A CASE FOR RECYCLING
## Turn Your Old PC Into a Coffee Table
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Some 50 to 80 percent of the toxic computer waste "recycled" in the U.S. gets dumped on the shores of poor countries that have lower environmental standards. Though you should never tamper with a color monitor (which contains 4 to 8 pounds of lead), other parts of your computer are safe to remove and reuse. Several companies collect and resell old computers and their components (check the Yellow Pages). I picked up a pair of casings from a local reseller for about $5, but a few visits to a dot-com dumpster might just as easily unearth a mountain of metal for free. Depending on what you get your paws on, try building one of the tables below, or use them as a jumping-off point for your own e-designs.

MODEL: N-D

N-D TABLE ReadyMade
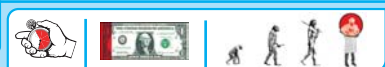
INGREDIENTS:
☐ 2 CPU casings, one horizontal, one vertical
☐ 2 8" x 18" pieces of scrap hardwood
☐ 1 8" x 18" piece of scrap wood, plywood, or MDF
☐ Handful 6" x 3/4" panhead screws
☐ 2 1 1/2" flathead wood screws
☐ Spray paint
☐ Clear coat (polyurethane) or tung oil

TOOLS:
☐ Drill
☐ Saw
☐ Small, round file
☐ Sandpaper
☐ Tape measure
☐ Pencil
☐ Straight edge

MAKE IT:

1. The base of the N-D Table consists of a horizontal CPU casing on its side reinforced by a length of attractive hardwood. (Many lumber yards sell hardwood scraps at a reduced rate. Ask around.) The same wood is used in the upper, horizontal casing between the tabletop and the shelf below. **2.** To begin, cut the scrap wood that will attach to the bottom of the base. This will act as the "foot" and won't be visible, so it can be lower-quality wood. The base should overhang the wood by 3/8" all the way around. **3.** Cut the wood that will form the vertical reinforcement for the base. This should be slightly narrower than the base and equal to its height. **4.** Cut the wood spacer for the top. This should be a little more than half the width of the casing and just tall enough to slip inside. **5.** Attach the foot to the bottom of the base with one screw at each corner. Drill a new hole for each screw and file off any snags. **6.** Turn the base upside down and position the vertical wood reinforcement. It should be located about one-third from the rear of the base for stability. Drill two holes down through the foot and into the reinforcement. (Be sure to countersink the screws in the foot so the screw heads don't scratch the floor or cause the table to rock.) Next, turn the base over and drill two holes into the reinforcement through the top. Finally, a quarter of the distance from the front edge of the base, drill two holes through the top,

as shown in the drawing. **7.** Remove the wood reinforcement and position the second casing, which will form the bottom shelf, on top of the base. Center the shelf on the base and make sure the two are squared with each other. Insert a pencil through each hole in the top of the base and mark their locations on the bottom of the shelf. It's very important that these holes line up. **8.** Remove the shelf and position the wood spacer inside. Mark one more hole on the underside of the shelf alongside the two already marked. The goal is to have the bottom of the spacer attached securely along its entire length. Mark the location of the outer two holes on the top of the shelf so you can screw into the spacer's top edge. **9.** Drill all the holes and file off any burrs. The holes should be large enough for the screws to pass through cleanly. **10.** Do a test fit to make sure everything lines up properly. First, drive two screws through the shelf into the top edge of the spacer. Then drive the two wood screws up through the foot and into the bottom of the base reinforcement. Set the shelf on the base as you did before. Align the holes and set the remaining screws. **11.** Once you've got a good fit, pull everything apart and paint the metal pieces. **12.** Sand the wood pieces well (at a safe distance from the drying paint) and finish with paint or a coat of polyurethane or tung oil. **13.** When everything is dry, put all the pieces back together.

T-42 TABLE

INGREDIENTS:
- ☐ 2 CPU casings, one horizontal, one vertical
- ☐ 2 8" x 18" pieces of scrap wood, plywood, or MDF
- ☐ Handful of 6" x 3/4" panhead screws
- ☐ Spray paint
- ☐ 4 stick-on rubber feet
- ☐ Epoxy

TOOLS:
- ☐ Drill
- ☐ Saw
- ☐ Small, round file
- ☐ Coarse sandpaper
- ☐ Tape measure
- ☐ Pencil
- ☐ Straight edge

MAKE IT:
1. This table's base will be made from the vertical CPU casing and two pieces of wood— a top piece and a back piece. Cut each piece of wood to match the inner width of the casing. Then cut the back piece to match the casing's height, and the other to a length 2" shy of the casing's depth. **2.** Slide the back piece into position as shown in the drawing. Use the casing's existing holes to attach the wood. Be sure to pre-drill holes in the wood so it doesn't split. **3.** Drill two new holes near the top edge of each side of the base casing, and position the top piece of wood as shown. The surface of the wood should sit flush with the top edges of the casing. Pre-drill the wood and attach. **4.** To prepare the tabletop, set the top casing into position as shown and drill two holes through the metal lip at the rear of the casing and into the back of the base. File the holes in the tabletop until smooth. **5.** Paint the two halves of the table. Automotive touch-up paint gives a nice finish and comes in a pleasing array of colors. The tabletop shown here is classic '87 Nissan red. Lightly sand and prime the metal for best results. Work outside or in a well-ventilated area—the paint is stinky and bad for you. **6.** Once you've applied a few coats and the paint is dry, join the halves. Use coarse sandpaper to rough up the underside of the tabletop where it will rest on the base. On the top of the base, mix two dabs of epoxy per the manufacturer's instructions. Set the tabletop on the base and make sure it's centered. Install the last two screws. **7.** Let the epoxy cure, stick on the rubber feet at the bottom of the base, and load it up with copies of your favorite how-to magazine.

(**Note:** If the table gets moved a lot the epoxy may not hold. If it comes apart, try sinking a screw through the top to hold it in place.)
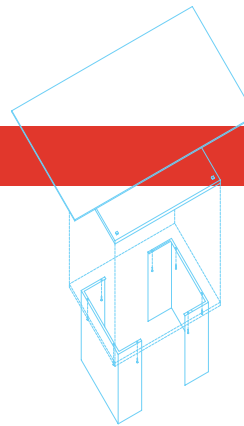
JAVA TABLE

INGREDIENTS:
- ☐ 2 horizontal CPU casings
- ☐ A big slab of something (the tabletop)
- ☐ Handful of 6" x 3/4" panhead screws
- ☐ Plywood or MDF
- ☐ Spray paint

TOOLS:
- ☐ Drill
- ☐ Saw
- ☐ Sandpaper
- ☐ Tape measure
- ☐ Pencil
- ☐ Straight edge

MAKE IT:
1. This table uses two covers from horizontal CPU covers, but vertical ones will work just as well. Assemble the base casings in the same manner as the T-42 Table. **2.** You can use any material for the top; we chose an old slate chalkboard salvaged from a demolition site. If you have a top you can drill into, simply paint the covers and screw them on. If you don't, cut a piece of plywood to a size smaller than the top and attach the bases to that, then adhere the top to the plywood. If the top is a heavy material, like slate, just let it sit on the plywood. Its mass will keep it from moving around.