bore them with a hand drill. Then countersink the screw holes with a countersink bit. (Of course, you can use an electric drill here.) Also bore a  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch hole through the head, as indicated on the drawing. Cut the seat brace and handle dowel to the given dimensions.

## STEP 2 Sanding the Pieces

The rocking horse deserves to be sanded as smooth as silk—there is probably no square inch on the toy



Exploded View



that won't be handled, if not licked and chewed on. Sand all the pieces using progressively finer grades of sandpaper. Spend as much time sanding as you spend on all the building; you, and your toddler, will be well satisfied with the result.

### **STEP 3** **Assembling the Body**

Mark the location of the rockers on the bottom of the seat board by centering them with the brace between them and attach them with glue and countersunk No. 8 × 1-inch flathead wood screws driven through the seat. Wipe away any excess glue with a damp cloth so you won't have any extra sanding to do when it dries. You can leave the screws exposed, as they are in the model shown here—just be sure that they are countersunk well below the surface of the seat and that there are no burrs sticking up—or you can fill the screw holes with wood plugs or

putty. If you use plugs or putty, sand the filling smooth (after it is well set, if you use putty). Fasten the seat brace between the rockers with 1-inch screws through the holes bored in the rockers and with the same-sized screws driven down through the top of the seat. Again, be sure that all screws are safely smooth.

### **STEP 4** **Finishing the Head and Body**

Give both the head and body of the rocking horse a coat of sealing finish. Remember that the riders are likely to chew on the horse, so check the label to be sure that the finish is nontoxic. After the sealer coat on the head is dry, mark the details, as shown in the drawing, and paint them in with a small brush and India ink, or use a colorfast felt-tip pen. Paint the halter red (or whatever color you like) and allow the head to dry; then apply a second coat of finish and allow it to dry.

### **STEP 5** **Mounting the Head and Handle**

Fasten the head in place in the neck of the seatboard with glue and No. 8 × 1/4-inch screws driven up from under the seat and through the bottom of the seat brace. Smear glue on the inside of the hole in the horse's head and drive the handle dowel through until it is in place. Wipe away the glue that the dowel squeezes out, then allow the head and handle to set.

### **STEP 6** **Finishing the Rocking Horse**

When the entire horse is assembled and dry, apply several more coats of finish, sanding with very fine sandpaper, after each application has dried to give a perfectly smooth finish.

