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Dave Campbell
Editorial Content Chief, *WOOD* magazine



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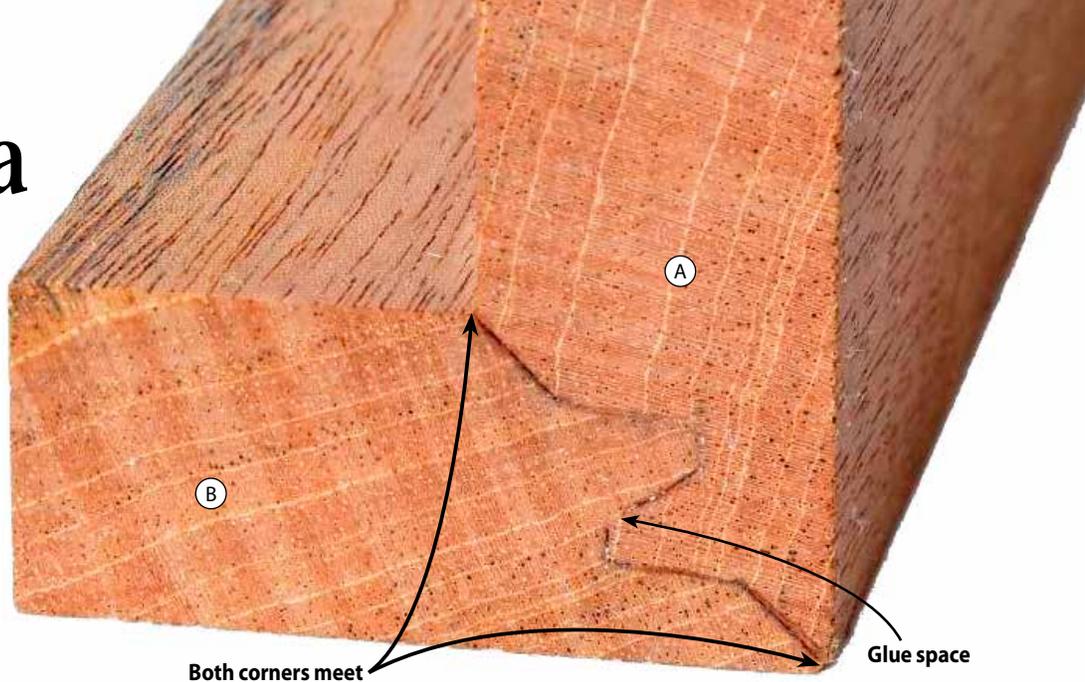
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Setting up a Lock-Miter Bit



Lock-miter joints have a lot going for them: appearance, self-alignment for easy assembly and clamping, and ample gluing surfaces for strength. They're ideal for right-angle corners of boxes, columns, cabinets, frames, and the like. Plus, you can cut both parts of the joint with a single router-table setup.

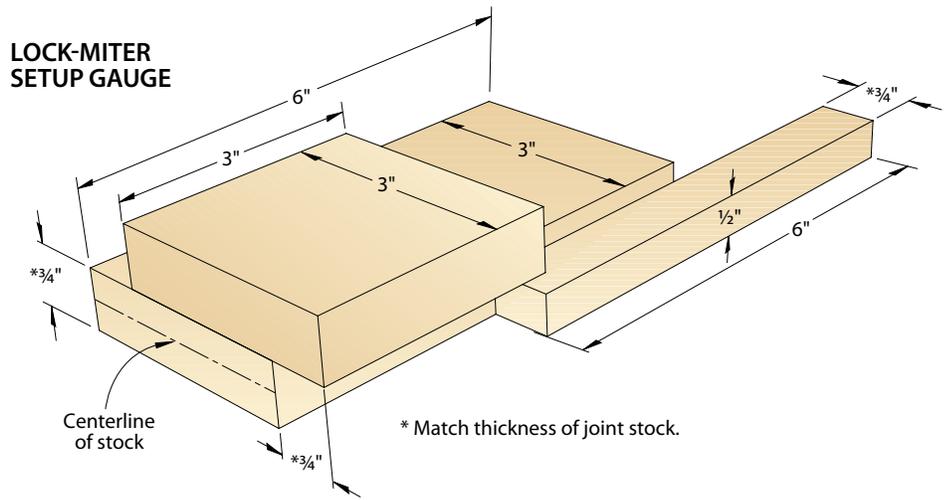
But getting the correct router-table setup—both the bit height and fence position have to be just right—can be a challenge. Here's a sure-fire method for setting up this bit.

Install the bit

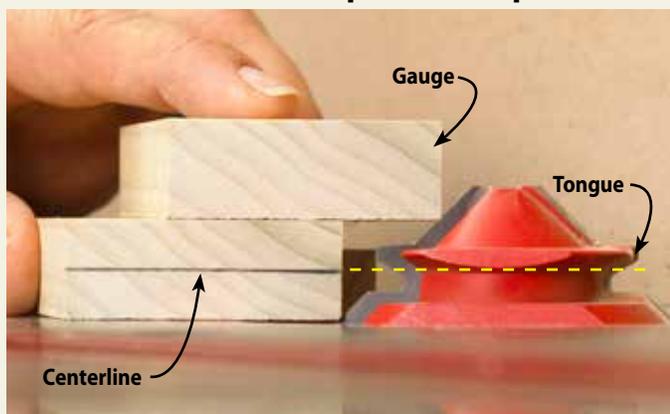
Lock-miter bits come in different sizes, covering different material-thickness ranges; choose one that works for the thickness of your stock. Install the bit in a table-mounted router, and set the router speed to 16,000 rpm for bits

1¼–2¼" in diameter or 12,000 rpm for bits 2¼–3½" in diameter. (Follow the bit manufacturer's recommendation if it

is different.) When routing workpieces 2" or more wider than the height of your router-table fence, attach a tall auxiliary

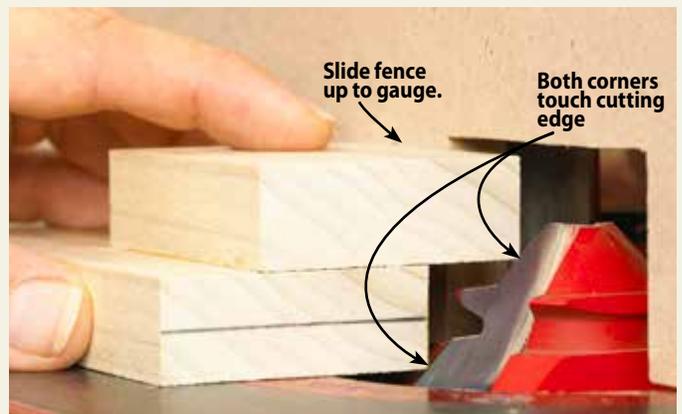


Make the initial bit setup in two steps



SET THE BIT HEIGHT FIRST

Place the gauge beside the bit and align the center of the bit with the centerline on the gauge. The center of the bit lies at the midpoint of the sloped face of the tongue.

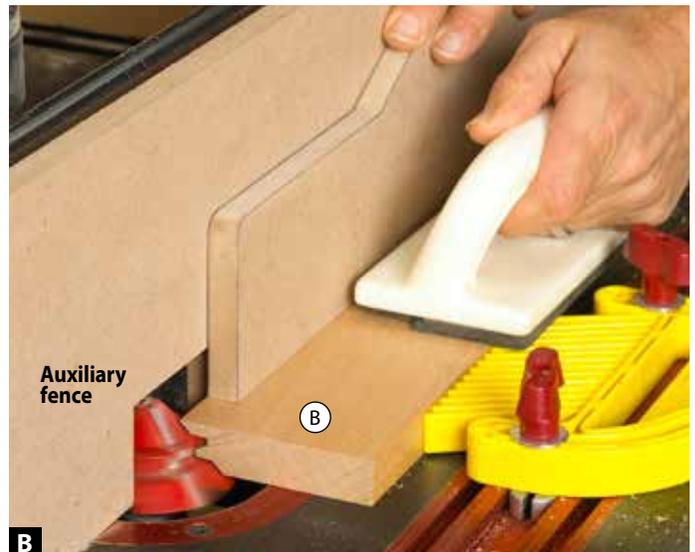


THEN, POSITION THE FENCE

With the height set, position the gauge so the top and bottom corners contact the bit's cutting edge. Then slide the fence up against the jig and lock it in place.



A A spacer makes the first cut shallow; remove it for the second pass. Use a featherboard and pushblocks for safe, accurate routing.



B Hold the workpiece firmly against the table and fence and feed it at a steady rate as you form the complex profile on the joint parts.

fence to ensure adequate support. (We mounted ours with double-faced tape.)

Now, make a simple gauge

From scrap stock the same thickness as the joint parts (both parts of the joint must be the same thickness), construct the lock-miter setup gauge [Drawing]. Draw a centerline across the end of the bottom piece, and mark the material thickness on the gauge. Use it as shown as shown on the *previous page*.

Cut a test joint

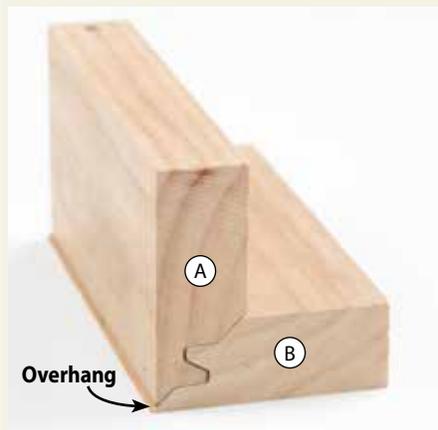
Rout both parts of the joint on scrap stock the same thickness as the workpieces. For easier routing, make shallow cuts by starting with a spacer attached to the face of the router-table fence. (We clamped a 1/4" plywood spacer in place to rout the joints in 3/4" material). Make one pass with the spacer in place, and then remove it for the final pass.

Rout one part of the joint (call it Part A) vertically [Photo A], with its *inside* face against the fence. Without changing the setup, rout the other part of the joint (Part B) flat on the table [Photo B] in two passes, with its *inside* face down.

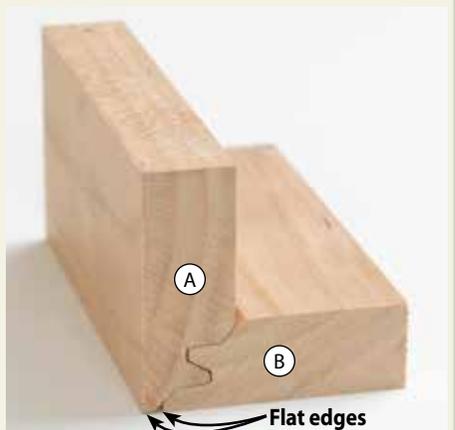
Check the resulting joint against these examples

After you cut the test pieces, assemble the test joint and compare it with the images *below*. Adjust the fence position or bit height, as indicated, in small

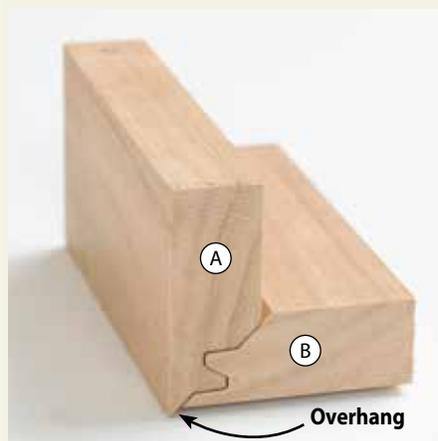
increments. Cut additional test joints and make adjustments until the parts meet precisely, like the joint at the top of the *previous page*. 🌿



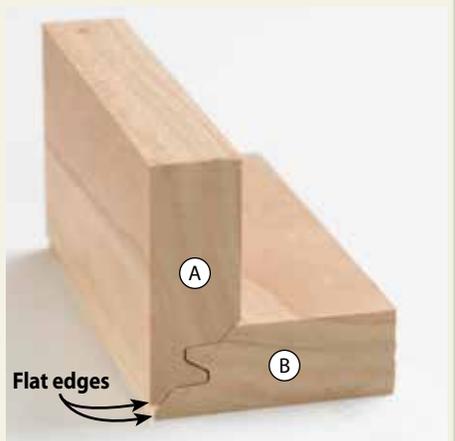
CORRECTION: MOVE FENCE FORWARD SLIGHTLY.



CORRECTION: MOVE FENCE BACKWARD SLIGHTLY.



CORRECTION: LOWER THE BIT SLIGHTLY.



CORRECTION: RAISE THE BIT SLIGHTLY.

More Resources

- ▶ Learn more about special-duty bits: Rabbeting bits with bearing sets: woodmagazine.com/rabbetingbit
- Clean-cutting spiral bits: woodmagazine.com/spiralbit
- Perfect angles with bird's-mouth bits: woodmagazine.com/birdsmouthbit

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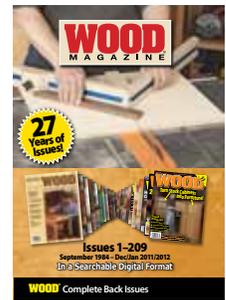
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