

Fireplace Insert

Intro: Fireplace insert

It's time to make the fireplace more attractive and cover that dark gaping opening since it's not going to be in use, and seal up that drafty chimney while we're at it.

Make a fireplace insert that looks like cut logs to hide your fireplace opening when not in use. This insert can easily be swapped out for the regular fire grille when I'm ready to use the fireplace.

Ready? Let's make!



Step 1: Log sections

I used very dry tree branches for my screen. Using a bandsaw I cut them into 2-3" inch pucks. They don't have to be perfect cuts, just roughly the right size each. A little irregularity to your logs will add to the realism.

Make sure you have a few different size logs to cut into pucks, you want larger pucks for the majority of the wood and smaller ones to fill in the gaps.



Step 2: Sand pucks

Depending on your bandsaw blade, and the type of wood you use, your pucks may have a mill marks on the surface from sawing. Spend a little time with a sander to create a clean and uniform surface on each puck.



Step 3: Stain

I applied an oil finish to seal and protect the wood from future damage, and to give it a nice look. Make sure to wear protective gloves and to work in a well ventilated area when applying any type of varnish, stain, or oil.

Allow the wood to soak up the oil after application, then wipe off any excess. After, let dry completely.



Step 4: Measure fireplace opening

Before we can stick the cut pucks to a backboard we need to measure the opening that we'll be putting this screen into. Carefully measure the opening for your fireplace, measuring all corners in case your opening is irregular or not square.

Transfer your fireplace dimensions onto a 1/2" sheet of plywood and cut out.



Step 5: Spray backboard

When your backboard is cut out paint it with a few coats of matte black spray paint.



Step 6: Glue pucks

When the backboard paint has completely dried the wood pucks can be glued to one side. I had originally tried mechanically fastening them with screws, but found that regular wood glue works fine.

Starting with the larger pucks, apply a healthy dollop of wood glue and arrange over the backboard. Continue gluing down pucks working down to the smaller pucks, making sure to scatter the sizes. Finish gluing with the smallest pucks which will fill in the gaps between the larger pucks.



Step 7: Finished board

Here's what my backboard looked like with all the wood pucks glued down. You can really see the difference in cut depths in these pictures, this will make the fireplace look convincing at a glance that it's really stacked with full logs.





Step 8: Install

Carefully maneuver the screen into place and push into the fireplace opening. My fireplace tapers inwards on the sides, and has a slightly lower lintel which will stop the screen from being pushed too far into the fireplace cavity.

Gently push the insert into the opening until it is fully seated and secure, held by friction.



Step 9: Enjoy!

With the faux log screen in place your fireplace can be the center of attention again, even without a fire going! When you want to use your fireplace again, simply remove the faux log screen. I think this is much nicer to look at than a dark fireplace opening.

Have you made your own **fireplace insert**? I want to see it!

