

Fitting a Bed Cloth to Slate Based Tables

1. Make Notches for the Centre Line of Table

Using a file and a tape measure put nicks in the slate centres of the ends of the table. Now with a taut string line you have the lateral measurements.

2. Fitting Bed Cloth

This operation can be carried out either by one or two people. In the latter case one person pulls the cloth and the other hammers in the tacks.

Place the bed cloth on the table with about 3 to 4 inches excess cloth overhanging the sides.

If using tacks, tack the cloth on the underside of the timber surround. Do not hit the tacks fully flat, so that they can easily be removed next time. Staples can be used on the sides, except at the pockets.

There are 12 positions where the tacks need to be driven into double layers of cloth for strength.

These are the 2 centres of the ends, the 2 centre pockets, the 4 corner pockets, and the 4 middles of the sides. The cloth will stretch, especially the width, and the excess can be trimmed later.

You can tack through one layer of cloth, then double over and tack for strength.

So, using about 8 tacks close together, tack the cloth (double layer) at the middle of one end, then at the other end stretch very tightly and tack in the double cloth.

The centre pockets are next. (The most difficult). I use 4 G clamps and pads. 2 at each centre pocket so that I can pull against them and pull the cloth down into the curve of the pocket and use my fingers to force the cloth under, and tack into single cloth underneath, and then I put a few tacks into double cloth. Then I position these 2 G clamps at the corner pockets without cloth tension.

Then I remove the other 2 G clamps and position them at the other corner pockets without cloth tension. I tack the opposite centre pocket pulling hard and down into the curve of the pocket. I do not need to slit the cloth. The cloth should sit tight against the fall of the slate. There will be wrinkles on the upper surface of the cloth.

These can be removed by pulling tightly at the corner pockets and clamping the tight cloth with the gee clamps. Then run the palm of hand in the direction of the nap over the whole surface to check for foreign bodies under the cloth. Now is the time to remove them.

Similar to the centre pockets, remove the G clamp and tack each corner with good tension. The ripples at the centre pockets should have stretched out.

Then tack the centres of the sides with strong tension.

Then with tension fill in with tacks every 4 to 5 inches.

3. Marking Out the Table

Stretch a string tightly along the length of the table using the notches for centring

This string can be held with staples, tacks or G clamps.

Now the 4 centre spots can be marked using the tape measure and the baulk line can be drawn using a 4B, or 5B pencil. Remove the string line. The semi circle can now be drawn and the other 2 spots are created.

Good luck,

Graeme Walters
Cannon Ball Billiards