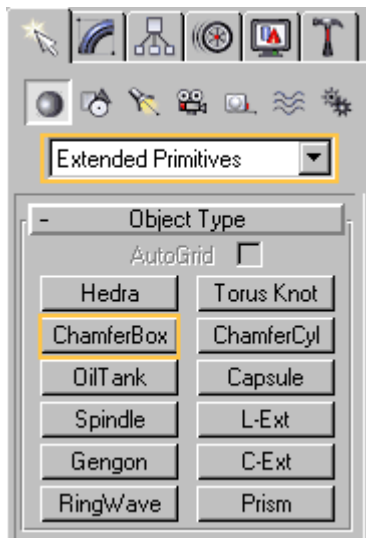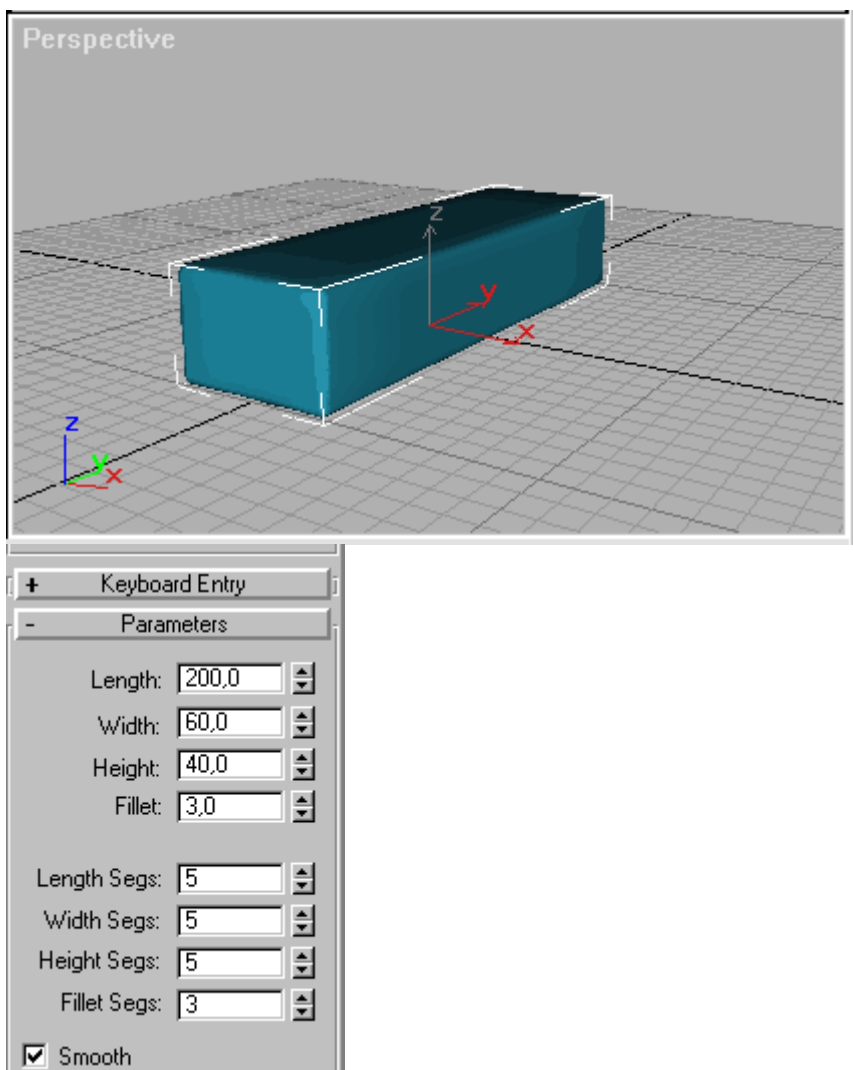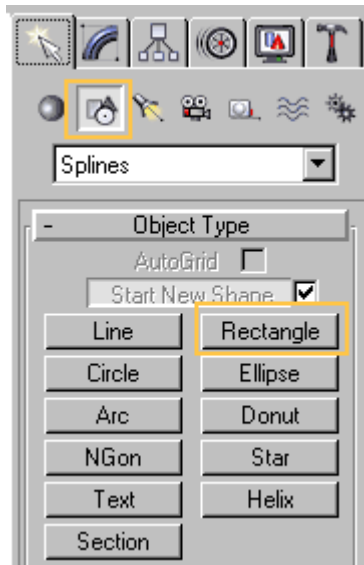First, click on the snapgrid button [icons].Then create a chamferbox using the technique shown on the pic below.
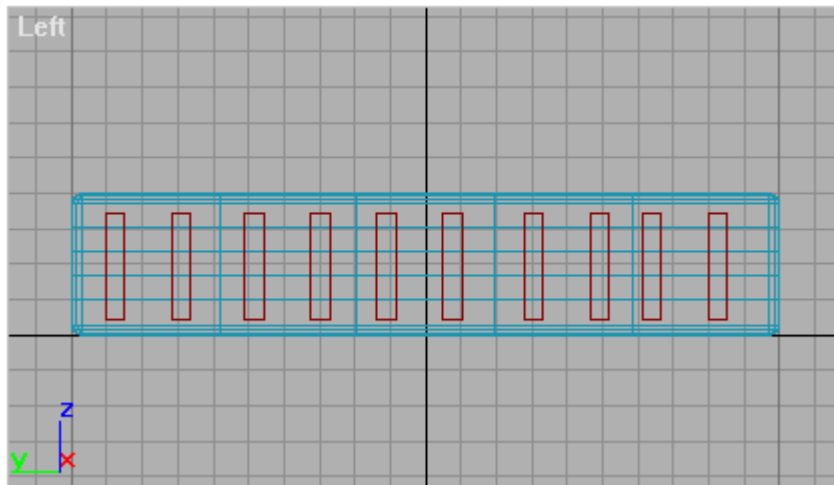
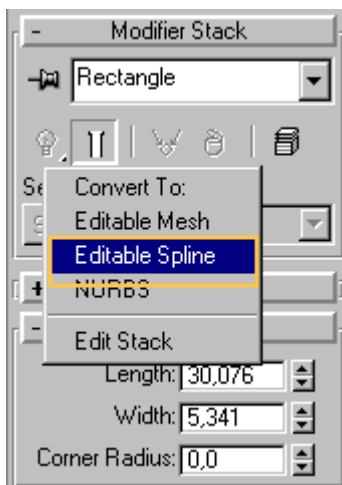Arrange to have it matching the setting on that picture :
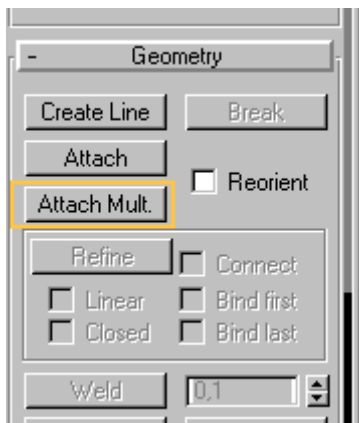
Now, go to the spline menu and click on 'rectange'

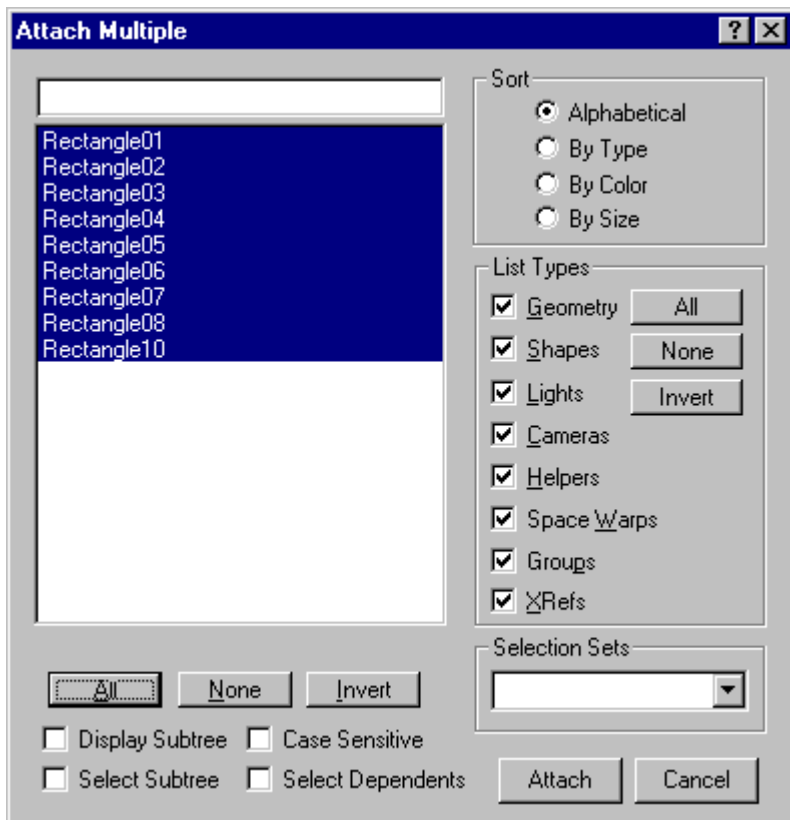draw one rectange and clone it as shown on the next pic

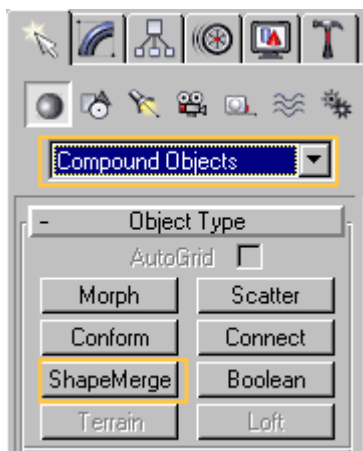select one rectangle, convert it to an editable spline

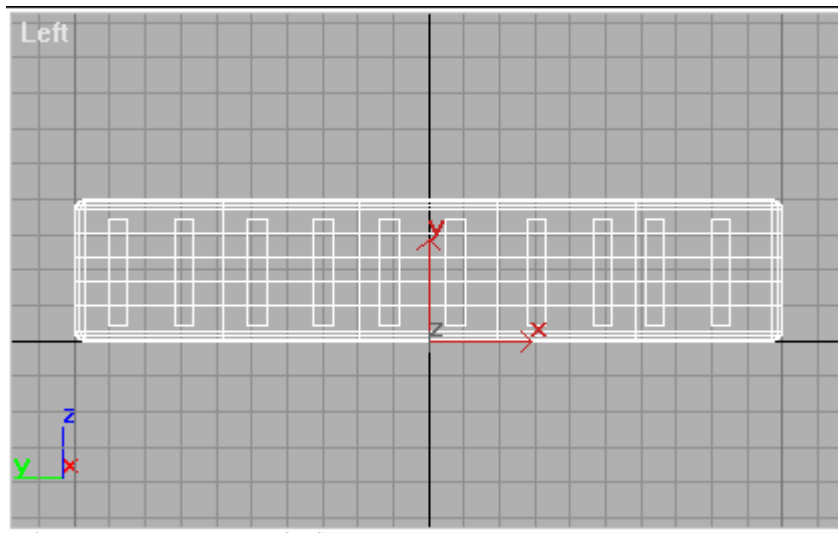in the modifier panel of that rectangle, click on 'attach multiple

in the attach popup window appearing, click on ALL, this will select all the other rectangles
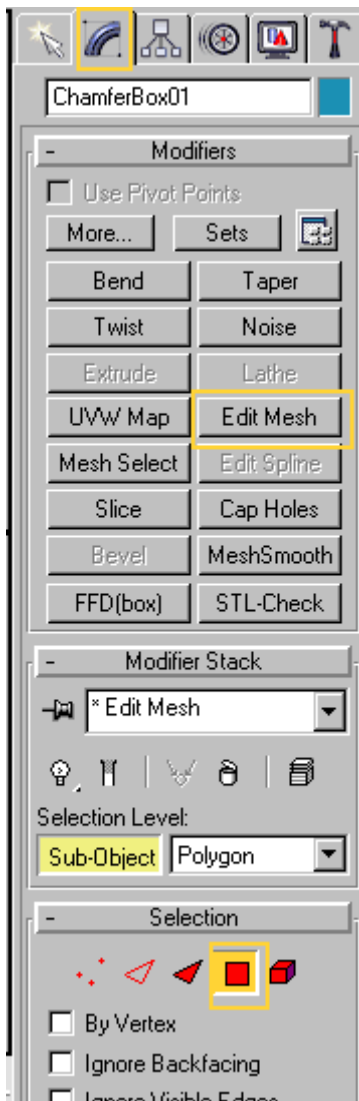
Select, the chamfer box you created earlier,go to the create panel, in the compound objects menu, select SHAPE MERGE
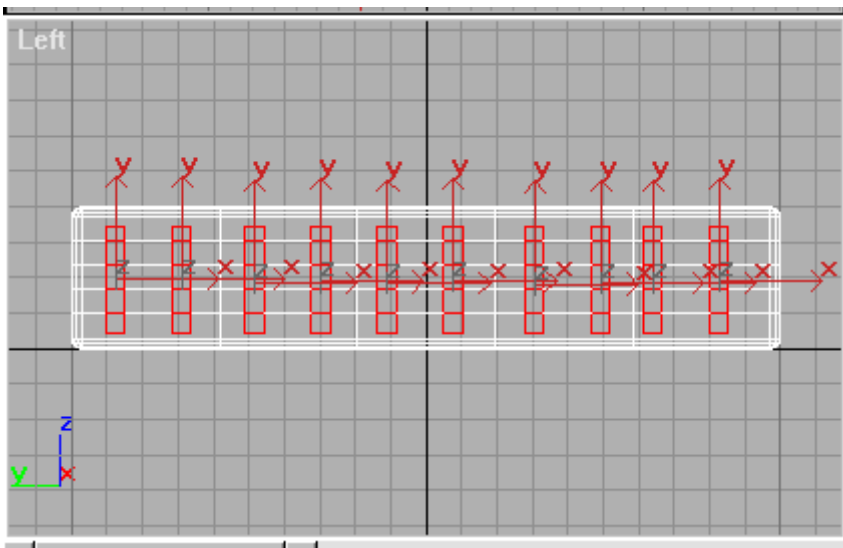
click on the PICK SHAPE button, and select the set of rectangles, your scene looks like that now
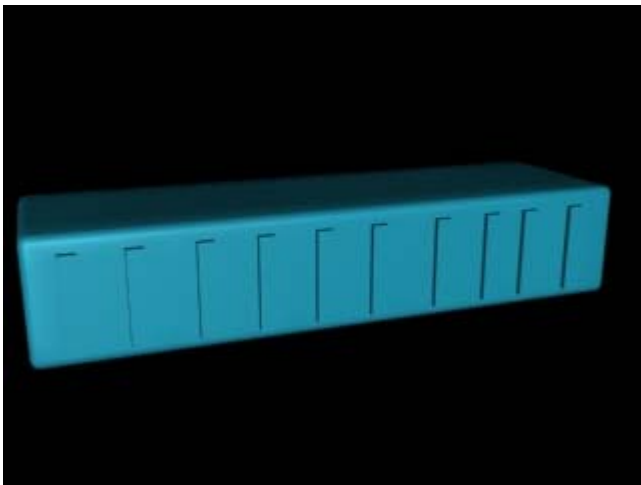
go to the modifiers panel, add an EDIT MESH modifier to the remaining object, click on the SUB OBJECT button, and select by POLYGON.

oh miracle, the rectangles you merged now appear selected in the main object :)

scroll down a bit the edit mesh panel and look for EXTRUDE.enter a positive or negative value in there and see what happens

Congrats ! you just mastered a VERY powerful technique :)