

Belfast sink jig

The aperture for a Belfast sink is normally made to allow a small overhang, normally around 10mm into the sink so that any water on the tops flows back into the sink, not under it where it can set up rot. This overhang is allowed for on the back as well as the left and right side, while the front edge of the sink is normally set up so that it projects just proud of the front of the worktop.

With these as starting points it's simply a matter of measuring the internal dimensions of the sink to then calculate the opening you need to rout.

The Belfast sink jig can be used in two ways, either using the location pins against the front edge of the worktop to set the back edge distance, or, if the sink is very wide, the jig can be positioned with the pin edge at 90° to the edge to allow extra cutting width.

Standard backsets using the pins range from 340mm to 500mm in 20mm increments so it's easy to get the jig set if your sink hits a standard depth.

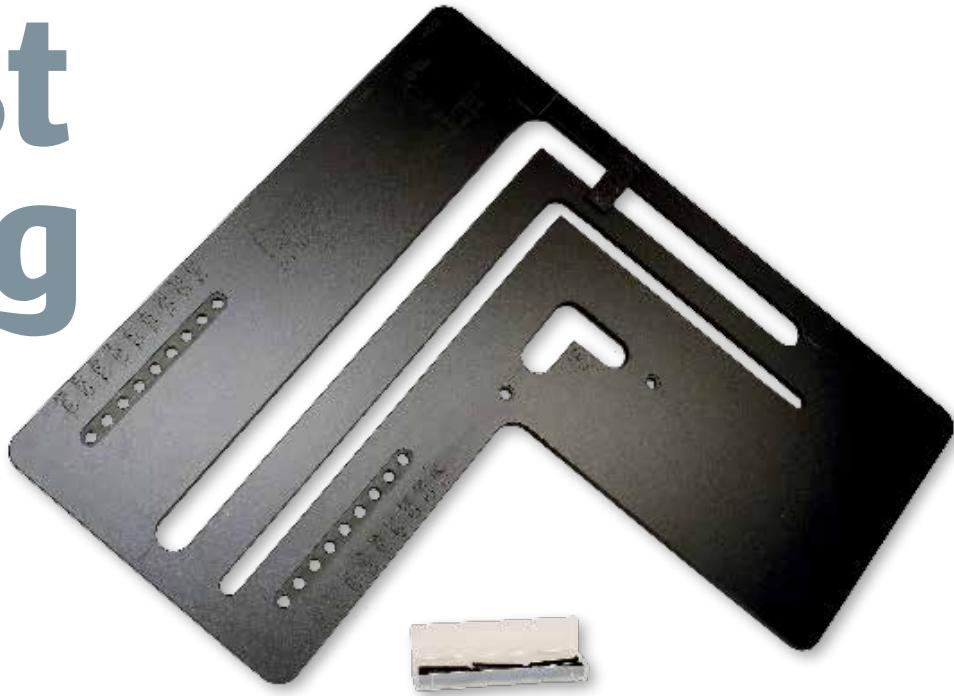
It's easy to alter should the need arise by simply placing packers between the jig pins and the worktop edge to alter the setting by the correct amount to gain the overhang required.

Using the jig in this orientation, the maximum sink width you can rout is 630mm.

Wider sinks, up to 1030mm, can be routed by swinging the jig through 90°, but now you have to rely on setting out marks to ensure you are accurately in position. That's easy enough though as the jig has a set of datum gauge lines scribed at the corners and end of the routing slot. This sets the jig to the correct backset, allowing for the 30mm guide bush the jig uses when fitted with a 1/2in-diameter cutter.

It makes life very easy when setting the jig with or without the pins as the top can be marked to the correct aperture and the jig is aligned to these marks using the scribed datums.

In situations where the jig extends beyond the edge of the worktop for the cut at a right angle to it and therefore prevents the scribe lines on the jig being used to align it accurately to your layout marks, there's a supplied datum block with a corresponding scribe mark. This drops into the jig opening close to the worktop edge to show the correct position of the scribe against your layout lines, allowing you to accurately position the jig and clamp it off ready for routing. Using the standard slot gives



▲ After establishing the aperture the top is marked up to the exact size



▲ Specific backsets can be set using the supplied pins



▲ You can easily shim the jig to alter the backset if needed



▲ The jig comes with a datum gauge block to correctly set it up to the layout lines

a 25mm corner radius but if you want a tighter radius there's a small corner aperture within the jig that takes it down to 7mm.

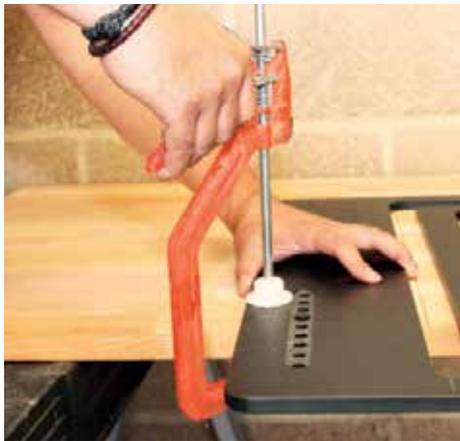
You need to rout the corners first and then join them, using the jig, to rout the straight runs. Again, datum scribes are used so that the jig aligns correctly if you opt for this particular radius setting.

Making the cuts

As with a standard mason mitre jig the cut has to be made by ensuring the cutter engages from the left so that it doesn't break out the front edge of the top.

This means you have to rout one half of the top then flip it over and reposition the jig to rout the other.

Kit & Tools



▲ Once the position is set the jig is clamped off securely



▲ The cut is made in two halves, working from the left inwards to avoid breakout



▲ Make the cut in a series of passes for best results



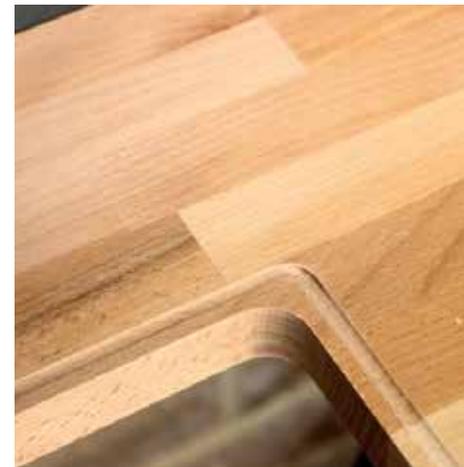
▲ With the jig set and clamped for the drip, the first cut is made



▲ The worktop is then flipped over and the marks transferred



▲ The jig setup is then repeated...



▲ The jig is again flipped to form the second half to leave a neat finish



▲ ...to make the second half of the process



▲ The result is a crisp clean finish



▲ The drip groove is formed by first marking the backset start and finish point for the cut

Drip groove

A second aperture in the jig is for the drip groove. This needs a 16mm guide bush as well as a small core box cutter of around 2.5mm radius.

No need for any pins or alignments to datums for this. It just needs the outer edge of the jig aperture to sit tightly to the newly cut opening in the worktop. This gives the correct backset for the cutter to allow the drip groove to sit directly over the sink edge once the top is fitted.

You should set the cut back in from the edge of the worktop by around 5mm so that it

doesn't let water run beyond the front edge and down the unit. Again, this is a two-part operation, cutting from the left and then flipping the jig to cut the right-hand side.

Conclusion

With the opening complete, on reflection it's certainly a jig that removes the stress involved in calculating what to cut and working out any offsets if you try and template it yourself. Once you know the sink opening and allow the overhang, that's all you need worry about and mark up accordingly.

You would maybe need to do a few of them to justify the outlay, but speed and simplicity of use would certainly escalate the thought process if the kitchen tops are a big investment, which they invariably tend to be once you go past the chipboard core and laminate option.

Good The Woodworking Verdict

+ Easy setup; assured results
- Expensive for a one off

Rating ★★★★★

Typical price: £118.97

Length 655 mm

Width 600 mm

Thickness 12 mm

Weight 3.6kg

You need to transfer any layout marks accordingly by squaring the width across the edge and onto the flip side as well as marking and setting the depth if you aren't using the pins.

Making the cuts in a few passes as is normal with this kind of cut leaves a great finish to the end grain as well as a clean aperture, but make sure you have a sharp cutter and work at a decent pace as the end grain and corner radii can be especially prone to scorching otherwise.

You should also be aware that the waste is

quite heavy and although still clamped to the jig during the cutting process, will still prove a dead weight once it becomes free of the worktop. This can, as I found, twist the jig slightly, making the cutter dig marginally into the newly cut aperture. Nothing too drastic though, and easily sorted with a few rubs of abrasive to feather it out.

Had I thought about it, common sense would have told me that you should support the waste piece. Ah, but hindsight is a wonderful thing!