

Building a Ceramic Tilemaker

Easily make 4x4-inch and 6x6-inch clay tiles!

If you have good woodworking skills or know someone who does, you can make a professional-grade tilemaker to use personally, in a school setting with students or employed by an assistant or apprentice.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Start by cutting two 10-inch by 12-inch pieces of 3/4-inch exterior-grade plywood. Set one aside for later use.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



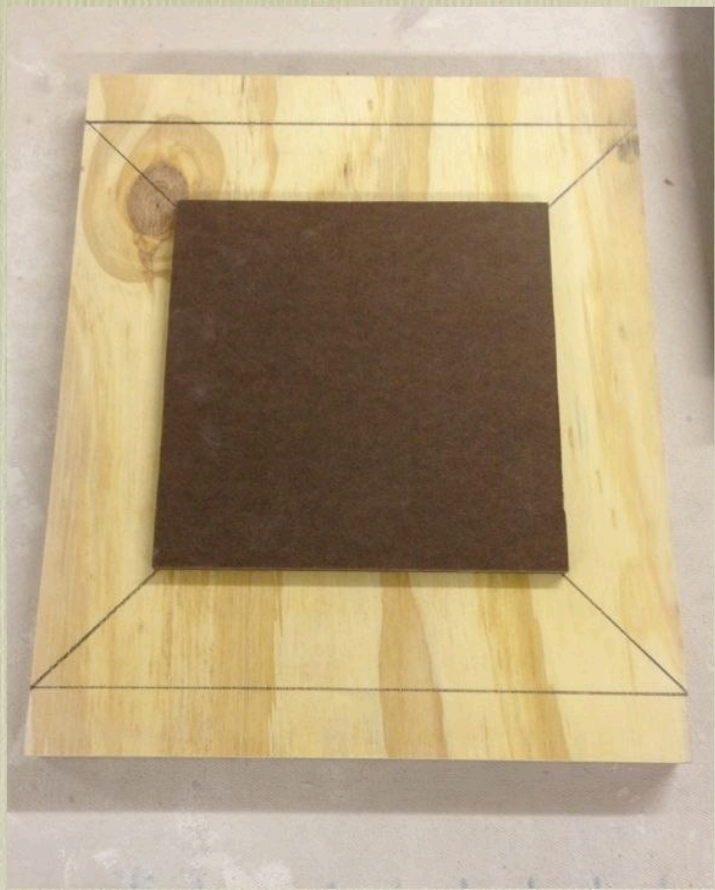
Measure one inch up from the bottom and down from the top, and draw lines there.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



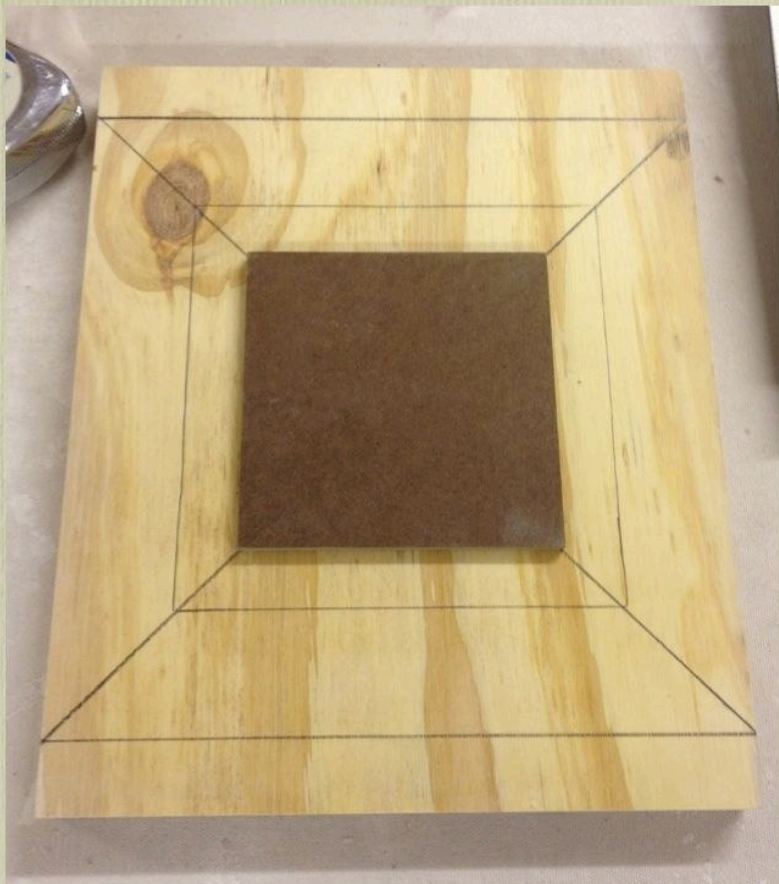
Draw an "X" between the two lines.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Cut a $6\frac{1}{2}$ -inch square of Masonite® and center it on the “X” exactly. Draw a line around it.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Cut a $4\frac{4}{5}$ -inch square of Masonite® and center it on the “X” exactly. Draw a line around it, too.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



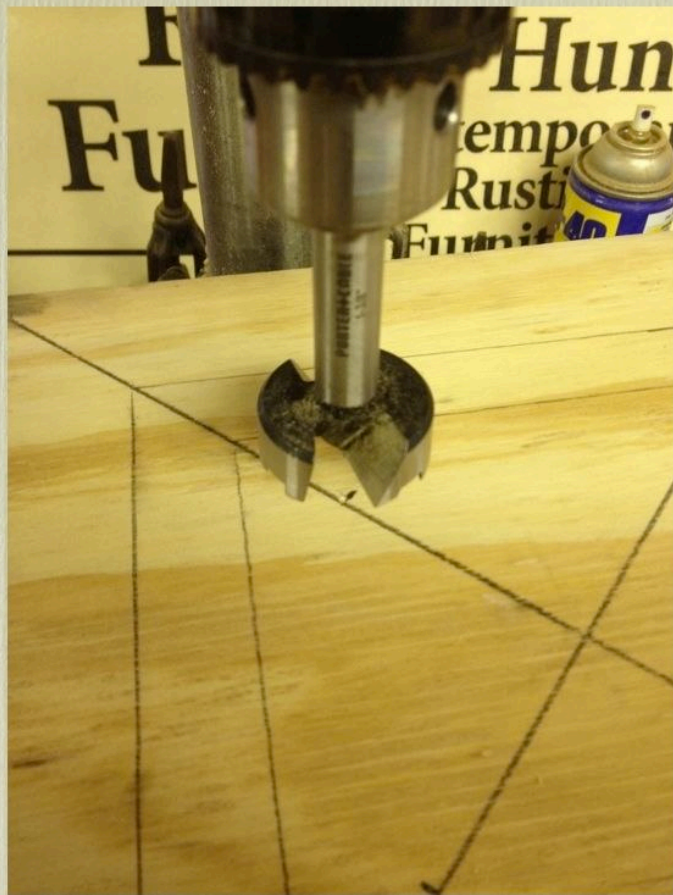
The plywood should look like this.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Starting on the line you drew around the smaller Masonite® square, make a mark $1/4$ -inch along the "X." Do this on the remaining three corners of the "X."

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



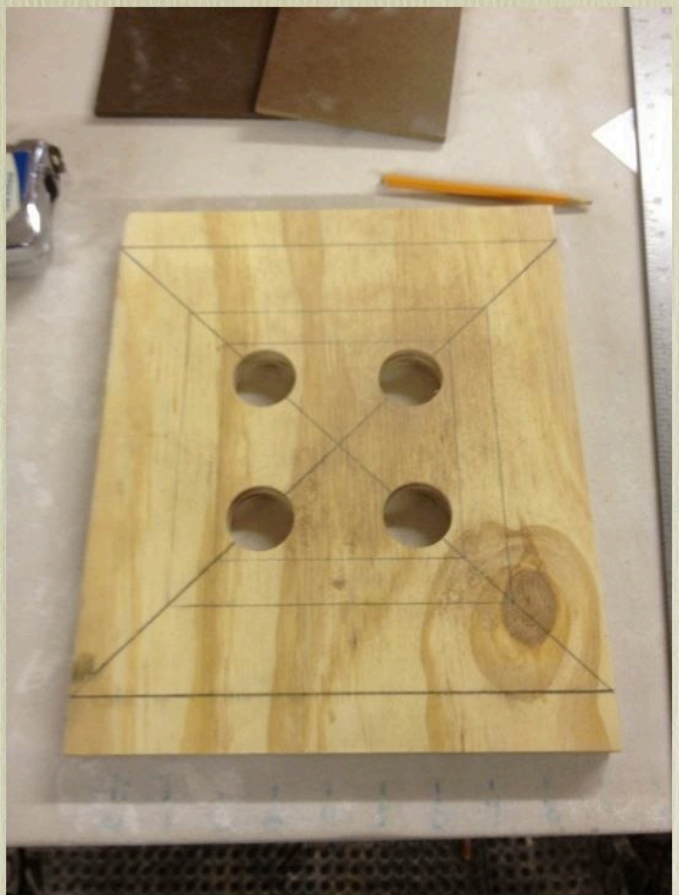
Use each of those marks as the center of a hole drilled through the plywood.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



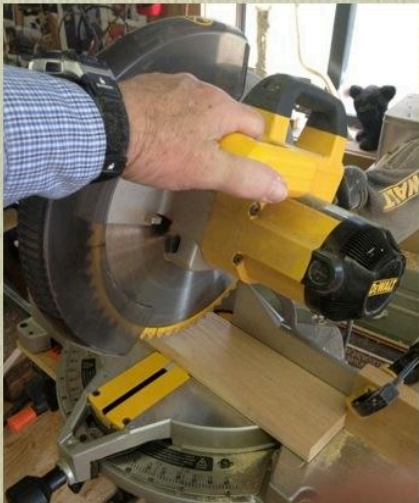
A "Forstner" bit in a drill press will make a neat hole, but you can use a hand-held drill as well. Neatness will not affect function.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



When you've drilled all four holes, the board should look like this.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Cut four half-inch-thick by four-inch wide hardwood boards to 10-inch lengths. These form the top surface of the tilemaker. Place the first board just inside the line you drew previously.



Bill Hunt Tilemaker



From the backside, pre-drill screw holes through the plywood into the hardwood board while it is clamped in place.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Secure the hardwood board to the plywood with 1 1/4-inch steel wood screws.



Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Three or four screws per board should hold it securely.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



You could also glue the boards in place instead of screwing them. Clamp and let the glue dry overnight.



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For thicker tiles, glue or screw (from the backside) another hardwood board on top of the tilemaker.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



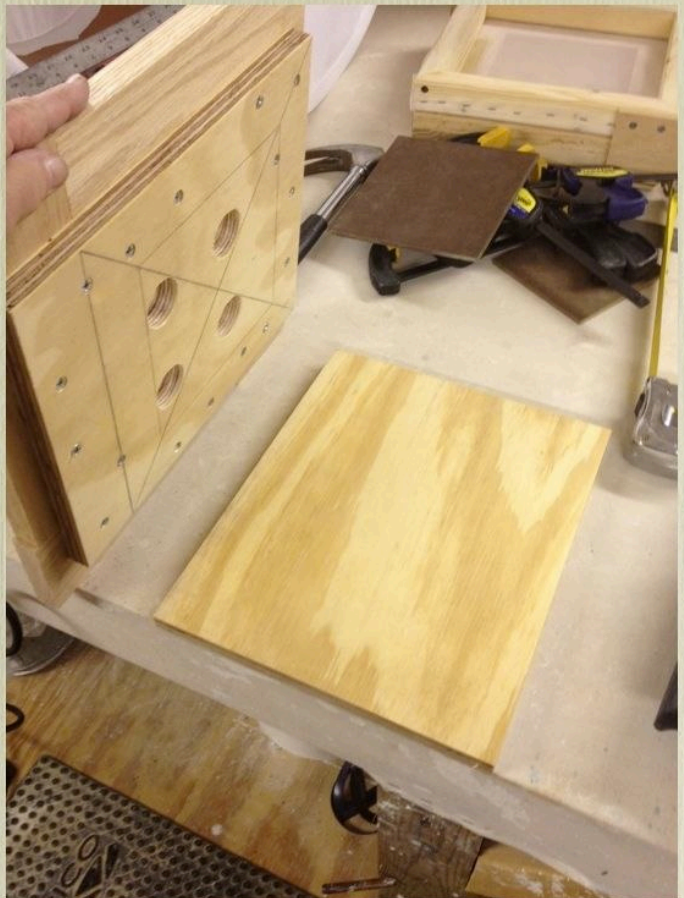
Your tilemaker should now look like this.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



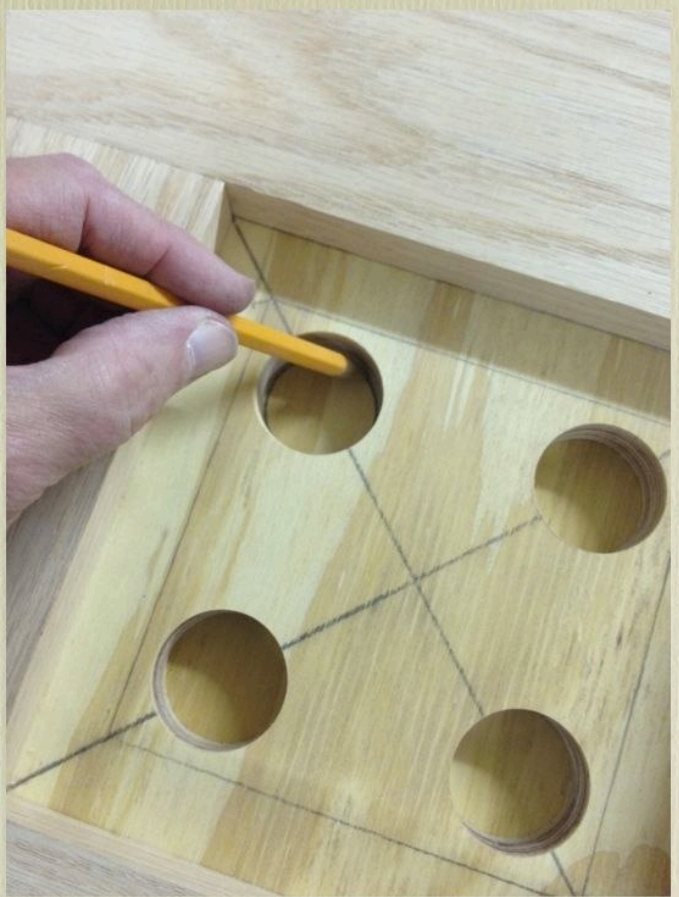
Place the 6-inch Masonite® square into the tilemaker to check the fit.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



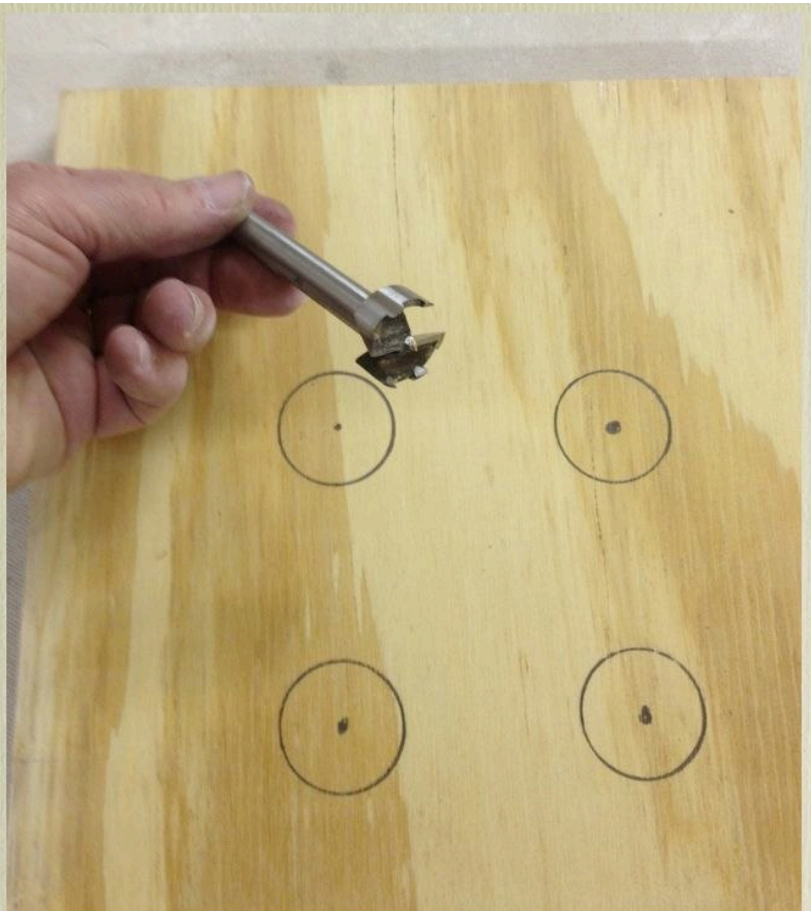
Lay the completed press exactly on top of the other 10 x 12-inch sheet of plywood.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Draw through the drilled holes onto the plywood sheet below.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Visually mark the center of each of the four circles, then select a smaller bit than the one you used previously. Drill four holes centered within the circles.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Select a hardwood dowel rod to fit the holes you just drilled.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Cut the dowel into four equal lengths tall enough that they will stand slightly higher than the face of the tilemaker when it is positioned over them. These will punch the tile out of the tilemaker.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



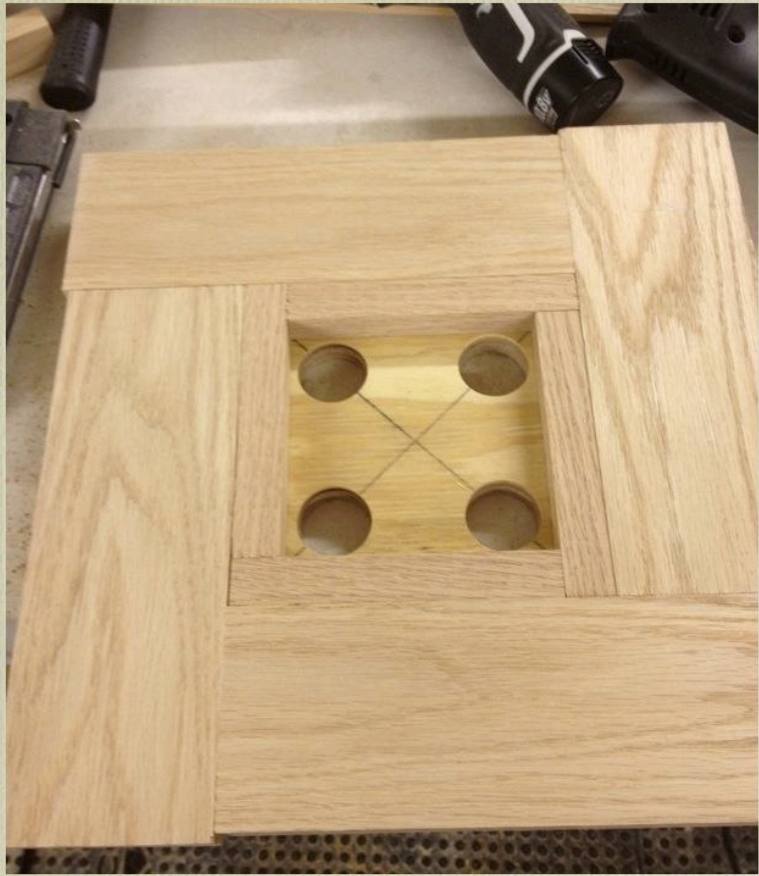
Cut four lengths from your hardwood stock, each with a width of approximately $1 \frac{7}{10}$ -inches by $4 \frac{4}{5}$ -inches.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



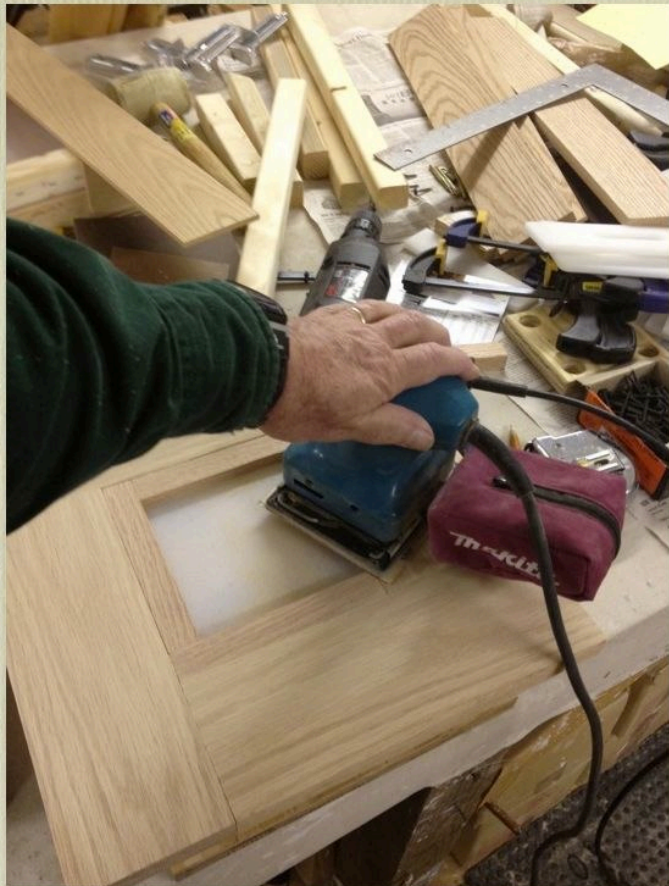
From the backside, predrill and screw these in place, two screws each.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



When these strips are tightly installed, the face of the tilemaker should look like this.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Sand the surface with a power sander or a flat block of wood with sandpaper on it.

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Purchase the thinnest two cutting boards available. This 8 1/2 by 11-inch one cost less than \$3 at Walmart.

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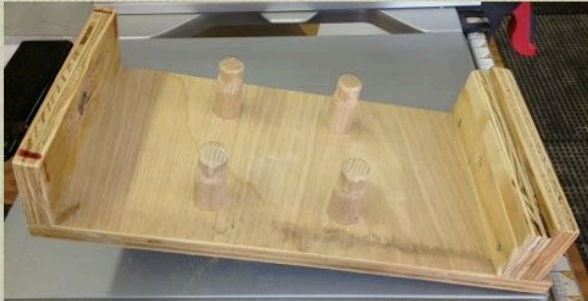
Cut the board into a handled scraper and a 4 4/5-inch square. Discard the rest of the cutting board.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Cut the other cutting board into a 6 1/2-inch square and a scraper cut from the remaining long side of the cutting board.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



Another style of tile punch allows the tilemaker to sit on top of it while filling it with clay.

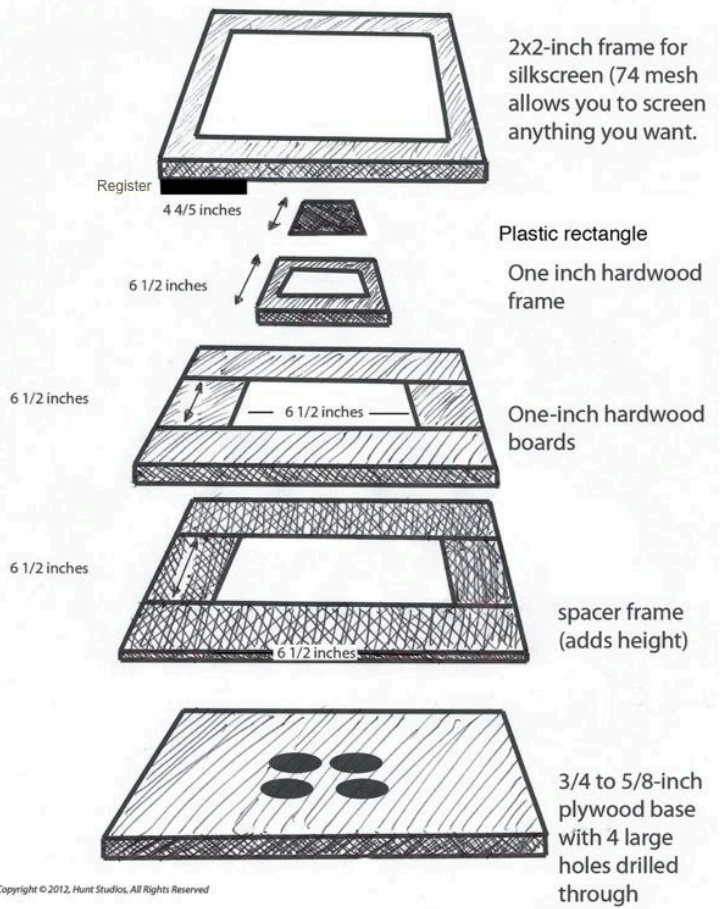


Bill Hunt Tilemaker



The press on top of the punch. Push it away from you and the tilemaker drops onto the punch dowels.

Bill Hunt Tilemaker



You can add a silkscreen to the tilemaker. Frame it so it slips down around the tilemaker for perfect register. Use four separate screens for full-color images.