

Souping up a Chopsaw Stand

To get all the features he needed in a chopsaw stand, one finish carpenter made his own extension tables and stops

by Gary M. Katz

Homemade means all the best features. Built mostly from materials on hand, these extension tables have legs that adjust in height plus fences that extend for cutting long stock. The lightweight legs fold flat for easy transportation.



1. Fence extends for long cuts. A groove that fits over a hardwood runner keeps the fence aligned with the saw. A knob locks the fence in place. Stops ride in a matching groove on top of the fence.

Three years ago, I walked out of my house one morning to find that my truck and all my tools—including my chopsaw stand—had been stolen. As I began to replace my tools, I looked at a bunch of sawstands (*FHB* #99, pp. 4449) and saw a lot of great features on the various stands. But no one stand combined all the features I was looking for, so I decided to buy a basic stand and add the rest of the features myself (photo above).

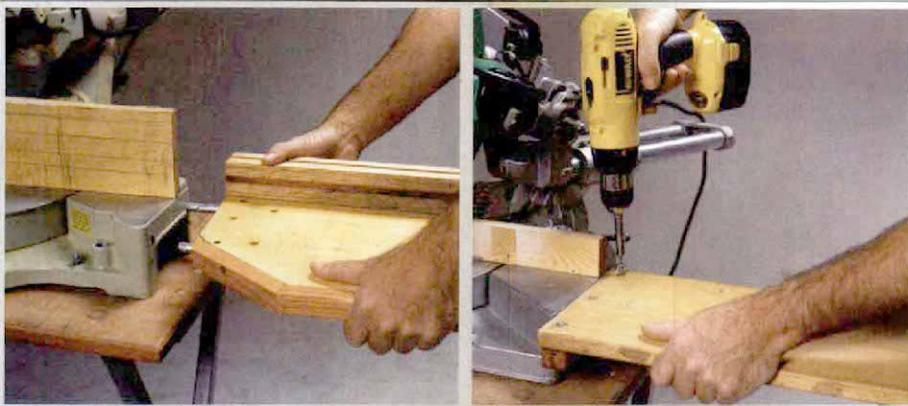
The manufactured folding stand that I set my saw on is no longer being made, but there are other stands, such as Black & Decker's Workmate (800-762-6672), that would work fine. Even a pair of sawhorses or a table-saw stand can give you a good solid base for the chopsaw.

Lightweight extension tables are the heart of the system—The first parts that I made were lightweight extension tables and folding legs. The tables are made of birch plywood 5 ft. long and 8 in. wide.

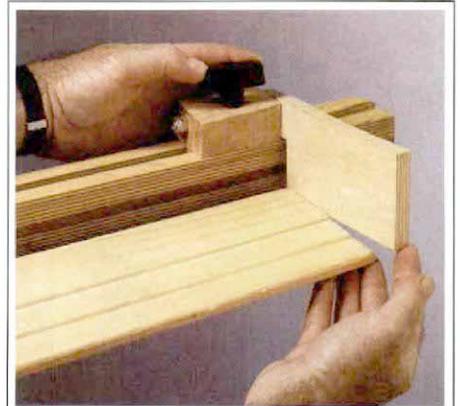
The legs are two pieces of plywood with a groove cut into one and a hardwood runner glued to the other. The runner rides in the groove to keep the two leg pieces aligned while the legs are adjusted to whatever height (photo bottom right, facing page) the job site demands. Tightening a single knob secures the two pieces together. The legs are joined to the tables with piano hinge so that the whole system folds flat for storage and transportation (photo bottom left, facing page).

My Makita chopsaw came factory-equipped with two short extension wings made of bent steel rod that slides into holes on the saw base. Thumb screws hold the rod in the holes. I used the same system to connect my extension tables to the saw.

I cut short sections of rod from one of the saw's extension wings and then glued them into blocks on the ends of the extension tables (photo top left, facing page). To keep the rods and the extension tables perfectly



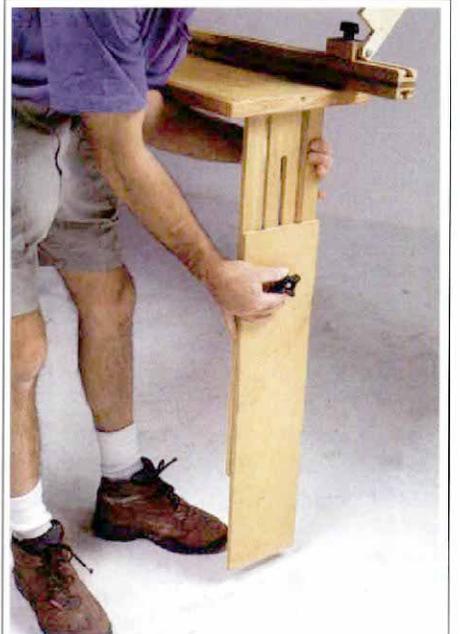
2 and 3. Two ways to attach the tables to the saw. The extension tables need to attach to the saw quickly, easily and in the same position each time. The method in the left photo uses existing holes in the saw base and metal rods to attach the tables. In the right photo, the tables are screwed to a block attached to the saw base.



4. Stops flip out of the way for multiple cuts. Stops that lock in place with a knob threaded onto a T-bolt can be flipped out of the way to allow many cuts to be set up.



5. Piano hinge joins the leg to the table. The leg folds flat for convenient storage. Here, the author tightens a knob to lock the fence in place.



6. Height adjustment at the turn of a knob. A hardwood runner riding in a router-cut groove keeps the two parts of the legs aligned as they adjust to the desired height. A single knob locks them in position.

aligned with the saw, I left the rod sections inserted in the saw base while the epoxy set up. If your saw does not come with predrilled holes, there is an alternative: You can attach a block to the saw base and then bolt the tables to the block (photo top center).

The sliding fence extends to 9 ft.—I do a lot of finish work, including door casings, so I need fences that extend for cutting long stock. I made my fence out of two pieces of Baltic-birch plywood laminated to a center strip of walnut (inset photo, facing page). The fence is lightweight, straight and rigid, and the walnut adds a touch of class.

The fence slides on a hardwood runner that keeps it aligned perfectly with the fence on the saw. Again, tightening a single knob locks the fence so that the extension tables can handle the casings and jambs from the 8-ft. tall doors that I install occasionally.

Adjustable stops flip up and out of the way.—If I'm on a job where I have to cut casings for a dozen doors of the same height, a stop system on my extension-table fences saves me from having to measure stock a dozen different times. But if at the same time I want to set up for cutting head casings at shorter lengths, those stops must flip up so that they don't get in the way when I'm making longer cuts (photo top right).

The flip-up stop system I made consists of a hardwood block that slides in a groove atop the fence. One knob keeps the stop at the length I need. The stock butts into an L-shaped plywood flag bolted to the block that rotates out of the way when not in use. I usually work with three or four stops, and I can often run casings for an entire house after measuring only once. □

Gary M. Katz is a writer and a carpenter living in Tarzana, California. Photos by Roe A. Osborn.