

Balsa Wood Inspection Techniques

The Thumbnail Test: Gently press your thumbnail into the wood.

Soft: Nail goes in easily.

Medium: Requires moderate pressure to dent.

Firm/Hard: Requires significant pressure, and leaves a minimal mark.

Flex Testing: Gently bend the sheet across its width. Medium-hard wood will resist bending.

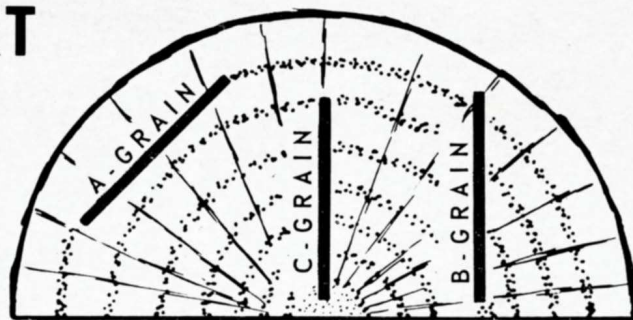
Weight Comparison: If buying in person, hold two sheets of the same size in different hands. The heavier sheet is typically more dense and firmer, while the lighter sheet is softer (contest grade).

Color/Appearance: Medium/hard wood can sometimes have a slightly darker, reddish, or brownish hue, whereas very white, light-weight wood is often softer and weaker.

BALSA ID. CHART FOR MODEL AIRCRAFT BUILDERS

Balsa is a most versatile building material. When you use the correct type your models will be lighter, stronger, look better, and fly better. You will need all three grain types. Learn how to identify them.

The strength of balsa is directly related to its density. The heavier the wood, the stronger and harder it is.



CROSS SECTION OF BALSA LOG

A-GRAIN sheet balsa has long fibers that show up as long grain lines. It is very flexible across the sheet and bends around curves easily. Also warps easily. Sometimes called "tangent cut".

DO: Use for sheet covering rounded fuselages and wing leading edges, planking fuselages, forming tubes, strong flexible spars, HL glider fuselages.

DON'T: Use for sheet balsa wings or tail surfaces, flat fuselage sides, ribs, or formers.

B-GRAIN sheet balsa has some of the qualities of both type A and type C. Grain lines are shorter than type A, and it feels stiffer across the sheet. It is a general purpose sheet and can be used for many jobs. Sometimes called "random cut".

DO: Use for flat fuselage sides, trailing edges, wing ribs, formers, planking gradual curves, wing leading edge sheeting.

DON'T: Use where type A or type C will do a significantly better job.

C-GRAIN sheet balsa has a beautiful mottled appearance. It is very stiff across the sheet and splits easily. But when used properly, it helps to build the lightest, strongest models. Most warp resistant type. Sometimes called "quarter grain".

DO: Use for sheet balsa wings and tails, flat fuselage sides, wing ribs, formers, trailing edges. Best type for HL glider wings and tails.

DON'T: Use for curved planking, rounded fuselages, round tubes, HL glider fuselages, or wing spars.

