
Subject: Table saw recommendations?

Posted by [crazychile](#) on Mon, 29 Mar 2004 12:47:09 GMT

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I am totally inexperienced when it comes to woodworking. I have a small Delta 10in. table saw but it wont work for cutting 4x8 sheets of wood accurately. After a breif search it looks like there isn't a fence available for it that will do what I want. So I am wondering what you guys like for table saws and what features I should look for. Model #'s would be helpfull also. I really just want the ability to make speaker boxes and I'll probably try to rebuild my kitchen cabinets at some time. Heres the catch, I really don't want to spend more than \$500 if possible. Can this be done or am I dreaming? The local autosound installer had a saw once that was set up like a big easel where the saw moved vertically to cut the 4x8 sheet that was also vertical. It seemed pretty accurate. Is something like that in my price range? Any info appreciated! crazychile

Subject: Re: Table saw recommendations?

Posted by [Dean Kukral](#) on Mon, 29 Mar 2004 13:34:38 GMT

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When I have a project, I usually have the store cut the 4x8 into slightly oversize pieces and then I neatly trim them when I get home. They do it for free or for a nominal fee. I doubt that you can do much for under \$500, but I have not looked. I suggest that you get one of those fences for portable power hand saws. You clamp the fence to the 4x8 and run the saw along side of the fence. They are not too expensive.

Subject: Re: Table saw recommendations?

Posted by [Ryder](#) on Mon, 29 Mar 2004 13:36:27 GMT

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Hi: I am hardly an expert myself and will be intereseted in what some others have to say here. I think it is quite hard to get what you want unless you stumble onto something used and then tweak it a little. My home brew answers were always slow and a bit awkward. To get really good cuts, without a lot of set up time, you need a steady and large table and steady blade and a square fence. A lot to ask at your price point. My answer was to buy my big pieces from a lumber yard in town that does a lot of custom work. They make the first cuts and bring it down to a size for the project where my smaller table can handle them nicely. This solution was just to easy to bother with anything else. I will never have the table they use. Handling full sheets by yourself on typical home (\$500 table) equipment is not easy. Cheers Craig Ryder

Subject: follow-up

Posted by [Dean Kukral](#) on Mon, 29 Mar 2004 13:50:09 GMT

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I have looked and tried to find a reference to the thing I was describing, but I keep getting the wrong thing. What I am describing is a piece of aluminum railing about four feet long that you clamp to the plywood and run your saw along the edge, keeping a straight line. I suppose that you could do the same with a length of wood, but then you would not get to buy a neat new tool. I have seen these in the woodworking magazines.

Subject: Re: Table saw recommendations?

Posted by [elektratic](#) on Mon, 29 Mar 2004 22:15:51 GMT

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Crazychile, You are describing a panel saw:

http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/B00006LPP9/qid=1080601120/sr=1-10/ref=sr_1_10/103-7772060-7408635?v=glance&s=hil am no expert, but from hanging out at woodworking forums I believe that even experienced woodworkers don't generally try to wrestle large sheets of plywood or MDF onto their tablesaws. They use a good old circular saw and a clamped straight edge or a sawboard. I cut panels slightly oversize with this method, then finish on a tablesaw. If you take your time and measure carefully, you can get extremely accurate results with a circular saw. If you want a tablesaw (not a panel saw), the best deal on the planet is the Ryobi BT3100. I love mine. Check out <http://www.bt3central.com>. You can do searches on <http://www.woodworking.com> and other forums to get views on other saws by the likes of Delta, Jet, Grizzly, etc. Good luck!

Pi Studio 2 Construction Pix

Subject: Re: Table saw recommendations?

Posted by [wunhuanglo](#) on Mon, 29 Mar 2004 22:45:55 GMT

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I think you may have the wrong idea about this whole thing. Most non-commercial table saws are 10". Even on big Powermatics and similar saws cutting a full sheet of plywood by yourself is next to impossible without additional fixturing (infeed and outfeed tables, etc...) You don't mention the saw you have (portable, floor standing, etc...) but Delta is a good name. You need to go to Fine Woodworking and find either some articles or books on how to handle large panels and using a table saw. The saw you describe at the installer's is a panel saw. Unless it's something the likes of which I've never seen it's a lot more than \$500 and not especially accurate.

<http://www.taunton.com/finewoodworking/index.asp>

Subject: Re: follow-up
Posted by [crazychile](#) on Tue, 30 Mar 2004 12:19:50 GMT
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Thanks for all the help everyone! I knew I came to the right place.1. Thanks for the comment about my approach. The circular saw idea makes a lot of sense. I need a new circular saw anyway, so I'll keep that extra guide in mind when I buy.2. I'll still need a new table saw, (I'll check out the Ryobi)my current Delta (I dont know the model#) was a Fathers day present a couple of years ago and could be mounted on a table, but I use the included stand. I would guess that the saw was between \$200-250 when new. The problem is that the top surface is small. I would estimate that the top dimensions are around 18x24. So its impossible to cut anything but small pieces with any degree of accuracy. Even if I were to have someone cut down a large sheet for me, the remaining pcs. are still too big. I built 1 pi's a while back and even the pcs. for those were too big to use with the built in guides on the Delta.crazychile

Subject: Re: follow-up
Posted by [Bill Fitzmaurice](#) on Tue, 30 Mar 2004 12:56:04 GMT
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Here's how I do it, and I've made more than a few cabinets. Cut your sheet goods with a circular saw, but don't try to be accurate, make the parts an inch or so oversize. Use the table saw to trim them to finished size, and that's best done using a panel cutting jig that sits atop the table; you put the part to be cut on the jig and the jig and part both go across the saw top; perfect cuts everytime. A fancy table saw or \$400 fence is not required; my saw is a \$200 Sears, and my panel cutting jig I made from a 2x3 foot piece of plywood and some scrap wood. This picture shows the jig on top of my saw. <http://hometown.aol.com/fitzmauricew/myhomepage/photo.html>

Subject: Re: follow-up
Posted by [Dean Kukral](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 00:50:57 GMT
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That's a good suggestion! Norm Abrams (New Yankee Workshop) showed one of these some years back, and I made one. It made working with larger pieces much easier. Mine fell apart, and I have been too lazy to replace it. (But I should have!) You have to be sure to get the back side perpendicular to the tracks, or it will not cut square.

Subject: Re: All this is good stuff and.....

Posted by [BillEpstein](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 02:32:58 GMT

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especially the jig mentioned by Sr. Fitz. Best build fir that is 2 of the bars that let your miter gauge slide in the slot. But you still have that little bitty table and what, 20" rip capacity? The BT3100 is a really great saw with a 32" capacity and just \$300. I haven't tried one but it looks good for occasional cabinet work. Best of all is to find a used Delta 36-444 Contractors saw. Or the older Sears that's quite similar. They have 27" wide tables and you can even put a 50" Biesmeyer fence on one. Before I had a table saw I used the factory edge of a piece of plywood screwed and glued to a piece of hardboard. You use enough width of plywood so that you can clamp it to the workpiece w/o the motor housing of the saw getting in the way and enough width of masonite so when you make the first cut, the masonite that's left attached to the plywood is forever a cutting guide. As for the saw, don't think twice, get the Makita 100x. Other good ones but it's the best value by far. Oh yeah, nobody uses it anymore, not me either but there was a time when making the cut on the saw guide was done with a router, not a saw. Nice clean edge, ya see.

Subject: Re: BT3100

Posted by [wunhuanglo](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 11:06:38 GMT

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I haven't tried one either - primarily because I bought their 8" portable radial arm saw. It sucked so bad that when I bought a new table saw I bought the DeWalt 10" portable. Has a 25" rip capacity and a really excellent fence.

Subject: Need more capacity? Make a bigger jig.

Posted by [Bill Fitzmaurice](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 12:06:57 GMT

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I didn't go into great detail on my jig, but should you need a larger capacity all you need is to make the jig bigger; going four feet by four feet is not out of the question, but rather a matter of how big your shop is. Also keep in mind that with a larger jig it's critical that the saw stand be securely bolted to the floor to keep the whole thing from tipping over.

Subject: Re: follow-up

Posted by [Bill Fitzmaurice](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 12:11:58 GMT

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But the tracks aren't always square with the blade. The picture shows a square being used to align the back perpendicular to the blade, clamped in place, and then you screw the back to the platform from underneath.

Subject: Re: follow-up

Posted by [Dean Kukral](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 12:33:22 GMT

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I see what you are saying. If the tracks are not parallel to the blade, then the fence is also not parallel to the blade. Since I spent \$300 for a fancy fence for my Sears saw, I HAD to go check and see if it was parallel or not! I was pleased to see that mine is parallel to the blade. :) I don't think that my blade is moveable, but it has been a long time since I set it all up, so I may have forgotten. It is belt-driven. I suppose that if this is an issue on an individual saw, then the directions for that saw will discuss it.

Subject: Wait a minute

Posted by [Dean Kukral](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 12:49:12 GMT

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I have been thinking about this some more. Whether the back of the jig is square to the blade or not is irrelevant. If you want the newly cut edge to be square to the old edge that is resting against the jig's back, then the back of the fence must be square to the track, not to the blade. This is because the jig slides in the track. If the blade is not parallel to the track, then either it angles away from the cut, which will probably cause a rough edge or maybe even some binding, or it angles into the cut, which would definitely cause binding and would be dangerous. I am not an experienced craftsman, so I am certainly open to disagreement, but it sure seems to me that if your blade is not parallel to the track, then you have a serious problem.

Subject: Re: follow-up

Posted by [Bill Fitzmaurice](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 14:38:43 GMT

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If the blade and tracks are more than 2 degrees or so out of whack you have a serious problem, to be sure, but for less than that I've found it not a problem if the jig is square to the blade. One other tip: never assume a piece of stock comes squared. I always run all 4 edges with the jig; I've not yet come across a piece of Russian Baltic Birch that was true.

Subject: Re: follow-up

Posted by [crazychile](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 15:40:51 GMT

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Thanks for the photo, Bill. I've been studying this for the last day or so and am a little confused by the photo. If you could clarify a couple of things for me I would appreciate it. 1. I build a new top surface for the saw out of plywood. (This fits over the existing surface). 2. In this new top surface is a slot where a perfectly square "L" fits and this is used to feed the piece of wood across the blade. 3. Do you also clamp a strip of wood on the other side of the blade to guide the varying sizes of wood? Thanks for the info! crazychile

Subject: Re: follow-up

Posted by [Bill Fitzmaurice](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 15:56:24 GMT

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Actually what you do is start with a sheet of plywood large enough to handle whatever size panels you anticipate cutting. It sits on two hardwood rails that fit into the slots on the saw top, glued and nailed to the jig with brads. The large piece of hardwood on the back of the jig is set in place using a T-square to make sure it is 90 degrees from the blade, as shown in the photo, clamped in that position and then also screwed and glued to the jig. When the glue is set run the jig across the table, so a slot will be cut right through it. To use just slap the piece being cut atop the jig, resting against the rear brace, and push the jig across the table.

Subject: Re: REply to bigger capacity and sucky Ryobi

Posted by [BillEpstein](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 22:49:24 GMT

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First, the Ryobi. Not it's fault. Radial arm saws have always been out of square and generally inaccurate. Ditto the newer "chop saws" and especially the sliding miter saws. Just look, as I have, at the throat plates on Porter-Cable, Bosch and Ridgid saws: after several cuts the plate looks has jagged edges far wider than the blade. The sliding miter table is the answer. The one I built was a copy of Kelly Mehler's in a way past issue of Fine Woodworking. He has a book of Table SAW tips you can find with the design. It addresses the issues of accuracy, safety and flexibility better than any other. Just don't try to use maple runners or fool with the plexiglass "safety" stuff. The fence enables the use of all manner of clamped on jigs for dadoes, mortises, finger joints and lots of other stuff. You'll never use a chopsaw again. And make several in different sizes as Fitzmaurice suggests: I had one that trimmed 36" wide interior doors! If you can't find the book just think: 1/2" quality birch plywood for the 'floor', 2 metal mitre gauge runners, a fence at the back about 4" tall of 2 layers of ply laminated together and a main, front fence 2 ply thick that's 4" tall except at the center where it rises to 6 or even 8" tall for a width of about 6". The high point has 2 effects: it holds a box that protrudes a further 4" to the front which encompasses

the saw blade for safety and it allows a surface to clamp to right on top of the blade kerf. This is where you attach the jigs, usually. Attach one metal runner to the floor at one point and then square the floor to the blade. Run another screw into the runner. Attach the front fence to the floor with one screw at the one end and square the fence to blade. Be real anal about this one. Now run in the rest of the screws and attach the second runner. The rear fence doesn't have to be very square at all. Finish with routing slots in your outfeed table, (you do have an outfeed table?) so you can push this and larger jigs past the blade. The saw kerf indexes the cut, you can clamp workpieces to the fence for extreme accuracy, make one for use with the dado head with "zero clearance", another with a right angle piece built in for tenons, etc, etc.

Subject: Re: More so with MDF

Posted by [Bill Epstein](#) on Wed, 31 Mar 2004 23:00:26 GMT

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We've all seen the wavy edges on MDF and some have experienced the 'wedding cake' edges on Melamine panels. What we do in the shop is run the panels over the saw to cut an eighth off, then flip it around so the cut edge is against the fence and make another pass. Now the 2 long edges are roughly parallel and smooth. You won't have the big capacity sliding table (neither do I anymore) so you take your best shot at pushing the 49" edge against the fence and repeating the process. That's pretty square on all four edges but, for a box, remember to over cut the panel that meets the edge slightly so you are always trimming edges and never sanding down panels. Squareness is a virtue but eliminating dips, depressions and waves from sanding is a necessity. The best possible workpiece would never be touched by a plane or sander.

Subject: Re: sucky Ryobi - Sorry, I disagree

Posted by [wunhuanglo](#) on Thu, 01 Apr 2004 00:01:32 GMT

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The bearings were awful - the blade wobbled to a ridiculous degree; very rough cutting. And it was seriously underpowered, even with a thin-kerf blade. And no, I don't think it was defective. I sent it to the factory and it came back as bad or worse. Too much attention devoted to gimmicks, not enough to basics.

Subject: Re: More space than saw

Posted by [Bill Martinelli](#) on Thu, 01 Apr 2004 04:10:11 GMT

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You need lots of space to work with sheet goods. Space is a big help. Being cramped in or

unstable just makes it harder. For all intents and purpose you could bolt a skilsaw to a sheet of plywood, mounted upside down on horses with a 2x4 for a rip fence! Course that only works for a while. Cast iron seems to hold its shape a little better than lumber. I've seen guys with 2000 dollar saw that cant cut a square board. I've seen setups with the little portable 10" saw's basically embedded into a huge infeed and outfeed table. Will something like this last as long as a Unisaw or similar? no of course not. But it can do a super job when you put your mind to it and you don't have a ton of bread to shake out for a big saw, or a bigger slider. I think I found the Picher in the freezer...If your not precutting your sheets before you cut finished panels your going to need 18' of space. 8' out of the blade and 8' in front plus 2' to stand. not to mention room to store sheets and move them around. Its nice to have a 4x8 table for an outfeed. Nice to have close to that for an infeed table too. This could give you some nice flat areas for assembly when your all done cutting for a while. Blades are worth more than you might think. Anything from a home center is not going to make nice cuts for you. Chip out and wavy kerfs really suck in 50 dollar a sheet oak. Can get you pretty depressed in 120 dollar a sheet walnut. and If you have some nice Mapa or Teak at 175-200 a sheet, that 40 dollar blade is just a stepping stone to suicide. Lots of high dollar commercial blades but there are a few available that are affordable for home shops. Forrest used to be only commercial now for a 100 bucks you can get one almost any place. CMT isn't bad but get dull quick. Freud? save your money. They are only a nice blade till you use a blade. Lately I use Amana blades. The 80 tooth will crosscut sheet veneer as well as a underscore slider does. (cant go as fast though) The 40 tooth blade is usually on the saw since the 80 tooth chokes with anything over 3/4" and has one purpose only, sheets. Get a deep gullet rip blade if your going to rip up a lot of glue joints. The main jist here is it takes some skill to cut straight, clean, square panels from any saw. If your trying to strong arm a full sheet around a little saw with one of those cute roller things,, chances are your going to get hurt. And mom said it wouldn't be fun when you loose an eye right? Have some nice tables for the small saws, Keep things solid and ridged with out flexing and bounce. Get a good blade that cuts clean and straight. Thin kerf blades have a purpose. You don't need one.Wax your tables and saw top. So you cant afford an Altendorf, at least make it so the board doesn't stick to an old rusty saw top. Tune up your saw so the blade is square to the miter slot, fence, etc. Lots of good articles on how to tune up your saw. Practice. Patience. work calmly. enjoy what you do.

Subject: Re: follow-up
Posted by [crazychile](#) on Fri, 02 Apr 2004 12:17:46 GMT
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Got it! Thanks!

Subject: Re: Wait a minute
Posted by [Bill Martinelli](#) on Sat, 03 Apr 2004 03:35:26 GMT
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The trunions are movable under the saws table. This allows for alignment of the blade to miter slots. If the blade is not square to the track it wont make a difference to the squareness of the piece cut. It will as you suggest make a ratty edge. This is called 'heeling' when the back of the blade is cutting outside the kerf. There are lots of article and probably books on how to tune up a saw. To take the affect of heeling even further to a useful purpose. It's possible to cut very large coves on a table saw by setting a fence at an angle and pushing across the blade in a sideways fashion. light passes, great care and danger is involved. read up on this before trying it at home.
Bill
