

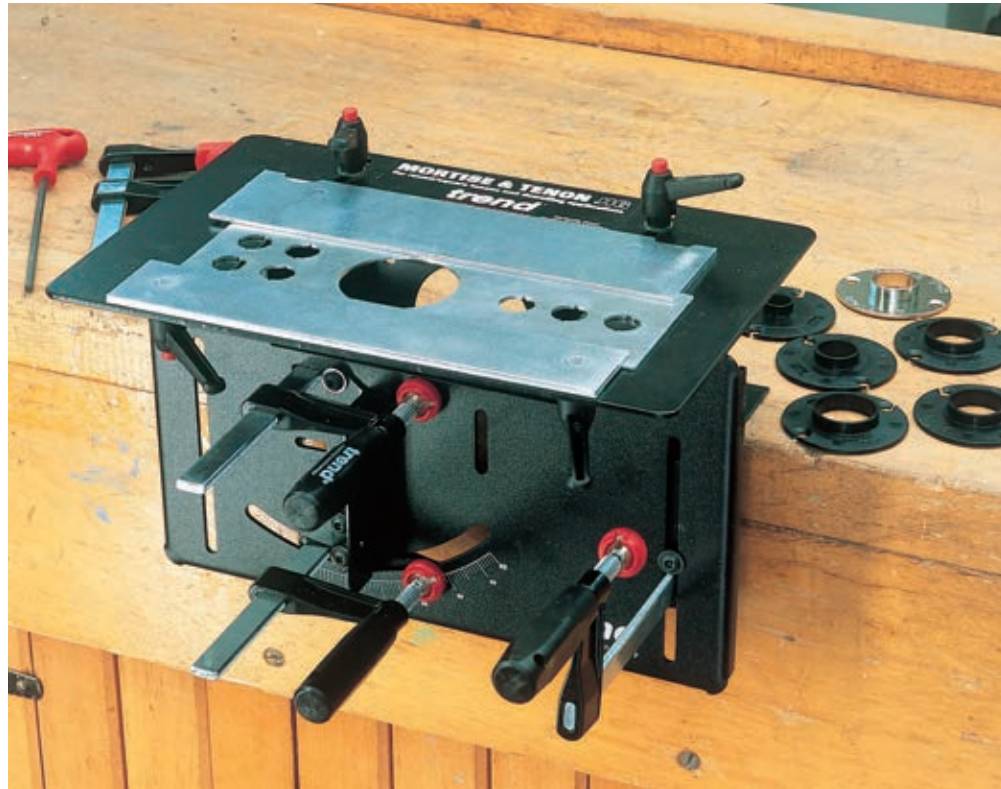
Trend Mortice & Tenon Jig

Not being a traditional hand woodworker I find any form of joint cutting quite challenging, and will often spend considerable time setting up a machine to do a job that a skilled worker would do by hand in minutes.

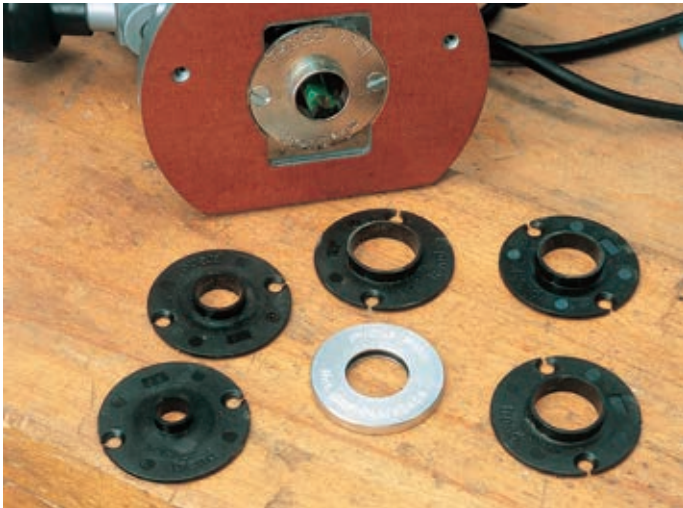
Trend's new Mortice and Tenon Jig overcomes all those problems, and makes the cutting of mortice and tenon joints easy. Even better, once you've set it to cut the tenon, the mortice dimensions are set automatically so the joint has to fit perfectly, and you only have to mark the first piece. As all the work is done with a router, the cuts are really clean in hardwood or softwood, and virtually any router will fit the jig, though it may be necessary to use a sub-base with some.

What you get

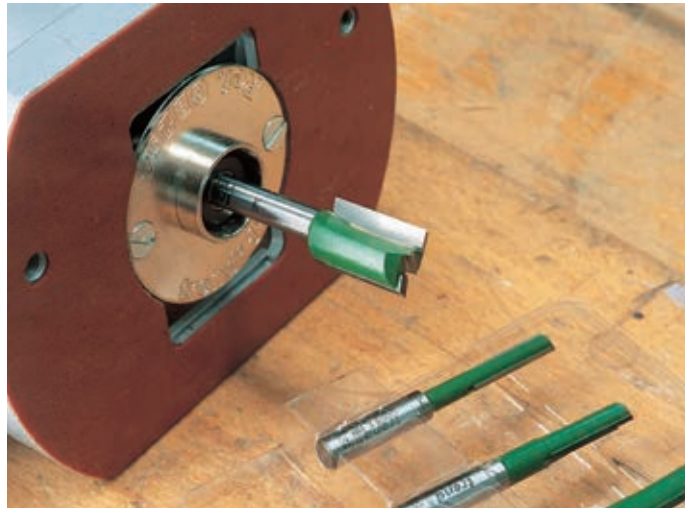
The jig itself is a sturdy steel plate affair that has to be screwed to the edge of your bench. It comes with a variety of guide bushes to enable you to cut a range of joint sizes, but there are no cutters included. You can use any standard cutters you already have, but



The jig comes with a variety of guide bushes for cutting a range of joint sizes.



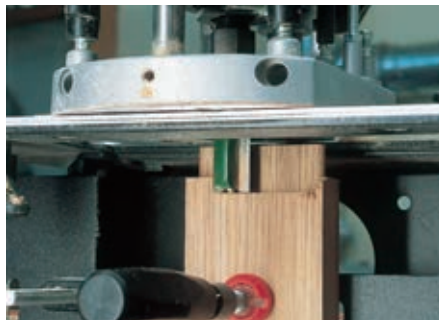
Optional long reach cutters allow you to cut bigger joints.



The setting bar uses the centre line of the joint to align everything correctly.



Tenons are cut with the timber vertical.



The rounded ends of the mortice perfectly match those of the tenon.



Tested



Angled tenons are equally simple as the fence will tilt up to 45°.



Compound angles are also possible as the front of the jig hinges forward.



Square tenons can be cut by simply reversing the guide plates.



The jig can also be used for making dowel joints.

Setting bar

The key to the jig is the setting bar which uses the centre line of the joint to align everything correctly. This is easy to use provided you've scribed an accurate centre mark on the first joint, and you then use it to set the width of the tenons. I'm notoriously impatient and can't work with fiddly jigs but this one is simple; just remember to work with the face side of each component on the inside of the jig.

Cutting joints

Tenons are cut with the timber vertical, using a 5/8" cutter and suitable guide bush. Just keep making shallow passes, running the router guide clockwise round the template. The length of the joint obviously relies on setting the depth stop accurately.

To cut the mortise you may have to change the cutter, and you'll need to replace the guide bush with the dedicated morticing one. This is used no matter what size of mortice you're cutting, and once the guides have been set for the tenon, the mortise is automatically cut to the right length, its rounded ends perfectly matching those of the tenon.

Obviously the timber is clamped horizontally in the jig for this, and I found the F clamps rather fiddly to use, particularly with bigger section material. There's also a fair bit of work needed with the supplied Allen wrench if you need to move them around, but with a little planning you can keep these adjustments to a minimum.

A selection of the joints that this jig can cut.



Angled tenons

These are equally simple as the fence tilts to 45°. The cutting procedure is then exactly the same as with a straight one, though you may have to play about with the tenon length to get it in the right position.

Compound angles are also possible as the whole jig front hinges forward; once again setting here is very simple.

If you're more of a traditionalist you may prefer square tenons. In this case, simply reverse the guide plates, but you'll have to square out the corners of the mortice by hand.

You can also use the jig for accurate doweling using the 5/8" bush and the range of holes in the guide plates; just find a cutter to suit the diameter of your doweling.

Any router work makes a great deal of mess, but an optional dust extraction kit is available.

Tested by
Alan Holtham



the optional long reach set will allow you to cut bigger joints. These cutters are available with either 1/4" or 8mm shanks; the latter option is better if you can accommodate it, as it reduces the amount of chatter with the long overhang out of the collet.

The jig comes with an adequate instruction book, though some of the line drawings are less than clear, particularly with regard to setting up. Having said that though, once you're familiar with the operation of the jig, and it's really simple, you'll probably never look at it again. The only reference you need is the table giving relevant cutter and bush sizes for the different sizes of mortice and tenon.

Guide bushes

The guide bushes supplied with the jig are mostly plastic, which are fine, but if you end up using one size a lot, it might be worth investing in the optional metal ones. There are a lot of other little bits and pieces you need to use with this jig, but not all at once, depending on the function you are using at the time. If you can, find a suitable box to keep it all together, or you'll lose something in all the shavings.

VERDICT

This is a seriously impressive jig — the more I use it the more I realise it can do. However, it has to be said that, although no capacities are given, it's really designed for small furniture work rather than heavy joinery. Although it might appear time consuming to have to keep changing bushes and cutters, it's actually quite quick when you get the hang of it.

The clamps are a little awkward but other than that, this a very useful piece of kit which should find a home in any workshop.

Prices: Jig £149.95; 5 long reach cutter set £39.95; Dust kit £9.95; Steel guide bushes £5 each.

Trend, tel: 0800 4 TREND or 01923 224657, www.trendmachinery.co.uk/mtjig

RATING ★★★★★