

MAKE YOUR OWN “PRINT WOOD”

This transfer trick makes scratch-building easy

By Jim Ryan

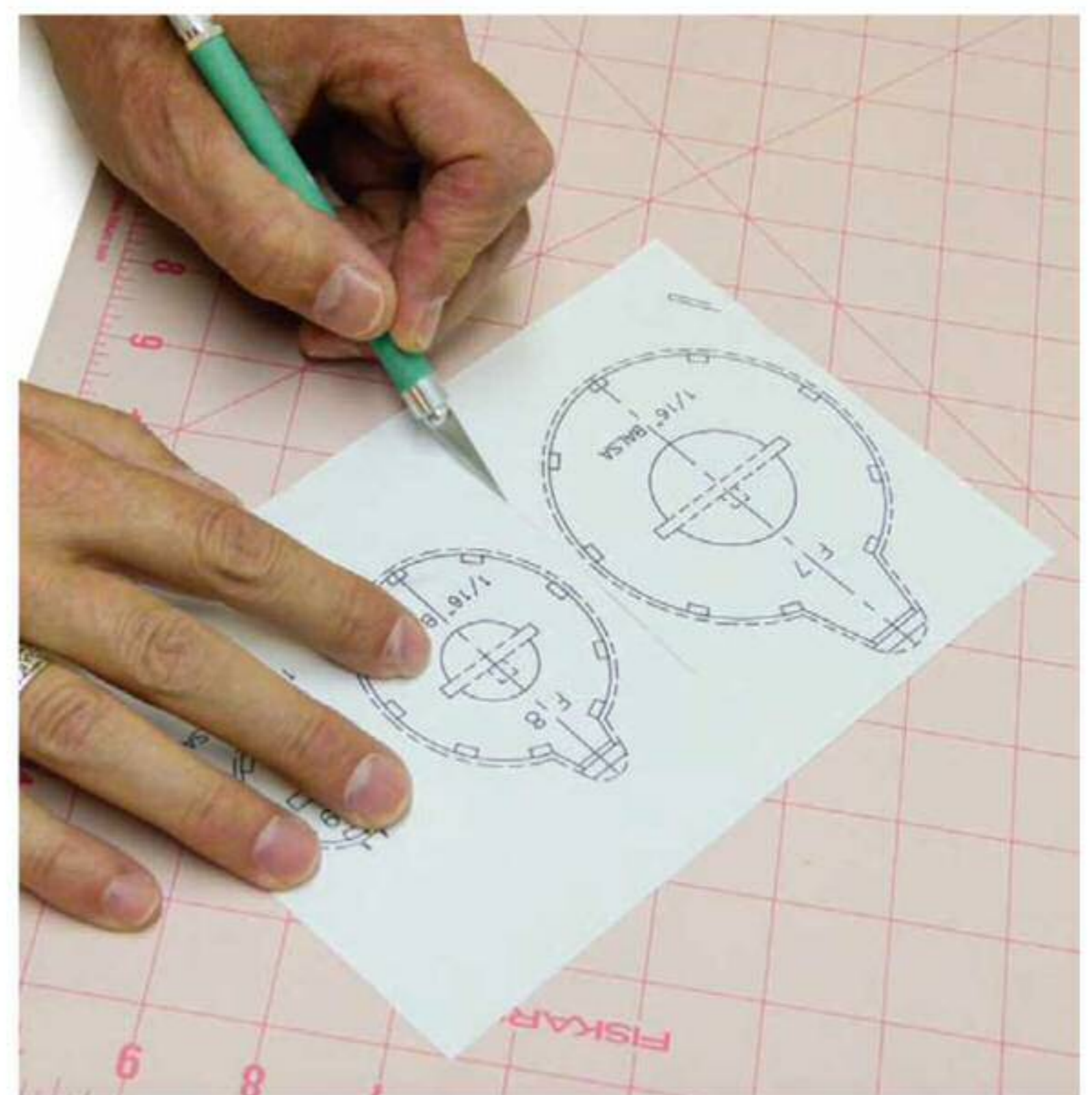
I've long believed one of the main reasons more modelers don't build from plans is the dreary task of transferring the parts from plans to balsa. After all, once you have the parts cut out, building from plans is pretty much like building from a commercial kit. Using the steps outlined here, you can transfer your part templates to sheet stock quickly and easily, and that plans-built masterpiece you've been fantasizing about becomes a much easier project.



Building from plans is one of the most rewarding niches in aeromodeling. With this acetone transfer trick, producing your own kit becomes a quick and simple task.



1 Here are the materials you need: photocopies of the parts templates, a cheap paintbrush, acetone, and balsa or plywood sheet stock. CAUTION: Acetone is a volatile solvent. Make sure your work area has adequate ventilation.



2 Before beginning, make photocopies of all the parts templates. These copies should be fairly dark, with nice, heavy black lines. Measure the copies to check that they're 1:1 duplicates of the plans in both height and width. Cut the templates apart, but don't make any effort to cut close to the lines.



3 Using a paintbrush, wet the sheet stock with acetone. Keep brushing back and forth until the wood goes from "wet" to "damp." Experience will show just how damp it needs to be for a perfect image.

4 Lay the photocopied template face-down on the sheet stock (pay attention to grain direction) and then press it in place for a few seconds.



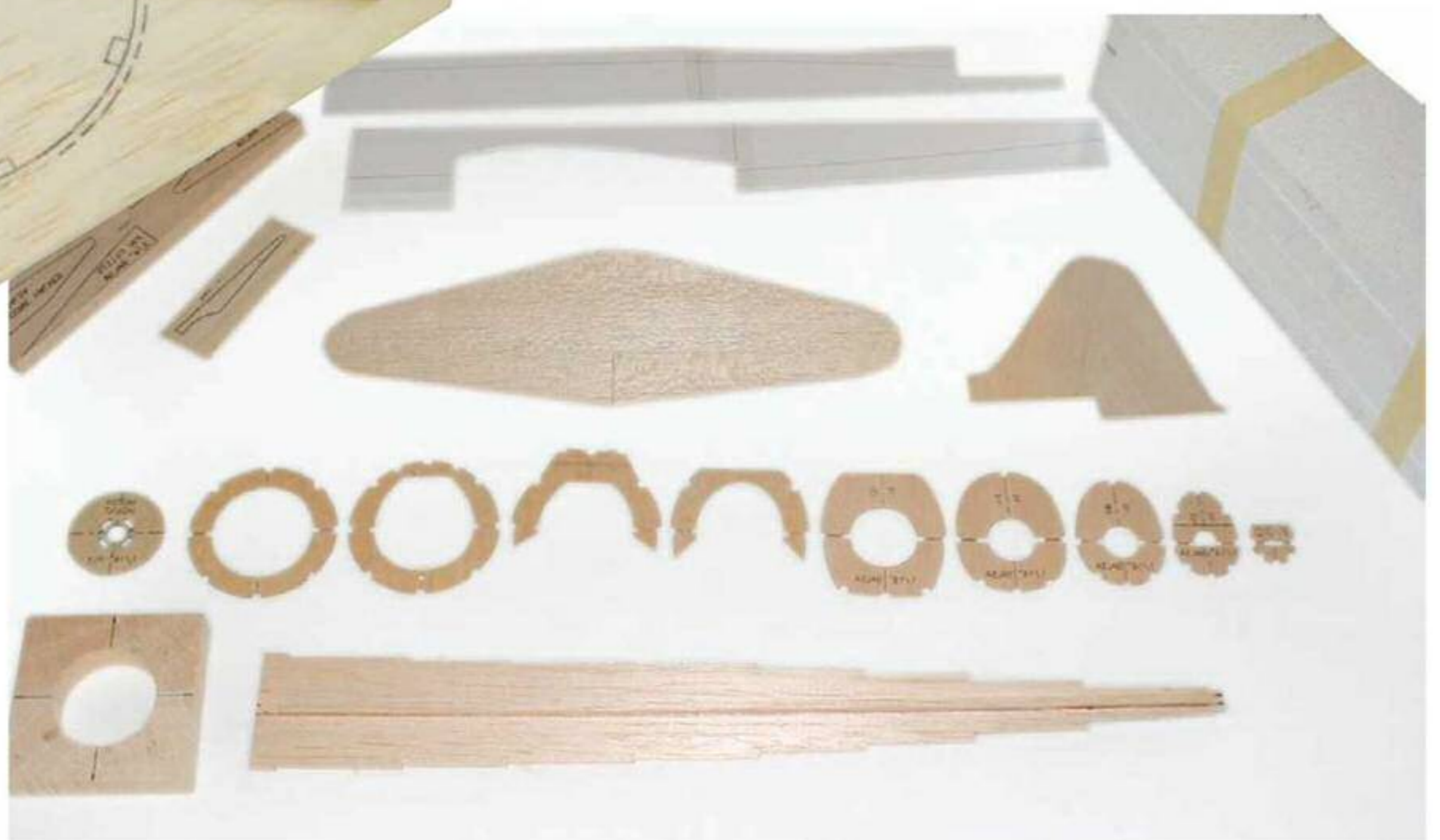
5 When you peel back the template, you should have a perfect mirror image on the balsa. Once you have all the templates transferred, you'll have an old-fashioned "print-wood" kit that's ready to cut out and assemble.



Troubleshooting Tips

Image is too light: Either the photocopies aren't dark enough (you can turn up the copier's contrast control to get darker lines with more toner), the wood is too dry (there has to be enough acetone in the wood fibers to "pull" the toner from the surface of the paper and adhere it to the wood), or the template hasn't been pressed long enough (press the template for 10 to 20 seconds to get a good transfer).

Image has a washed-out appearance: This happens when the wood is still too "wet" when the template is pressed in place. The wood should be damp; if it's visibly wet, the excess acetone will tend to dilute the toner, rather than cleanly transferring it from the paper to the wood. By brushing back and forth for a few more seconds, you force the acetone down into the wood fibers, therefore getting a better transfer.



6 With all the parts cut out, you're ready to start building. Once you've mastered the art of making your own print-wood parts, you can take advantage of all the terrific plans that aren't offered as kits. Go for it! 🛠️