

# The Cat box

By Stephen Hatcher

It's Not  
What  
You're  
Thinking

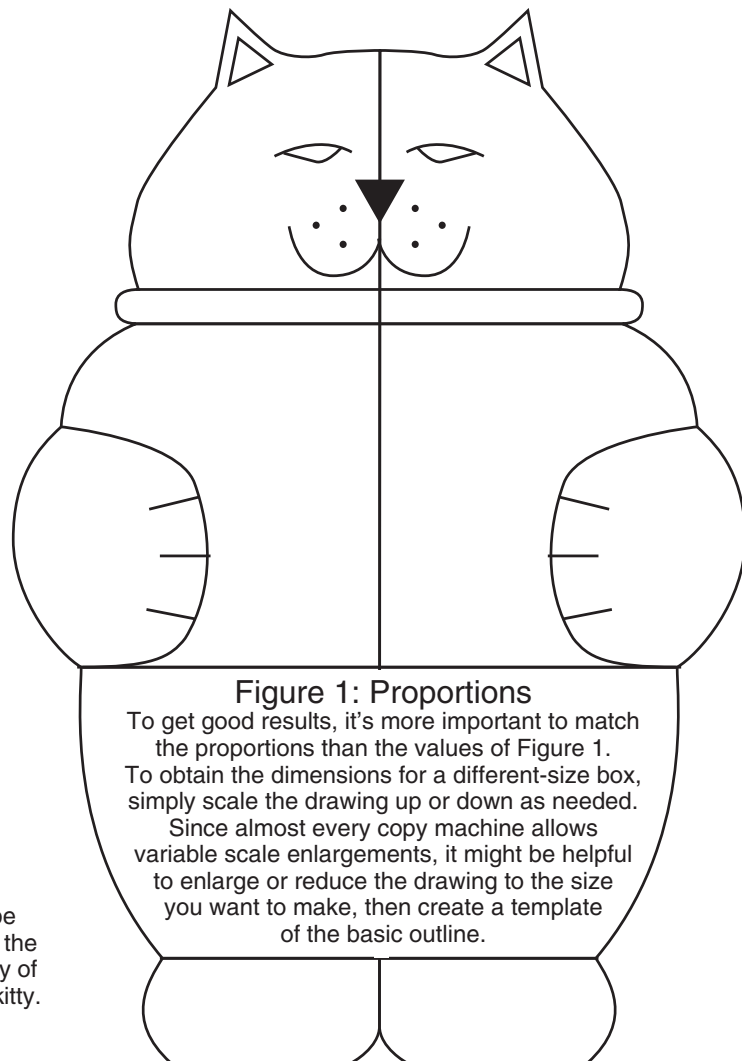
I enjoy combining wood turning and carving, often trying to achieve a whimsical result. I look for inspiration in pottery, craft figurines—anywhere I find it. This cat-box project is a fairly simple

box that allows you to form paws and ears by removing material with a rasp. I suggest adding details with a small burr on a power-carving tool, though hand-carving tools also work well.

*Continued*



Tiger-stripe maple fits the personality of this tiger kitty.



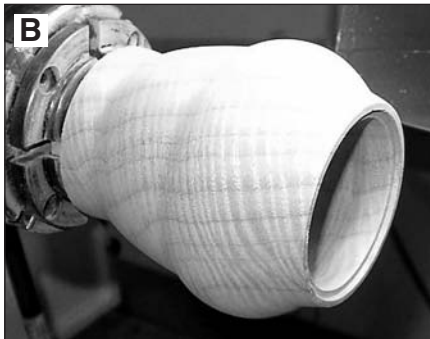
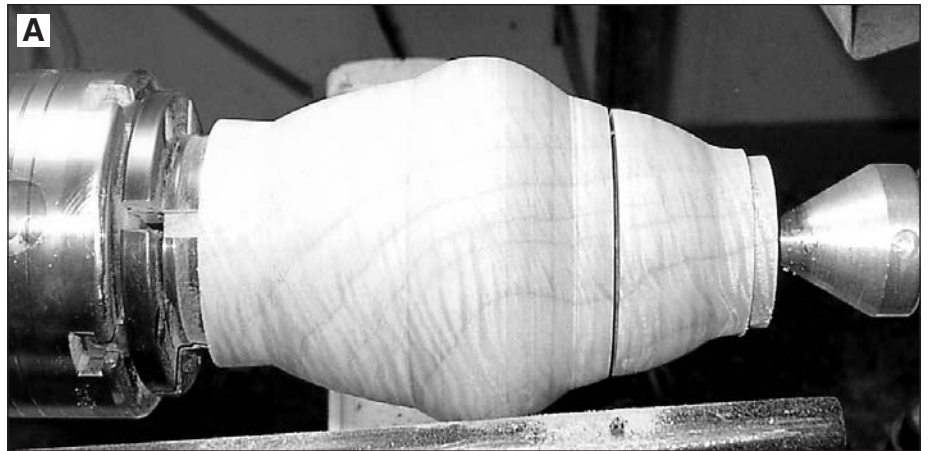
**Figure 1: Proportions**

To get good results, it's more important to match the proportions than the values of Figure 1.

To obtain the dimensions for a different-size box, simply scale the drawing up or down as needed.

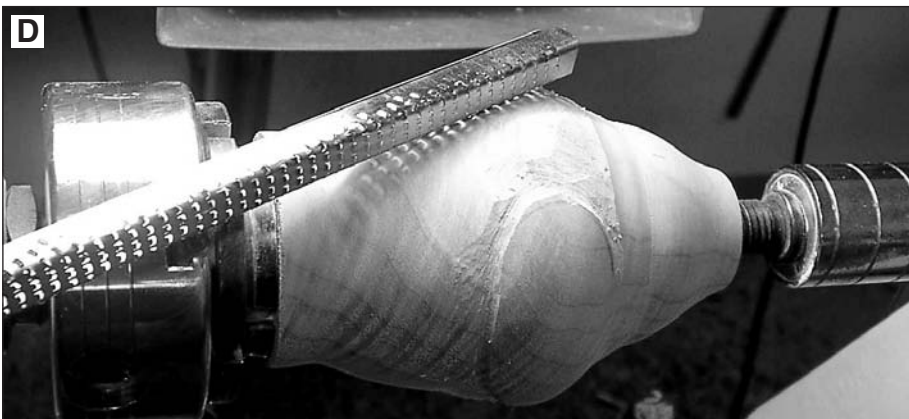
Since almost every copy machine allows variable scale enlargements, it might be helpful to enlarge or reduce the drawing to the size you want to make, then create a template of the basic outline.

► **Step 1** Turn the cat shape as shown in Figure 1. The block should be about 1/2" longer than the finished length to allow for adequate end wood clamped in a chuck during hollowing. Don't bother sanding now; you will carve about half of the surface and sand again when adding paws, ears, tail, and feet. When you complete the basic shape (Photo A), separate the head (lid) with a thin cutoff tool.



◀ **Step 2** Hollow the inside of the head and body. I pre-drill with a 2 1/2" Forstner bit, then shape the interior with a small hollowing tool for a uniform wall thickness. Create a tenon on the lid and a mortise on the body for a fitted lid as shown in Photo B. I use only about 1/10" depth because I want the grain to align well when the lid is on the finished piece. Sand the interior to a 400-grit smoothness.

► **Step 3** Put the head back on the body with the grain aligned. Then draw on the finishing details with a pencil. Note that in Photo C, the head has been further turned to remove the tenon used for hollowing. That curvature will later provide the outside profile of the cat's ears.



◀ **Step 4** Remove stock between the hands using a rasp as shown in Photo D or spoon gouge (I prefer a Microplane rasp). Now add a curved tail using a handheld spoon gouge. Remember this is a "for-fun" project so keep the carved details and sanding simple.

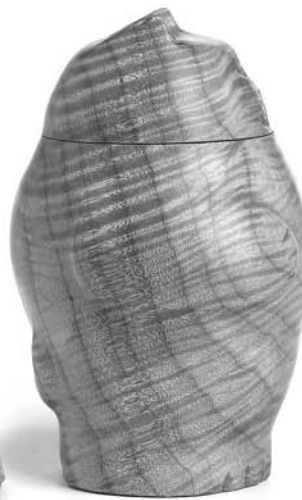




FRONT VIEW



LID OFF

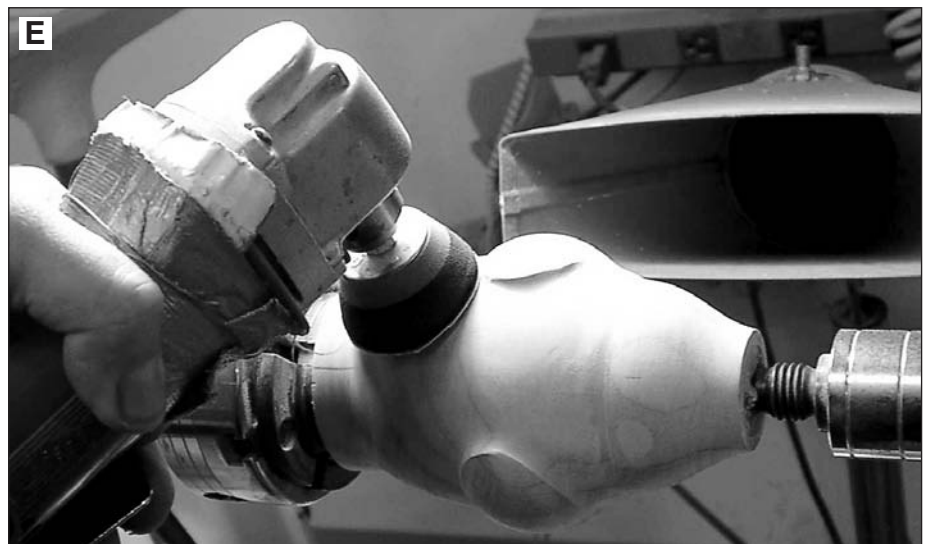


SIDE VIEW



BACK VIEW

► **Step 5** Use a 2" power-sanding disk with a soft sponge rubber backing to sand the entire piece from 80- to 400-grit smoothness as shown in Photo E. Shape this area as a smooth stomach "bulge" between the front paws. Adding a tail will require hand-sanding. Remove the box from the lathe and remove the wood between the cat ears. Then create a notch between the back (lower) legs.



◄ **Step 6** I find detail work is easiest if I place the box on the lathe again between centers while heavily padded with rags or foam. Use a 1/8" burr with a Dremel tool or pneumatic carver (Photo F) to add cat-like features including eyes (slits), nose, whisker spots, claws, and hollows in the ears. Lightly rub the carved areas with 0000 steel wool until smooth. Finish as desired (I prefer tung oil), then buff to a soft luster.

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