



Featherboards are your friend. As extra insurance against kickback, with the added benefit of more consistent cut results, try using a featherboard. These can be site-made by cutting kerfs into a piece of scrap, but I prefer the FeatherPro, a foam-fingered plastic version that fits into the miter slot of the sawtable, eliminating the need for a deep-reach clamp.

CLOSE THE GAP

The main problem with standard tablesaw throat plates is that the cutout for the blade is too wide to offer support for the fibers in the wood being cut, and this means tearout. But there's another problem—a safety issue—with these wide-mouth plates: When making a rip cut, thin or short strips of wood can jam in the gap and kick back very easily. A zero-clearance throat plate solves for both of these issues, because the width of the slot in the plate is a perfect match for the blade. You get full support around the blade, on every cut. Often you can find these inserts as off-the-shelf accessories from each saw manufacturer, or from a third-party manufacturer. If those wells turn up dry, you can always make your own, using the standard throat insert as a template for a bearing-guided router bit. The perk of making your own is that it doesn't take much more effort to crank out a half-dozen as it does to make just one. That's a good thing, because that means you can have a dedicated option for different situations: one each for a full-kerf blade and a thin-kerf blade, one for 45° bevel cuts or other common angles, and one or more for when you have a dado set on the arbor.



The zero-clearance route. Zero-clearance inserts are available for nearly all modern portable tablesaws, but if they aren't available for your cabinet or contractor's saw, or you just want to have backups, make a stack of homemade inserts using the existing throat plate as a pattern for cutting with a bearing-guided router bit.

