Choose Your Wood

Before we get started, it would benefit you to look at the wood you are using for sheeting your foam parts. Most models from 0.40-sized sport models to 40% monster IMAC airplanes are using 1/16-inch balsa to sheet almost everything including the wings. We use 4-inch x 48-inch sheets as a basis and cut them down from there.

There's a big difference in density of balsa and we found in one batch a sheet that weighed 11 grams and another that was 70 grams! The heavy wood should be a tad stronger but I doubt there is any sheeting application that needs lumber like that 70-gram plank. Imagine the variations you could have if you were to just blindly start gluing sheets together at random. It is better to know what you have from the start by weighing each sheet on a good digital scale. I picked mine up at an office supply store for $29.00.

Use the lighter, more bendable woods for shorter runs like the stabs or for places that require a tight bend like the turtle deck. But remember, the light wood is also very soft and gouges easily making handling and your finishing job a delicate process. Use harder wood if you want a more robust surface to finish. A soft, contest-grade sheet weighs something in the neighborhood of 14 to 18 grams (4 to 6 pound density). We used these everywhere but the main wings.

We used planks that came in at about 18 to 22 grams (6 to 8 pound density) for the wings, and tried to avoid any wood over 24-25 grams. Before any foam was glued we weighed the individual parts and made sure that the left and rights sides were as close to the same weight as possible.