

ROUTING 2002 TESTS

Trend Mortise & Tenon Jig



As you unpack the components of this jig from its neat packaging, you can't help but marvel at their build quality. The main ones have been constructed from well-formed and finished steel plate. And it's good to see that Trend takes producing the accompanying user manual very seriously indeed.

This is an excellent booklet that enables the jig to be assembled and operated without tantrums and hair loss. Its text has been exceptionally well laid out and is satisfyingly accompanied by copious well-drawn illustrations.

Basically, the jig consists of three main parts: the body, a tilting back plate and the top plate. The main body needs to be screwed down to a stable workbench. Although, it can be attached to a stout baseboard, and therefore clamped to a bench, and so become portable and more space efficient.

The tilting back plate has various slots to accommodate up to four F clamps and so facilitates an impressive range of work/timber clamping configurations. The top plate retains the adjustable guide bush templates that are locked by Bristol (like ratchet) handles. The jig

does away with the mortice gauge and just the centre line and desired tenon width need to be marked. The superb steel set up bar - no cheap plastic moulding for this crucial tool - dictates the correct positioning of the guide bush templates. A chart in the manual states which of the five sizes of guide bush is correct for the required tenon thickness. Once the guide bush and cutter have been fitted to your router, the depth of tenon is set and so the tenon may be routed out. This is a surprisingly straightforward process. The only small problem I experienced was that my guide bush kept snagging at one particular point on the right hand template. However, a little fettling soon remedied this.

Pleasingly, routing the corresponding mortice does not require any additional adjustment. After fitting the appropriate size of cutter for your tenon thickness and the supplied metal guide bush and collar

(one size does all), you may set your router's depth stop to the required measurement and rout the mortice - which takes just a few brief moments!

I fully expected my first mortice and tenon joint not to mate too well. After all, with some dovetail jigs this can be common until a little trial-and-error resetting is undertaken. However, I am pleased to report that they afforded a nice fit with clean and square enough shoulders to prevent any unsightly gap lines.

The great boon of this jig is that the vertical guide pivots and enables angled tenons to be cut. Thanks to a graduated scale, and the excellent clamping configurations, forming these tenons are almost as straightforward as regular ones. The only difference is when setting out the tenon width, but even a mathematically challenged person like me can figure out this calculation! The tilting back plate enables front angled tenons to be produced and couple this with the vertical guide set at an angle and compound angled tenons can be readily achieved. Apart from the

numerous tenon varieties (including useful twin tenons), square tenons may be routed by turning the templates around. Although, you will have to square the mortice ends with a chisel.

An additional feature of this jig is that it enables the user to create dowel joints by utilising the holes in the template either side of the guide bush guide. I found that this could be useful for repetition jointing with timber of exactly the same thickness.

Although, for a small batch run I think I would prefer to use a regular drill, or brace, and bit. For by the time I had fiddled about with setting the various clamps and template; I could have completed the job in the traditional way.

Apart from the fact that the jig isn't particularly suited for large-scale joinery, there are few drawbacks.

However, no cutters are supplied as standard and an appropriate set of cutters (set/MT1) will set you back £46.94 (inc VAT). And for the health conscious, a dust extraction kit (MT/dustkit) will cost you a further £11.69 (inc VAT). A replacement 14 piece plastic guided bush set is also available, but I would recommend that their optional steel guide bushes be used.

This ingenious mortice and tenon jig has been well designed and manufactured. And even though you will probably need to buy the companion cutter set, it must be deemed good value. It could prove extremely useful for chair making as well as general woodworking.

However, it may turn out to be an extravagant buy if you don't envisage undertaking a large number of mortice and tenon joints.



Verdict Straightforward but cutters are extra

Price £176.19 inc VAT

Contact 0800 487363 www.trendmachinery.co.uk