

Shopping for a Chopsaw Stand

If you've been working with your saw on the floor and your work propped up on 2x4 blocks, it may be time to get off your knees

by Gary M. Katz



Portability, productivity and comfort. Stands in a range of shapes and configurations provide workers with comfortable platforms for chopsaws. Iowa Manufacturing's StableMate (the sawhorse) and Wedge (the saw platform) fold for easy portability, but its rollers offer minimal work support.

For years I cobbled up a chopsaw stand for every job I worked on. I'd use different combinations of plywood and 2x's on top of sawhorses. When sliding compound-miter saws came out, I got a manufactured stand. But last year, a week before Christmas, my truck was stolen along with every tool I owned, including my chopsaw stand. I didn't mind losing the truck, but the tools...

I bought the same kind of truck that I had before. But I wasn't as sure about the saw stand. The market had expanded since my first purchase, and I had a lot of choices. I wanted something lightweight, strong and durable. I thought I wanted long extension tables. And I didn't want to spend all day setting up my workstation. With these criteria, I went to see what was out there.

When I wrote this article, I did my best to round up every saw stand on the market. But since I finished the article, others have surfaced, too late to be included, and I fear that there are more out there that I haven't even heard of. I hope this discussion of the various aspects of saw stands will be a guide toward making educated assessments of stands that might have escaped my attention.

Sorting out the differences between saw stands

—If this article had been a review of, say, circular saws, I could have sorted the tools by blade size and amp rating. However, the more I looked at these saw stands, the more I realized how many different stands there were and how most had their own assortment of options. For the sake of organization and my sanity, I had to create categories and then try to squeeze each stand into one of them. I came up with these categories: folding stands on legs, nonfolding stands on wheels, folding stands on wheels.

Aside from wheels vs. legs and folding vs. nonfolding, one of the biggest differences between chopsaw stands is the system they use to support work. Most of the stands I reviewed come with a roller support system or with extension tables. With a roller system, work is supported at a single point away from the stand, and longer boards either droop between the stand and the roller, or they flop over beyond the roller. Boards also tend to skate around on the rollers, so taking measurements can be a challenge. On the upside, however, stands with roller systems tend to be lighter and more compact.

Extension tables, or wings, not only provide continuous support of work but also allow quicker and more accurate cutting. Measuring and marking the length of a board is much easier with extension tables, and many extension tables come in handy as makeshift workbenches.

Most stands with extension tables also have adjustable-stop systems (photos below). Adjustable stops come in many forms, but they all let you make multiple cuts at the same length with just a single measurement. Many stop systems are calibrated with built-in tape measures on the tables. However, stands with continuous extension tables with stop systems do come at a price. In addition to costing more money, they weigh more, and they need more storage space.

Folding stands on legs: the best light-duty choice—The stands in this category are usually the best choice for carpenters who don't use their chopsaws all day, every day. They are light-weight, compact and designed for easy transportation and setup.

Black & Decker: Workmate 400 (photo center left, p. 46). I'm always a bit leery of tools that receive a lot of TV advertising, but the Workmate is an exception. A good all-around workstation, the Workmate can clamp a workpiece either vertically or horizontally. For the hobbyist or part-timer, the Workmate is a great choice. It's stable and light (about 41 lb.), and it is not limited to light-duty work. Black & Decker makes many Workmate models, but the 400 seems best-suited for holding a chopsaw. Also, the Workmate folds flat for easy storage.

The plastic parts and the light-duty metal of the Workmate's clamping system make me want to put this stand in the hobbyist category, although many of the stairbuilders I know swear by these stands. However, if you plan to use a Workmate 400 for a lot of chopsaw work, I recommend buying roller stands to support longer boards.

Ryobi: Quickstand (photo center right, p. 46). If you're looking for a simple, inexpensive platform for your saw, but without the clamping ability of the Workmate and for a considerably lower price, the Quickstand might be perfect. At 27 lb., it's one of the lightest stands I looked at. Ryobi makes the Quickstand out of lighter gauge steel than most other manufacturers use for their stands. But the Quickstand is every bit as sturdy, even with a big miter saw bolted on.

My hat goes off to the Ryobi designers for the imaginative engineering in this stand. The Quickstand has a simple scissor-leg design and a platform made from two pieces of MDF. The more weight placed on the stand, the more stable the stand becomes. One of the legs even has an adjustable foot to eliminate wobbles. As with the Workmate, rollers would be useful accessories with the Quickstand. (Ryobi has discontinued the Quickstand, but a few stands remain in store inventories.)

Iowa Manufacturing: StableMate (photo facing page). The StableMate is the best fold-up sawhorse system I've seen. It's strong yet weighs

Chopsaw-stand specifications							
Manufacturer	List price*	Weight	Support system	Adjustable stop	Calibrated stop	Wheels	Folds
AD&E SawWalker	\$299.95	63 lb.	Bars	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
AD&E SawHelper (800) 441-1388	\$389.95	70 lb.	Table	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
B&D Workmate 400 (800) 762-6672	\$176.95	41 lb.	No	No	No	No	Yes
Delta Kickstand (800) 438-2486	\$247.90	74 lb.	Rollers	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Hitachi SawSteady (800) 546-1666	\$641.30	65 lb.	Table	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
IDMM Saw Stand (818) 348-0425	\$260	49 lb.	Table	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ICS Port-A-Bull (612) 263-1427	\$299	25 lb.	Bars	Yes	No	No	Yes
Iowa Mfg. StableMate (800) 882-4422	\$134.80	38 lb.	Roller	No	No	No	Yes
Rack Manufacturing Co. Pow'r MiterMate MTS-500	\$164.95	55 lb.	Bars, rollers**	Yes	No	No	Yes
Pow'r MiterMate MTS-550	\$269.95	74 lb.	Bars, rollers**	Yes	Optional	Yes	No
Pow'r MiterMate MTS-575 (800) 624-2027	\$269.95	76 lb.	Bars, rollers**	Yes	Optional	Yes	Yes
Reynders Last Stand (503) 926-0210	\$310	74 lb.	Bars	No	No	Yes	No
Rousseau SS 2850	\$139	32 lb.	Table	Optional	Optional	Yes	No
Rousseau HD 2900 (800) 635-3416	\$297	69 lb.	Rollers	Optional	Optional	Yes	Yes
Ryobi Quickstand (800) 525-2579	\$40	27 lb.	No	No	No	No	Yes
Trojan Work Center	\$119.95	33 lb.	Rollers	No	No	No	Yes
Trojan MS-2000 (800) 745-2120	\$309.95	70 lb.	Bars, rollers**	Yes	Optional	Yes	Yes

*Retail and mail-order prices are often less than manufacturers' suggested list price.
**Extension-table system is optional.

Calibrated-stop systems



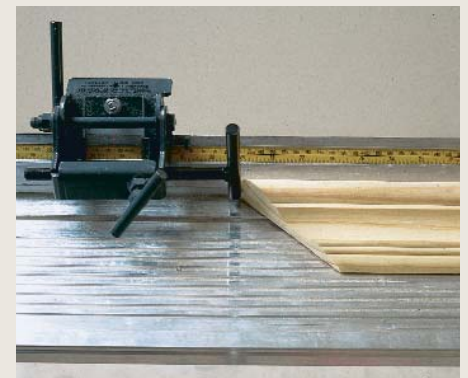
1. Rack Mfg.'s Quik/Stop-60

2. IDMM's stop system



Calibrated-stop systems allow for multiple cuts without changing measurements. The most convenient stops flip out of the way like the two stops on Rack's Quik/Stop-60 (photo 1). AD&E's FlipStop system is well-built but uses metal rod that lets the tip of a mitered casing slide by (photo 3). IDMM's stop clamps into position with the accuracy of a table-saw fence, but it does not flip out of the way (photo 2).

3. AD&E's FlipStop



Folding stands on legs

The Trojan Work Center relies on a 2x6 for attaching its legs, rollers and saw platform.



The Black & Decker Workmate 400 has a clamp built into its work top.



Rack Manufacturing's Pow'r MiterMate MTS-500 can be used with a variety of Rack accessories.



Ryobi's Quickstand is the lightest stand on the market but sturdy enough for a large chop saw.



The Port-A-Bull by ICS is compact, is easy to carry and uses L-stock for its support system.



only 38 lb. The StableMate sets up quickly, and the legs fold inside the cross beam for compact storage. With an accessory called The Wedge, the StableMate sawhorse turns into a saw stand; The Wedge lets you clamp a miter saw to the StableMate. A roller support slips onto the end of the horse, but the roller is never far from the saw, which limits the length of the board that can be cut. A second StableMate would be a help.

Innovative Customer Services: Port-A-Bull (photo bottom right). Remarkably similar to the StableMate, the Port-A-Bull offers some ingenious additions. First, it is all-aluminum, cutting the weight to a lean 25 lb. Folded up, the Port-A-Bull takes up little space in a truck or shop, and it sets up quickly and easily. Two sliding aluminum clamps let you attach a chop saw mounted on a platform that you provide. The whole system is strong, and my saw never wobbled. Unlike the StableMate, the Port-A-Bull's support system telescopes out of its top up to 42 in. beyond the stand. Instead of a roller, the horizontal part of the support is made out of L-stock. With the support extended up, shorter work will butt into the L instead of riding over it, so it doubles as a stop.

The Port-A-Bull isn't quite as strong as the StableMate, but it's still sufficient for most small woodworking projects. I did try cutting a long 4x6 on the Port-A-Bull, and the weight of the wood almost tipped the whole thing over.

Trojan: Work Center (top photo). One of the first manufactured stands I ever saw was the Trojan Work Center. It's a simple, sawhorse-type design I've seen at job sites for years. The Work Center takes up minimal space, and it's lightweight.

The saw bolts onto a particleboard table that clamps to a 2x6 cross beam, supported by two pairs of folding sawhorse legs. The two rollers also clamp onto the 2x6, which can be any length you need. Besides the usual drawbacks of a roller system, my biggest complaint is that my 15-in. Hitachi miter saw felt a little wobbly on the stand. Wobbling probably wouldn't be a problem with smaller saws.

Rack Manufacturing: Pow'r MiterMate MTS-500 (photo bottom left). The MTS-500 combines the best features of the Work Center and the StableMate. While eliminating some of their drawbacks, it has a few wrinkles of its own. First, setting up the MTS-500 is a snap. The legs fold out from under the saw platform and lock neatly in position. A roller support system, which stores conveniently under the tabletop, telescopes out to just over 6 ft. from the saw. Each roller has legs that eliminate deflection under heavy loads.

The MTS-500 roller system is better than most, although every adjustment requires fussing with a bunch of wing nuts. The MTS-500 has an adjustable stop made out of L-stock like the Port-A-Bull. Setting the stop system is time-consuming, however, and play in the system can make accuracy a problem. Also, the adjustable stop won't extend far enough to cut door casing.

Rack makes an extension-table system, the Quik/Stop-60 (photo top right, p. 45) (list price \$129.95), that works with any of its stands. The

Quik/Stop-60 table is 60 in. long, but a telescoping fence allows repetitive cuts up to 8 ft. 6 in. The table bolts to the saw platform, and once I'd drilled the holes for it, the Quik/Stop set up faster than the roller system. Although the extension wing is heavy and bulky, it eliminates half of the telescoping-tubing hassle, and most of those pesky wing nuts.

The Quik/Stop-60 comes with three stops that flip up and out of the way, letting you set up for multiple cuts. I set the stops to cut the heads and legs of door casing, and I switched between door sizes quickly without having to reset my stops. I only wish the work surface on the extension wing was wider than 4½ in. But the stop system is one of the best I encountered.

Nonfolding stands on wheels: more at home in the shop—I originally intended to review only portable stands for the job site and was surprised to find some stands that straddle the line between shop and job site. Stands in this section don't fold up unless you take them apart, and assembled, they take up a lot of room in the truck. Also, the casters or small wheels these stands have makes it tough to get them from the truck to the work site (top photo).

Rack Manufacturing: Pow'r MiterMate MTS-550 (photo second from top). Like its cousin, the MTS-500, the MTS-550 is made out of welded tubular steel. The MTS-550 has two large wheels, so it moves around easily inside a shop. But the first time I tipped it onto its wheels to move it, my tools slid off the shelf. I attached a strip of 1x4 on the back of the shelf to fix this problem. If I were to buy this stand, I'd probably want to add a middle shelf, too. The stock table and support system are identical to the MTS-500, but the 550 would be much better with the optional Quik/Stop-60 system.

Rousseau: Miter Saw Stand SS 2850 (bottom photo). If assembly time is a factor when selecting a saw stand, then the Rousseau SS 2850 might not be a good choice. It took me four hours to put this unit together, not counting the time it took to cut the tables and shelves. However, the assembly instructions are excellent, and the saw-mounting templates provided by the manufacturer are foolproof.

Because of its small wheels and low clearance, the Rousseau SS 2850 would be a bear to get to and from the job site, but the SS 2850 rolls smoothly around a garage or shop floor on casters and rubber wheels. There are two shelves beneath the saw table, so other tools can be kept handy. There are no knobs, wing nuts or external braces. The extension tables are hinged to the stand and lift easily into position with self-locking angled braces that do a fair job of supporting the tables under all but the heaviest loads. I gave the SS 2850 a workout in my shop for a couple of weeks and would recommend it for anyone who works in a tight shop.

Rousseau sells a fence, the SS 3800 (list price \$101), with a calibrated adjustable-stop system. The SS 3800 extends up to 7 ft. and allows calibrated cutting with two stops, one flip-up and the

Nonfolding stands on wheels

The Last Stand by Reynders Enterprises has extension wings that fold down, but like most stands on wheels, dragging it over rough terrain can be a challenge.



The Pow'r MiterMate MTS-550 by Rack Manufacturing would be best-suited for shop use.



The SawWalker by American Design & Engineering is lightweight and compact.



Rousseau's SS 2850 is made of sheet steel and rolls smoothly on casters and rubber wheels.



other stationary. Because the SS 3800 screws permanently to the extension table, no additional setup time is required.

Reynders Enterprises: The Last Stand (top photo). Although slightly smaller than Rousseau's SS 2850, The Last Stand's tubular steel seems more rugged than the SS 2850's sheet-steel construction. Its extension wings are 12 in. wide with two sets of braces that keep the wings from wobbling. Fully extended, the wings are 13 ft. long. When not in use, the braces store conveniently beneath the stand.

The clearance for mounting a saw on The Last Stand is really tight, and the bases of my big saws were too wide to fit. However, the saw platform does adjust easily to different saw heights with four Allen screws.

Instead of a solid table, The Last Stand's extension wing has cross bars, which means that there's no continuous support for your work. But the bars are close enough together that I never had trouble with short pieces hanging up. The Last Stand has no fence or adjustable-stop system, but it wouldn't be difficult to rig one up. There is ample room under the saw for additional shelves, but they're not provided by the manufacturer. One unique feature of The Last Stand is that the wheels are perpendicular to the extension wings. Even with the wings extended and the braces installed, I could still roll the stand around inside a room.

American Design & Engineering: SawWalker (photo third from top). Although lighter and more compact than the other shop-type stands, the SawWalker is made from the same 1-in. tubular steel as most of the other stands. With a 23-in. wide table, the SawWalker is wide enough for nearly every saw on the market. The stand comes with two plywood platforms, one secured to the stand and the other to the saw. I shimmed between the two until the saw table was at the same level as the wings. Like The Last Stand, the extension wings on the SawWalker rely on cross bars to support material, and the spacing of the bars did not present any problems. The wings are 8 in. wide, which I found adequate for supporting most material.

The SawWalker comes with a fence and a clamp-on adjustable stop. The fence extends over 8 ft., and I made repetitive cuts for 8-ft. door casing with no problem. A roll of stick-on measuring tape comes with the stand, so the fence can be calibrated to just longer than 6 ft. The last 3 ft. of tape are stuck on the telescoping tube, but they don't last long when the tube starts sliding in and out. The stop on the SawWalker adjusts pretty quickly, but it's still not as nice as a flip-up stop system.

Folding stands on wheels: three are self-contained—Within the category of folding stands on wheels, three stands claim to be self-contained. In other words, everything you need for cutting is built in and can be carried from the truck in a single trip. With so much fit into them, self-contained stands are necessarily heavy, and none of them felt really comfortable as I wheeled

Folding stands on wheels

Trojan MS-2000 Miter Saw Stand



A test of strength and patience. Follow Trojan's instructions and you'll need long legs and a strong body to set up their stand, especially with the saw attached.



Delta Kickstand



Stairs can be an obstacle. Even with large wheels, Delta's Kickstand is difficult to get up and down the large steps on job sites.



IDMM Saw Stand



A single wheel means less weight. The Saw Stand is meant to be pushed or pulled like a wheelbarrow.



Rousseau HD 2900



A hidden trap. The HD 2900 unfolds easily, but the tires can interfere with the saw handle.



them across rough job-site terrain with a heavy saw attached.

Delta: Kickstand (photos second from top). The best feature of the Delta Kickstand is the large wheels that roll over power cords and small lumber scraps. But even with the large wheels, getting it to and from my truck was no fun. The Kickstand sets up quickly. Its support system relies on two large, adjustable rollers that fold out from each leg, allowing decent work support. There is a short fence with a stop, but repetitive cuts are limited to under 30 in. Even folded flat, the Kickstand still took up a lot of room in my truck. With my saw on it, the Kickstand weighed 120 lb., and it was very difficult to get it in and out of my truck, especially when I was alone.

Rack Manufacturing: Pow'r MiterMate MTS-575 (not pictured). The MTS-575 is the same basic design as Rack's 550 shop stand except that the 575 folds flat and rolls on two wheels. Folded up, it is about the same size as the Kickstand.

The MTS-575 uses the same telescoping support system as the other Pow'r MiterMates. It's as strong as a tank and almost as heavy, weighing in at over 100 lb. with my saw attached. Getting it in and out of my truck was really difficult, and the small wheels made climbing stairs and bumping over the job site next to impossible. One advantage the MTS-575 enjoys over the Kickstand is that the particleboard saw platform slides out of the stand with the saw attached. The 575 is much easier to wheel around without the saw attached, but then it's not a self-contained unit and you're making two trips to the truck.

Rack's Quik/Stop-60 extension-table system can also be used with the MTS-575. But keep in mind that the extension wings would require yet another trip from the truck.

Trojan: MS-2000 Miter Saw Stand (top photos). After opening so many shipping cartons, I was scared to death when a huge box arrived with the Trojan MS-2000. I was afraid of another nightmare assembly, but I couldn't have been more wrong. The MS-2000 came completely assembled except for the wheels. However, I soon discovered that setting up the MS-2000 at a job site is pretty tricky, even with the attached instructions.

Unlike the other self-contained stands, the MS-2000 has extension wings with both rollers and tubular steel bars for work support. But I found that the large spaces between the rollers and bars let short pieces of lumber fall through occasionally. The MS-2000 doesn't have a calibrated fence for measuring, but there is a compact stop system that clamps to any of the cross supports and allows repetitive cuts up to 9 ft. The C-clamp that attaches the stop system was a little tight, but a well-placed tap of a hammer fixed that problem. Unfortunately, the stop doesn't flip up, so it got in the way when I was cutting boards longer than the stop length. The extension wing tended to droop under the weight of the workpiece, which changes the position of the stop. But the folks at Trojan told me that a new fence/stop system is being developed to take care of all of these problems. The manufacturer

also claims that the wheels roll easily up stairs, but it felt like hard work to me.

Better support and stop systems mean extra trips to the truck—The rest of the stands in my folding-stands-on-wheels category require more than one trip from the truck to the setup site. These stands typically have extra legs, wings or extension tables that aren't built-in or stored within the unit. But often for the price of walking and setup time, you'll get a more versatile stand.

Rousseau: HD 2900 (bottom photos, facing page). I've used the Rousseau table-saw stand for years, and the HD 2900 is made of the same heavy-duty materials. At 31 in. tall, it's the lowest saw stand I tested (most were around 36 in. high). For me taller stands are more comfortable, especially when I'm lining up the sawblade with a pencil mark. When I swung the saw to one side for a 45° angle cut, I found that I had to cut 2 in. off the handle on my saw's turntable to clear the tires. (The handle works better a little shorter.)

The HD 2900 folds into a neat little package, but with a miter saw bolted on, it's still a bit too heavy for me to lift, especially after a long day of work. I was grateful that the saw came off the stand easily with a couple of hand screws.

The Rousseau stand relies on a telescoping two-roller system like the MiterMate. The extension tubing for the HD 2900 is permanently housed beneath the table, but the rollers and support legs need to be carried separately. Rousseau's system is a lot simpler to set up and adjust. All of those little red wing nuts that the MiterMates have are replaced by half as many T-knobs. Rousseau did send me an optional extension fence, the SS 6000 (list price \$115) so that I didn't have to depend on the rollers for work support. Rousseau recommends mounting the SS 6000 to a 2x12, but a piece of ¾-in. plywood worked nicely for me. Rousseau offers yet another extension table, the SS 6112, that is made of steel and doesn't need the wood.

The SS 6000 is a longer version of the optional extension fence that comes with the SS 2850 shop stand. The SS 6000 has two stops that allow calibrated repetitive cuts on boards over 10 ft. long. The first stop flips up, and the second stop doesn't, which means it can get in the way.

IDMM: The Saw Stand (photos third from top, facing page). When I mounted my saw to The Saw Stand, I was glad I'd already cut 2 in. off my saw handle because I couldn't swing the saw table to a full 60°. I had to shim my saw up close to the level of the extension tables; built-in adjusting screws fine-tuned the rest of the height.

The Saw Stand is a lighter, smaller design on a single wheel with extension tables that need to be carried separately. I found it easier to carry the stand over muddy driveways or up stairs rather than pushing or pulling it wheelbarrow style, although the stand rolled nicely over smooth surfaces. I attached my saw to the stand with four screws to make it removable.

The extension wings on The Saw Stand attach through a system of fixed pins and knobs. Each extension wing has an adjustable diagonal sup-



A saw stand that stands out. AD&E's SawHelper combines many top features: It is lightweight, is easy to carry and set up, and comes with extension wings and a calibrated stop. The bracket (photo below) lets the stand's wings attach to the saw for precise alignment every time the stand is set up.

port that is built into the stand, and the entire system sets up very quickly. The stand is sturdy, and its wide tables make a great workbench. The Saw Stand has an adjustable-stop system that works like a table-saw rip fence. The stop slides along a steel bar running across the front of the stand, and it tightens in position with a small lever. This stop system is calibrated, and it's accurate in both directions. It doesn't, however, flip out of the way. An extension system for The Saw Stand expands cutting capacity to over 8 ft.

A standout among chopsaw stands—*American Design & Engineering: The SawHelper* (top photo). It took four hours to assemble the SawHelper, and that didn't include the time it took to read the six pages of assembly instructions. The templates that came with the SawHelper didn't include my new Makita 12-in. compound-miter saw. But this stand is worth every second that it takes to put it together and more.

The SawHelper's most interesting feature is that the extension tables, called the Ultrafence, attach directly to the saw via brackets that bolt to each side of the saw base (bottom photo). Steel pins on the bracket ensure precise alignment of the table every time it is set up. The stand itself is lightweight and simple because no extra structure is needed for the wings to connect directly to it. I was able to use the SawHelper extension tables with my chopsaw sitting on top of my table-saw stand, and it would even work on the tailgate of a pickup truck. The SawHelper is probably the most versatile of the stands I reviewed.

The SawHelper's extension tables are 6 in. wide, providing excellent support for most stock. Also, the instructions include simple plans for expanding the tables to accommodate wider stock such as 12-in. shelving. The SawHelper



comes with one 8-ft. extension table and one 5-ft. table but is also available with two 5-ft. extension tables. An optional extension stop, which telescopes out of the fence, can be added to the table for making longer cuts like mitered casings for 8-ft. and 9-ft. doors.

The FlipStop on the SawHelper is another neat feature (photo bottom right, p. 45). It slides effortlessly across the solid aluminum fence, sets easily to the calibrations on the fence and flips up conveniently when it's in the way. My only gripe is that the FlipStop and the extension stop depend on metal rod to do the stopping. While this system works fine for square cuts, the pointed end of a miter slides the round rod right past, which throws off the calibrations on the fence.

I found that I could carry the stand and the extension wings in one trip, so I never missed having a stand with wheels. The SawHelper's stand folds flat, so it takes up very little space. The two extension tables store easily in most trucks.

Hitachi sells a saw stand called the SawSteady, made by American Design & Engineering. The SawSteady is identical to the SawHelper and comes with two 4-ft. extension tables and the FlipStop system. □

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