

Top this! – with a little help from Mitre 10.

Mosaic work is colourful, creative and fun. In this project we've shown you how to create a tabletop that will be a unique expression of your creativity – and you'll have a great time doing it, too!

Don't panic about what sort of design you'll come up with – simply mixing different coloured tiles together can be very appealing, or you can follow geometric or more fanciful designs. Remember, mosaics are not like being able to draw or paint – the tiles do all the work for you!

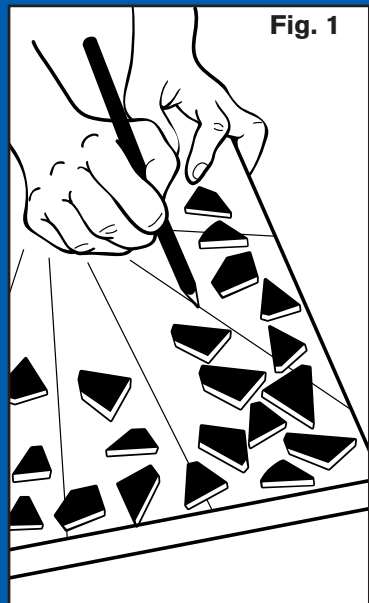


Fig. 1

Another great thing about this project is that it enables you to rejuvenate what may be an old or daggy piece of furniture. The tabletop illustrated in this project was purchased from a Salvation Army Op Shop, so don't rule out grabbing yourself a solid little table in the same way and working some magic on it. As long as the shape suits you, you can paint or refinish legs to suit your new mosaic creation.

Alternatively you can build your own coffee table using MitrePlan 40 – Make a coffee table. This will give you complete satisfaction of a job well done.

As for the tiles themselves, talk to your local tile supplier or Mitre 10 store – they're sure to have broken, discontinued or odds and end tiles that you can purchase and select some good colours and designs. Be sure to select tiles that are the same general thickness. Once you've laid them down and grouted the table, any sharp edges of the tiles that are not protected by the grout will be fairly menacing. The best bet is to select tiles that will sit at the same height when glued down.

Step 1: Break the tiles

Before starting, you need to decide on a theme for your tabletop design. Designs like waves, swirls, or perhaps an animal or floral image are not overly ambitious for a first timer effort. Select your tiles to suit the colours you will need to create your design.

Now put on your safety glasses and break your tiles by placing them face down in the towel, covering the tile back with the towel, and striking with the hammer. You're trying to create 20mm-40mm fragments, so don't pulverise the tile. Any larger pieces can be trimmed down using the tile nippers later.

Step 2: Prepare the tabletop

If your table top is timber, sand it back to create an even surface for the tile adhesive to stick to. If your table top is plastic, metal or laminate, you will need to cover the original table top with the tile underlay. Adhere the underlay to your table top using some construction adhesive and allow it to dry before attempting to work with the new surface.

Step 3: Lay out the tiles

Now draw out your design on the table top, taking the time to get the lines and shapes right. Once you are satisfied with the design, start filling in the patterns by dry-fitting the tile fragments in place (Fig. 1). Don't leave more than 5mm or so between tile fragments, and don't sit tiles too closely side by side as the grout will not be able to penetrate correctly later on. Use the tile nippers, always wearing your safety glasses, to trim tiles to size. We found holding the nippers and tile fragment inside a cardboard box was a good way of containing any flying fragments and dust when doing this. Take the time at this stage to ensure that your tile fragments are the right shape and size to do justice to your design.

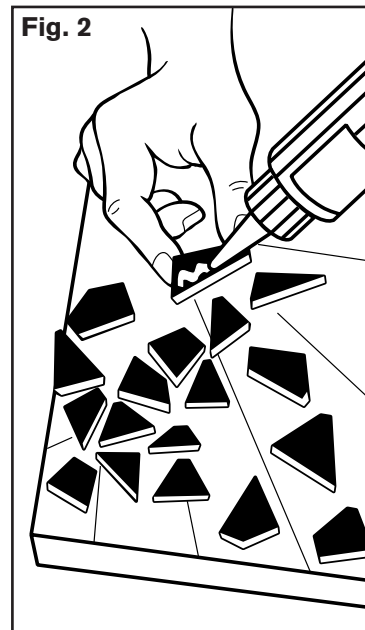


Fig. 2

Step 4: Stick down the tiles

Once you have completely covered the tabletop with tile fragments in the design of your choice, get comfortable and start gluing (Fig. 2). Start from one corner, and working with one tile fragment at a time, use your old knife or filling blade to apply tile adhesive to the back of each tile fragment. If your tiles are large enough, tile adhesive can be applied directly from its container. Press it down firmly onto the table top – but be careful not to squeeze all of the adhesive out from under it. Continue in this way until all tiles have been stuck down, using the tweezers to work with small or fiddly tiles. When all the tiles are all stuck down, use your wooden ruler to check the level of the new surface you have created. Press down any raised tiles, and use your tweezers to pull up and reglue any tiles that seem too pressed down – you are aiming for a uniform levelled surface that will take grout well. Follow the manufacturer's instructions in regard to drying time.

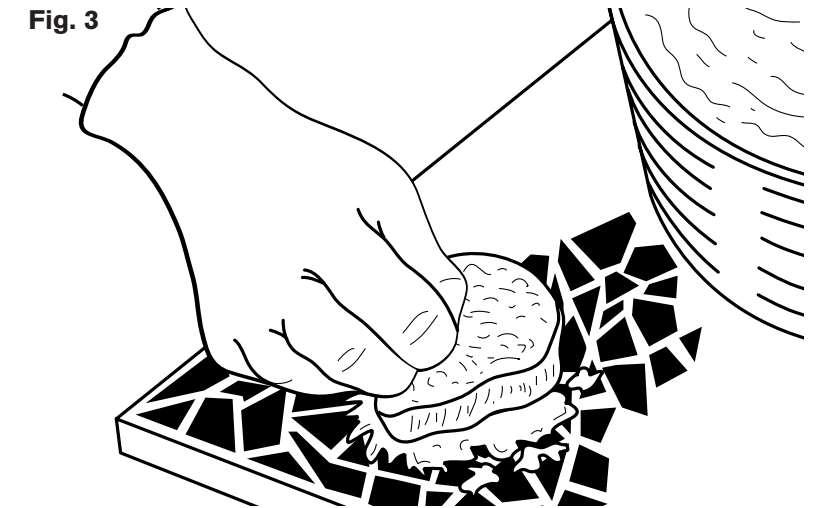
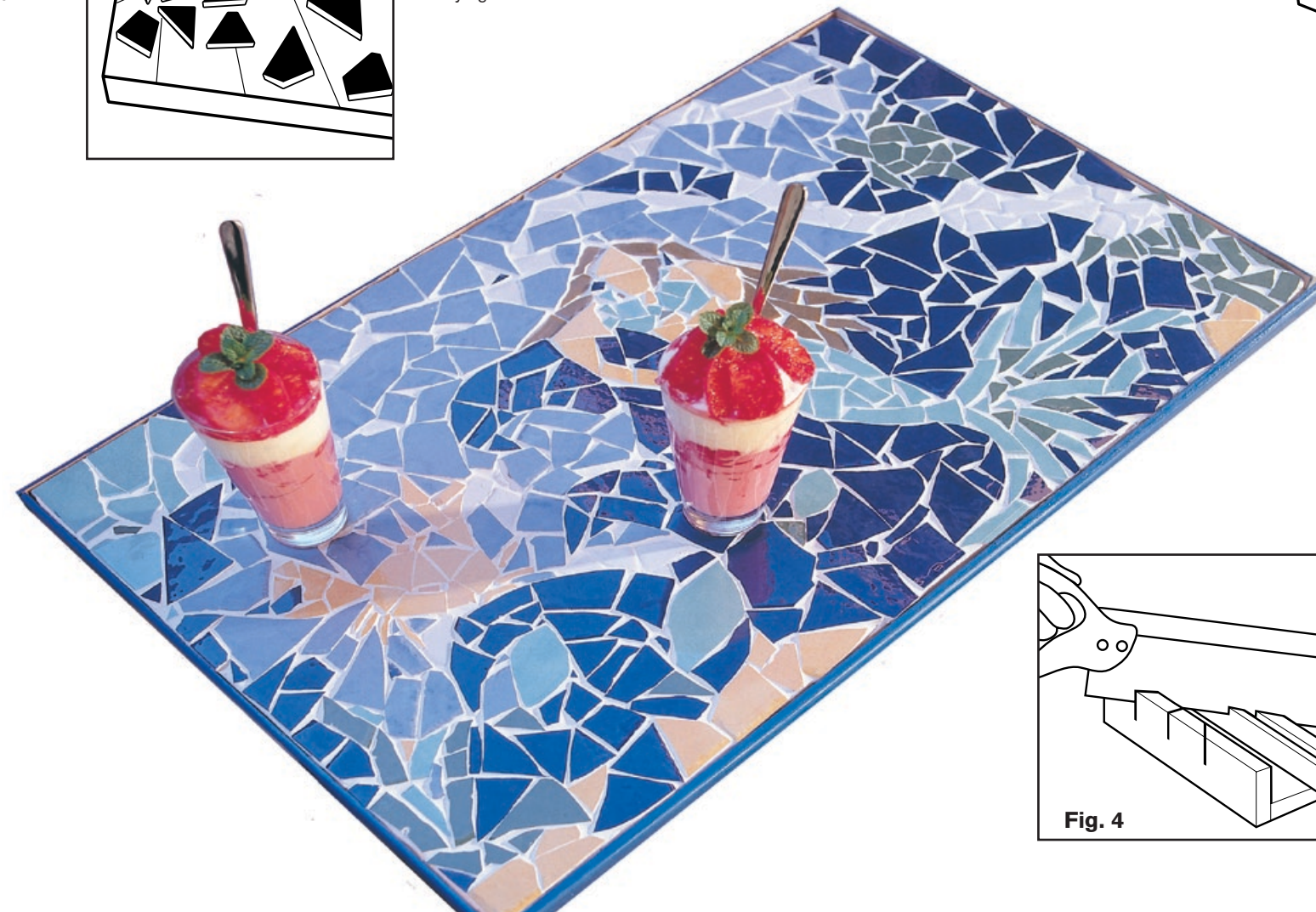


Fig. 3

Step 5: Apply the grout

Make up the grout in accordance with the directions on the pack. If unsure of grouting technique, refer to MitrePlan 15 – Take on wall tiling for assistance. Once it is ready to go, apply it in sections to the tabletop, working the grout into the gaps between the tiles with the grout squeegee (Fig. 3). It is preferable to overfill rather than underfill at this stage. Keep working back and forth until you have removed as much of the excess grout as possible with the squeegee, and ensured that all gaps are filled with grout. Allow the table to sit for ten minutes, then fill the large bucket with clean water. Take the barely damp, flat, smooth sponge and start wiping over the surface of the tiles to remove the excess grout. Rinse out the sponge constantly – you should be able to get one or two good swipes before needing to rinse. Make sure you wring out the sponge well each time. Once you are satisfied with the finish on your tabletop, leave the grout to dry. Check the manufacturers instructions on the grout packet for recommended drying times.

Step 6: Finishing

Once the grout is dry, a haze will probably form across the tiles no matter how careful you were with cleaning off the excess grout. Use your clean rag to polish the haze off. Now you need to finish the edges of your table. Use some beading, mitre cutting the corners to create neat edges (Fig. 4). To do this, simply select some beading or edge trim from your Mitre 10 store wide enough to cover the old edge of the table and the new tiled surface, and measure the length of each side of the table. Cut the mitres so that the lengths you have just measured form the short side of the mitre. Apply the construction adhesive to each length, and press into place along the side of the table, using the PVA glue to fix the mitre joins together. Use tape or some other form of temporary fixing to brace the four pieces in place while the glue cures. Once dry, sand back and finish the trim as desired.

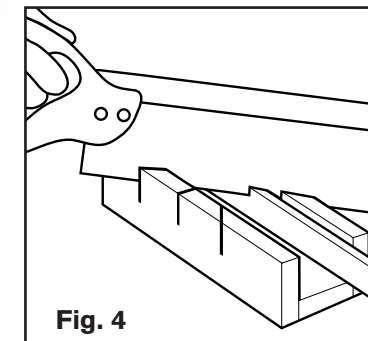


Fig. 4