

Chair-building basics

For millenia, chairs have been expected to exceed the seemingly simple demands of seating.

Comfort, durability, and beauty are the criteria they must meet. The best provide a seamless blend of all three qualities. The worst can be bad indeed. Well-designed and properly built chairs provide comfortable and durable seating, are pleasing to look at, and fit into their surroundings. Small wonder that chair making is often considered to be the pinnacle of the wood-worker`s art.

By the time their use became more widespread in Europe in the 16th Century, chairs had become stylized to serve specific purposes. Dining chairs were built to fit around dining tables, and writing chairs were often paired with desks. Often, neither was matched to the human form; comfort frequently took second place to the formal function. Traditional dining chairs, for example, feature a backrest at an almost 90 degrees angle to the seat, obliging the user to sit ramrod straight.



Windsor Georgian
Double Bow with
cabriole legs
Wikimedia Commons

Although function remains an important design consideration, chair makers today typically give first consideration to the human form in their work, particularly when they are building custom-made chairs.

Once you have designed a comfortable chair, it is time to turn your attention to appearance. The design possibilities for chair making are virtually limitless.

(Excerpt. Source: Building chairs, The Art of Woodworking. 1994. St. Remy Press, Montreal-New York)

Vocabulary:

Millennia - millennia (a span of one thousand years)

Durability- holdbarhet

Seamless - sømløs

Blend - blande

Pinnacle - høydepunktet

Ramrod - ladestokken.

Virtually - praktisk talt