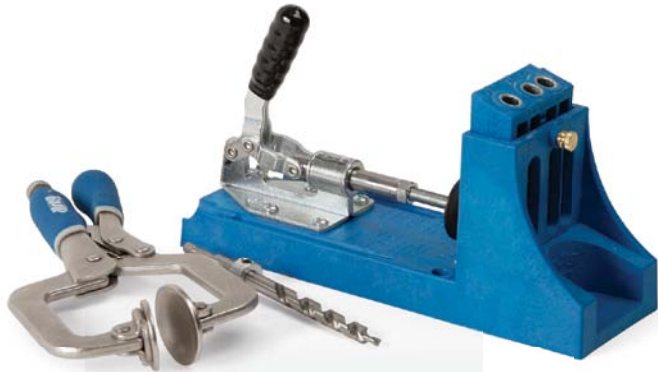


# Pocket-Hole



## Kreg K4 Master System

**Price:** \$150  
**Construction:** Glass-reinforced nylon  
**Weight (with case):** 5 lb.

HEAD  
TO  
HEAD

## Porter-Cable QuikJig

**Price:** \$210  
**Construction:** Aluminum and plastic  
**Weight:** 10.5 lb.



## The matter of mobility

Although these tools aren't particularly large or heavy, their design influences their portability. Some pocket-hole enthusiasts have a jig set up in the shop, and some throw the tool in the truck to use on the job site. Your work style should influence your choice.



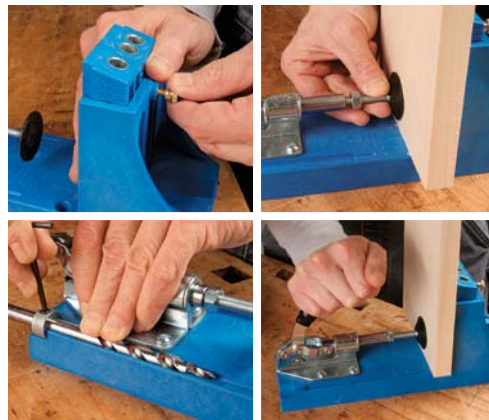
The Porter-Cable jig has a larger footprint than the Kreg jig, and it doesn't break down into smaller pieces for transport. Although it has a slot for storing square-drive bits, it has no carrying case, so the drill-bit, clamp, and screw storage is up to you. The Kreg jig is about half the size of the Porter-Cable model and comes with a carrying case, though it's not especially roomy or sturdy.

## Thickness adjustment: 1 step vs. 4

Because a pocket hole is oriented at an angle, the depth of the hole needs to be adjusted to match the thickness of the wood. The thicker the stock, the deeper the bit needs to bore into the wood. To adapt to different thicknesses, the guide block on the Kreg jig slides up and down, and is secured with a setscrew. On the Porter-Cable model, there is no depth adjustment to worry about. The collar on the drill bit pushes down on a metal plate, and the plate stops automatically based on the wood's thickness.



Here's the catch: The Porter-Cable setup uses a longer drill bit—9 in., compared to Kreg's 6-in. bit. Because of that and because the metal guide plate is higher and farther back than on the Kreg model, it's cumbersome to pull out and reposition the drill bit after boring each hole. The gap between the metal guide plate and the drill guide holes below also requires more fuss and increases the chance of accidentally dulling the drill bit due to misalignment.



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# Jigs

Porter-Cable enters a category that has long been dominated by Kreg, but is their new jig an improvement?

BY JUSTIN FINK

## Two-part clamp makes for smooth production work

When you're moving a lot of pieces through the same jig, anything that speeds the process is a blessing. The Porter-Cable jig has a two-part system. First, a front lever is pulled down (photo right). Next, a rotating clamp lever is pushed down and twisted to lock the stock into position.



For subsequent pieces of the same thickness, you can quickly clamp and release the stock using the front lever.



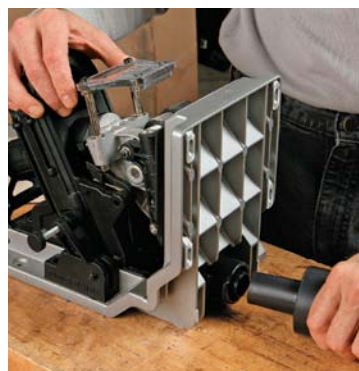
Although the previous generation Kreg K3 model had the clamp lever in the front as well, more recent K4 models have the clamp at the rear of the jig to make room at the front for dust collection and for the whole apparatus to be clamped to the worktable. At best, this rear position on the K4 system is simply not as convenient to operate. At worst, when boring through stock that is wide or tall, the clamp is awkward to reach, and pulling the lever toward your body to secure the stock is more difficult than pushing it down, like on the Porter-Cable.

## Clearing the chips

Drilling pocket holes makes a lot of wood chips. If those chips aren't cleared away efficiently, they can slow repetitive drilling significantly and shorten the life of the drill bit. Both jigs are designed to be compatible with a 1¼-in. vacuum hose or adapter (though this isn't listed in the Porter-Cable manual).

The Kreg model has a removable shroud that attaches to the front of the drill-guide block with a horizontal hose outlet. As long as the vacuum is attached and running, the chip-collecting shroud functions adequately. Without the vacuum, though, the shroud must be removed so that it won't clog. Even when it's removed, wood chips build up on the flat portion of the jig and interfere with the positioning of the wood.

On the Porter-Cable model, the dust port is on the bottom rear of the jig. The hose is out of the way, and because it sucks up the chips from the base of the drilling guide, it does a better job. When there is no hose attached, the Porter-Cable relies on a removable tray to catch falling chips. It does the job of keeping the chips off the base of the jig, but it fills quickly on large jobs and would need to be cleaned out frequently.



## Bottom line

The **Kreg jig** is simple and solid, and does the job for a reasonable price. There are few moving parts to worry about, and a missing setscrew would be easy to replace. The jig's small size and slim case make it convenient to move from job to job or tuck in a drawer between uses.

On the other hand, the new-to-market **Porter-Cable** model exposes serious weaknesses in the Kreg setup. It's hard to argue against the streamlined clamping mechanism and thickness adjustment on this tool, both of which operate more efficiently than the Kreg setup. In fact, the Porter-Cable jig's top-notch engineering makes some of the Kreg features look toylike in comparison. Still, the greater number of moving parts puts the Porter-Cable at a greater risk for failure over time, and repairs don't look simple.

At the end of the day, no matter which tool you choose, you will end up with the same pocket holes. So for now, I consider the Kreg's lower price and wide array of compatible accessories to be more important than Porter-Cable's innovations. Regardless, this category is poised to expand. Features will improve, prices will drop, and buying decisions will be more difficult.

Justin Fink is a senior editor. Photos by Rodney Diaz.