

Compact Cordless Miter Saws

Tool Test



A veteran carpenter puts eight ultraportable sliders to the test

BY BEN BOGIE

Although the trend in the last 10 years seems to be increasingly bigger and heavier sliding miter saws, I started my career over 20 years ago learning on an 8½-in. Hitachi, so returning to this size of saw feels familiar. There's a lot to like about sliders this size. The small blades deflect less than

larger blades, resulting in exceptional cuts, but the ability to easily carry the saw to the work site with one hand and get right to work cord-free is the real reason to get one. For this test, I limited our selections to 7¼-in. saws, assuming that this will be a super-portable second saw to complement the larger miter saw you probably already have.



**BEST
OVERALL**



**METABO HPT
C3607DRAQ4**

BARE TOOL \$950
**BATTERY AND
CHARGER** \$200
BLADE DIAMETER 7¼ in.
VOLTAGE 36
CROSSCUT 90° 2¼ in. by 12¹³/₁₆ in.
CROSSCUT 45° 2¼ in. by 8⁹/₁₆ in.
WEIGHT 34 lb.

**BEST
VALUE**



**RIDGID
R48607**

BARE TOOL \$380
BATTERY AND CHARGER \$150
BLADE DIAMETER 7¼ in.
VOLTAGE 18
CROSSCUT 90° 2x8
CROSSCUT 45° 2x6
WEIGHT 25 lb.

I also included the 7½-in. Makita because it seemed close enough.

If you're used to a corded saw, you may assume these battery-powered versions are just for punch lists, but modern high-capacity batteries mean you can set up one of these saws up in the morning and cut a day's worth of trim without ever tripping

CRAFTSMAN CMCS714M1

KIT WITH BATTERY AND CHARGER \$230
BLADE DIAMETER 7¼ in.
VOLTAGE 18
CROSSCUT 90° 2x8
CROSSCUT 45° 2x6
WEIGHT 26 lb.



DEWALT DCS361M1

KIT WITH BATTERY AND CHARGER \$380
BLADE DIAMETER 7¼ in.
VOLTAGE 18
CROSSCUT 90° 2x8
CROSSCUT 45° 2x6
WEIGHT 29 lb.

KOBALT KMS 0724B-03

BARE TOOL \$270
BATTERY \$100
CHARGER \$45
BLADE DIAMETER 7¼ in.
VOLTAGE 21.6
CROSSCUT 90° 2x10
CROSSCUT 45° 2x6
WEIGHT 30 lb.



over a cord. I compared all the models, side by side, making cuts in 2x stock, ¾-in. plywood, 5/4x6 poplar, and 1x9 hard maple. I quickly plunged the saws into 2x stock to evaluate their power and cut quality. I made crosscuts in wide maple to check for wandering cuts. The Achilles heel of sliders is play in the sawhead. Excessive play causes the blade to wander and creates a belly-shaped cut in wide pieces. At full extension, most of these saws had minimal head movement—I was surprised. The Craftsman and Kobalt had the most play, with the DeWalt, Milwaukee, Makita, and Metabo HPT having almost none. The others fell in between.

Controls and features

Out of the box, only three saws had their miter and bevel stops and pointers properly calibrated: the Metabo HPT, the Makita, and the DeWalt. I make it standard practice to check and calibrate a new saw, but it's a nice feature to not have to. All of the saws have front miter locks and bevel locks in the back. Milwaukee has a miter-detent override, a nice feature when working close to a detent. The Kobalt makes you hold up the lock lever to pass detents, which I found awkward.

For bevel locks, the Makita and Metabo HPT have short-throw levers that are quick and effective. The Metabo HPT has a bevel-adjust knob that allows you to dial in the exact setting. All of the saws have compact footprints compared to 10-in. and 12-in. miter saws, which is nice for portability, but also means there isn't a lot of room to support stock. Makita and Metabo HPT include accessory wings that expand the saw table. The small footprints also mean that some of these saws couldn't crosscut through the 8¾-in. maple. The Makita, Metabo HPT, and Kobalt have larger crosscut capacity.

Many of the saws feature a shadowline cut indicator, which I find to be superior to lasers as they're crisp and don't require eventual adjustment while also illuminating the cut zone in low-light conditions. Notably, the Ryobi and Makita feature neither a light nor a laser, which felt like a glaring omission. The Metabo HPT was the only one in the pack to use a laser, which is quite good, and also includes onboard lighting with two brightness settings.

Build-quality and power vary

As far as material quality, machining, and assembly, the Makita and Metabo HPT saws

are very close, with a slight advantage to the Metabo HPT. The Ryobi and the Kobalt scored lowest in this area. For power and cut quality, it's hands down Makita with Metabo HPT very close behind. Both of these saws feel more powerful than the others and absolutely plow through cuts with no noticeable hesitation or blade run-out.

The cut surfaces were smooth, square, and straight. The Ryobi was the least powerful-feeling while still delivering fair cut quality, and the Craftsman was adequately powered, but had a great deal of blade run-out, resulting in poor cut quality that I don't think was a blade issue. An honorable mention goes to the Ridgid, as it's well-powered, bevels in both directions, and makes decent cuts, even in hardwood.

And the winner is ...

For me, it all comes down to quality of cut and precision of the adjustments. Overall, the Makita and Metabo HPT saws are the clear leaders. They are beautifully executed saws with excellent cut quality. I'll gladly take either for the most demanding finish carpentry. But for me, the Metabo HPT takes the crown. It has excellent cut quality, great capacity, and dual-bevel capabilities, and was the only one with a bevel-adjustment knob. You can also run it with a 110v adapter. My only complaint is that I'd prefer a shadowline cut indicator instead of the laser.

The Makita saw is a close second; it has phenomenal cut quality and power, great capacity, and great build quality, but loses points for missing lighting and no cutline laser or shadow, and it's only single bevel. Next would be the Milwaukee and DeWalt saws, which are perfectly adequate, but lack the refinement and precision of the Metabo HPT and Makita. The budget winner here for me is the Ridgid. It's a good-quality tool with strong features and decent performance at a good price.

Note: For the specs listed here, we weighed all the saws and checked miter and bevel capacities ourselves. Battery offerings by manufacturer are varied and constantly changing—we've done our best to present a fitting comparison for each tool if a kit was not available for purchase. □

Ben Bogie is project manager for BPC Green Builders of Ridgefield, Conn. Photos by Melinda Vazquez, except where noted.

MAKITA XLS02Z

BARE TOOL \$600
TWO BATTERIES WITH DUAL-PORT CHARGER \$260
BLADE DIAMETER 7½ in.
VOLTAGE 36
CROSSCUT 90° 2¼ in. by 11¾ in.
CROSSCUT 45° 2¼ in. by 8¾ in.
WEIGHT 34 lb.



MILWAUKEE 2733-21

KIT WITH BATTERY AND CHARGER \$550
BLADE DIAMETER 7¼ in.
VOLTAGE 18
CROSSCUT 90° 2x8
CROSSCUT 45° 2x6
WEIGHT 28 lb.

RYOBI PBT01B

BARE TOOL \$200
BATTERY AND CHARGER \$130
BLADE DIAMETER 7¼ in.
VOLTAGE 18
CROSSCUT 90° 2x10
CROSSCUT 45° 2x6
WEIGHT 25 lb.

