Make a Magnetic Wood Knife Holder
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I wanted a way to store my kitchen knives that would free up counter space and protect the knives’ sharp edges from getting nicked and dulled (I spend enough time time sharpening my woodworking tools!). Here’s one solution -- find a nicely figured piece of hardwood, embed some high-strength magnets, rout keyholes for easy wall-mounting, then finish with mineral oil.

If you're lucky to have a full shop like I do at Makeville Studio, you can start with rough lumber and mill to final size. Otherwise, start with 1x4 hardwood stock, available pre-milled from most home centers and lumber yards.

Materials:
- wood: 3/4 to 1” thick, 24” x 4” (or 3.5” if you’re using 1x4 stock)
- rare earth magnets: qty 15 of 1/2” diam x 1/2 thick (part #ND035 from www.magnet4less.com)
- mineral oil
- CA or super glue

Tools:
- table saw, planer, and jointer (if using rough lumber); or miter saw/hand saw (if using 1x4 stock)
- drill press or hand-held drill with 1/2” forstner bit
- stationary or plunge router with key hole bit

Instructions

Here’s a finished 24” knife holder, made from a leftover scrap of cherry lumber.

**Step 1** - If you’re using rough lumber, cut a piece slightly oversize on the chop saw (see Tip in Step 2). Mill your piece flat and square, taking thickness down to 7/8” to 1”.

*Tip:* Watch this [FWW video on milling lumber](http://www.finewoodworking.com/subscription/SkillsAndTechniques/SkillsAndTechniquesArticle.aspx?id=5293) for a quick refresher.

**Step 2** - Cut your milled lumber to size on the table saw: rip to 4” and cross cut to 24”. OR cross cut your 1x4 stock to 24” on a chop saw or with a hand saw.

*Tip:* Before cross-cutting, examine your board for defects such as checks (cracks running in from the ends), knots, and anything else you don't like the look of. Then look for areas with color and grain pattern that you do like. Your 24” length should exclude the “bad” stuff and include as much of the “good” as possible. A quick and handy tool for picking out the best area in a board is a simple home-made view finder like the one shown.
Step 3 - Layout magnet locations on back of board. 1/2" holes for the magnets will be spaced 1.5" apart, centered in the board.

Step 4 - Load up the 1/2" forstner bit in your drill press. Set the depth stop so that the center guide of the forstner bit stops short of the front face of your board. You'll want the bottom of the hole to be at most 1/8" from the face of the board. Drill 15 holes.

Tip: No drill press? Use a hand-held drill with an improvised depth stop, made of cardboard and tape.

Step 5 - Layout and rout two keyhole mounting slots. Mark two 1.5" lines parallel to the long edge of the board, starting 1" from each side. Using a plunge router with an edge guide, plunge in about 1/2" and then rout out your 1.5" line.

Tip: No plunge router? Drill a 3/8" hole about 1/2" deep, place your stationary router in the hole, turn on the power and rout the 1.5" straight line from there.
Step 6 - Prep board for finishing. Use a card scraper or sanding block to remove any scratches or other marks from the visible face and edges of the board. The card scraper will give you a smooth finish very quickly--learn more in this [FWW video on how to use card scrapers](http://www.finewoodworking.com/SkillsAndTechniques/SkillsAndTechniquesArticle.aspx?id=5299).

If you’re sanding, start with 120 grit and then change to 220 or 240 grit for final finish.

**Tip:** Soften sharp edges quickly using a block plane to create a light bevel (inset).

Step 7 - Glue in the magnets. One hole at a time, put a couple drops of super glue in the bottom of the hole and push in a magnet. Make sure the magnet is inserted fully–tap it gently in with a dowel if necessary.

Step 8 - Apply a mineral oil finish. This can be as simple as wiping on some oil, letting in soak in for 15 minutes and then wiping it off. But if you want a buttery smooth finish, continue to Step 9.

**Tip:** Check out this [FWW article on food-safe finishes](http://www.finewoodworking.com/SkillsAndTechniques/SkillsAndTechniquesArticle.aspx?id=26893) to learn about alternatives to mineral oil.
Step 9 - Sand in the oil finish. Load your sanding block with 400 grit wet/dry sandpaper and sand with the grain. When you see a thick oil/sawdust slurry forming, you’re done sanding. Let the oil sit for 15 minutes and then wipe off.