

# HEAD<sup>2</sup>HEAD

# Ultra-Portable



## Bosch GTS1031

SAW WEIGHT 52 lb.

STAND WEIGHT 14 lb.

TABLE SIZE 22 in. wide  
by 20 in. deep

PRICE \$438; GTA500 folding  
stand sold separately, \$80

BY PATRICK McCOMBE

**M**y introduction to job-site tablesaws took place more than 20 years ago when I was issued an 8¼-in. Makita by my employer. It was a good saw, and at 40 lb., it was easy to carry. Then in subsequent years, the job-site tablesaws I used seemed to get bigger and bigger.

Most recently, I've been using a Bosch 4000 with Bosch's Gravity Rise folding stand. It, too, has been a good saw, but when mated to its wheeled stand, it weighs 113 lb. and fills the bed of a compact pickup. Given the saw's bulk and my aging back, I was intrigued when Bosch introduced a smaller tablesaw, model GTS1031, with an 18-in. rip capacity. In the company's advertising, an average-size carpenter is shown carrying the saw with one hand while climbing

a staircase. Even without the stand, there's no way I could carry my saw with one hand.

Not long after Bosch introduced this compact saw, DeWalt introduced its own. DeWalt now has an entire line of ultra-portables. For this test, I considered three, which are similar but have different rip capacities—the DW745 (20 in.), the DWE7490X (28½ in.), and the DWE7491RS (32½ in.). I decided to put the DWE7490X up against the Bosch in a head-to-head test.

### First impressions

Both saws come almost fully assembled, and their out-of-the-box accuracy was similar. I spent about half an hour on each saw making the blade parallel to the miter slot and setting the stop for 45° bevels. The process for truing the blade is the same for both saws. It involves



# Tablesaws

**SMALL** enough to carry with one hand, but **BIG** enough for job-site work



## DeWalt 7490X

**SAW WEIGHT** 57 lb.

**STAND WEIGHT** 16 lb.

**TABLE SIZE** 26 in. wide by 22 in. deep

**PRICE** \$469, packaged with folding stand

loosening four machine screws that hold the trunnion to the table and then aligning the blade to the miter slot with a combination square.

### Guards and controls

Each saw has a well-designed, three-part modular blade guard that includes a riving knife, anti-kickback pawls, and a blade cover. The blade cover and anti-kickback pawls are removable, and they can be stored on the saw's housing. The riving knives, which are the thickness of thin-kerf blades, rise and tilt to match the blade height and bevel. The DeWalt includes two riving knives: one that accepts the blade cover, and a finlike one for use without the cover. Both DeWalt knives can be swapped or removed altogether by pulling a cable-connected handle that is mounted under the saw table. This setup is easier to use than Bosch's, in which a small lever secures the riving

knife. Although the height of Bosch's knife is adjustable, the knife itself can't be removed readily.

Both saws have blades that are fully enclosed under the table. When connected to a good shop vacuum via their 2½-in. dust ports, they collect about 90% of the dust—a very reasonable amount.

Blade-elevation and blade-tilt controls are similar on both saws. The blade is elevated with the familiar crank arrangement. Blade tilt is controlled by unlocking a lever, setting the bevel, and locking the setting with the lever. Neither saw has gear-driven bevel controls; instead, the trunnion swings freely when it's unlocked.

### Miter gauges and rip fences

I found the miter gauges on both the Bosch and the DeWalt saws to be small and flimsy, but job-site tablesaws are seldom used for cross-



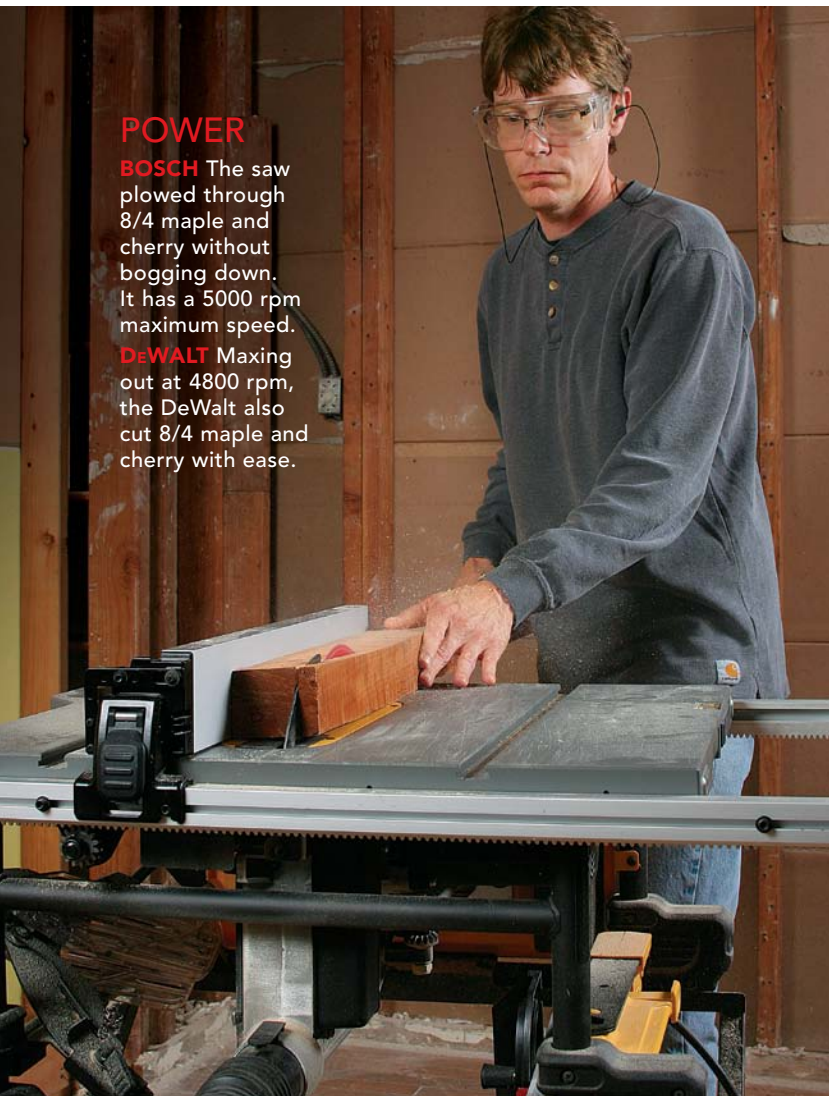
# FIVE FEATURES THAT MATTER MOST

In terms of performance, either saw is a good choice. The kind of work you do and how much you value portability should guide your selection. Here are the features worth considering and where the saws' differences become most apparent.

## POWER

**BOSCH** The saw plowed through 8/4 maple and cherry without bogging down. It has a 5000 rpm maximum speed.

**DeWALT** Mxing out at 4800 rpm, the DeWalt also cut 8/4 maple and cherry with ease.



## RIVING KNIVES

**BOSCH** Rotating a small lever under the throat plate (above left) adjusts the height of the riving knife. The knife cannot be removed readily, but it can be lowered to make nonthrough cuts, although it's harder to adjust than DeWalt's.

**DeWALT** The riving knife is adjusted or removed with a lever mounted under the saw table (above right). The setup works great. The saw comes with two riving knives: a finlike one (shown) and a taller one that holds the blade cover.



## FENCE DESIGN

**BOSCH** The rip fence grabs the front and back rails (top photo, facing page). Pushing down on a lever secures the setting. The fence slides with ease and holds tightly.

**DeWALT** The rack-and-pinion rip fence is precise and easy to adjust with a front-mounted knob. An auxiliary fence (left) folds down for narrow stock and supports wide rips. The push stick is neatly stored aboard the fence.

cuts. They are for ripping, and this is where these otherwise similar saws start to show their differences. Both have good rip fences, but they don't work the same way.

Bosch's rip fence grabs sliding rails on the front and back of the table when you push down its locking handle. The DeWalt adjusts with rack-and-pinion gears that move the rails where the rip fence is attached. In addition to offering precise adjustments, this setup keeps the fence parallel to the blade. Another nice feature on the DeWalt saw is the flip-down auxiliary fence. This low-profile auxiliary fence is good for narrow rips, as it leaves more room for your hands and a push stick. To use it, you need to add its 2-in. width to your measurements when setting the main fence. The auxiliary fence also can be adjusted to support wide rips when it is extended beyond the table. The fence includes a well-positioned storage spot for the push stick.

## How we tested

Before testing, I replaced the stock blades with 40-tooth, middle-of-the-road blades (\$37 each) from Freud.

I tested the saws by ripping and crosscutting softwood framing lumber. I also cut 1/2-in. and 3/4-in. plywood and OSB, and I ripped hard maple and cherry in both 4/4 and 8/4 thicknesses.

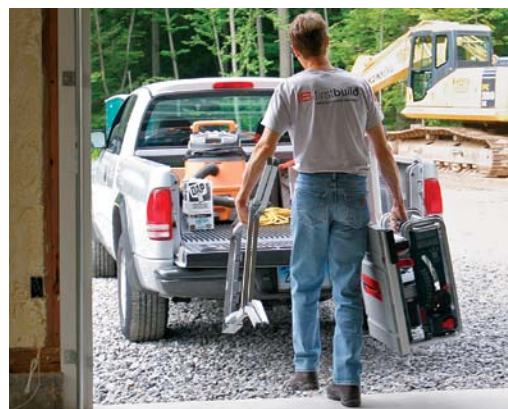
The saws cut all the materials with ease, including the hardwoods. They cut the 4/4 stock like butter. I had to slow the feed rate slightly with the 8/4 hardwood to keep from bogging down the motor. Even so, the feed rate was reasonable, and there were no burns or obvious saw marks, even with these thick materials. These little saws have a surprising amount of power, but like all the portable saws I've used, both tools are very loud. Standing in the cutting position and measuring at ear level, the Bosch registered 90 db., and the DeWalt was



## RIP CAPACITY

**BOSCH** The expanding table accommodates stock up to 18 in. wide. The table extension rides on aluminum rails that operate with a very smooth and precise action.

**DeWALT** Rip capacity is an impressive 28½ in. For wider rips, the stock is supported by the L-shaped auxiliary fence. The rip fence is secured to the extension rails with draw catches.



## PORTABILITY

**BOSCH** At 4½ lb. lighter and with a smaller table than the DeWalt, the Bosch excels at portability. The tubular frame has a surplus of well-placed and comfortable grips, and the stand stays closed when folded.

**DeWALT** Wider rip capacity and a larger saw table come at the expense of portability. The DeWalt, because of its stand design and weight, is more difficult to carry.

85 db. Sound levels were recorded indoors with the saws running but not cutting. They get even louder under load.

### They do dados

Both saws accept stacked dado sets. The DeWalt can cut dados up to 1⅜ in., while the Bosch maxes out at ½ in. Matching dado throat plates are sold separately.

Both saws are available with stands. Bosch's simple folding stand weighs 14 lb. and sells for about \$80. The saw is secured to the stand with a pair of metal clips and a draw catch. The setup works well and makes it easy to break down the saw.

DeWalt offers two saw/stand combinations. The DWE7490X comes with a folding stand that weighs about 16 lb. It's meant to be bolted to the saw, making setup and breakdown more difficult.

## YOUR FEEDBACK

We asked users of the saws for feedback on FineHomebuilding.com and on our Facebook page. Here are some selected comments.

**Eric D. Brown** Replaced my DW744 with the DW745 when I got tired of lugging its 90 lb. or so into the truck at the end of the day. Love the new one (riving knife, onboard cord, and push-stick storage), but the miter gauge is not the best quality, and I miss the auxiliary support extensions found on bigger saws.

**Phil Johnson** I purchased the Bosch GTS1031 a couple of years ago for my remodeling business, primarily for its compact size, which allows it to fit into one of the shelving units in my enclosed trailer. I've been very pleased with the performance, and it's a breeze to pull out and set up with the GTA500 stand.

I do use infeed and outfeed rollers when ripping 12-ft. to 16-ft. stock, but I have found the saw quite stable for most of my work. I like the new riving knife and guard system, although I often work without the guard. I've tried ripping down full sheets of plywood, but this isn't the tool for that task, due to its small table size. Overall, I've been very pleased.

**Shawn Burgess** I've been using the DeWalt DWE7491RS with the wheeled base. This saw is a breath of fresh air compared to my previous DeWalt tablesaw. The features I notice the most when I'm using the saw are the wheels, which allow easy setup, the push-stick holder on the back of the fence (right where you need it), and a storage place on the saw for accessories when they are not in use. The height adjustment wheel is very fast, the bottom cage is so open that no dust accumulates within the saw, and the fence is easily reversible. So far, I wouldn't even think about buying another saw.

Rather than use the supplied bolts and locknuts, I connected the saw to the stand with bolts and star knobs, which made it easier for me to separate the saw from the stand for better portability.

DeWalt also offers a wheeled stand with folding legs that's sold in combination with the DWE7491RS (\$580). The stand is sturdy, but it brings the saw's weight to 90 lb.

### The verdict

Choosing a favorite from these two saws is tough; both have standout features. I much prefer Bosch's stand, but I like DeWalt's rip fence. If pressed, I'd pick the DeWalt, but if portability was my first concern, I'd pick the Bosch. □

Patrick McCombe is associate editor. Photos by Rodney Diaz.