Fuss-free faux through-tenons

Give a project the look of finely crafted through-mortise-and-tenon joints, without the hassle, by making these practical pretenders.

Sure, through-mortise-and-tenon joints look great. But they should, given the time you'll need to precisely cut and fit them. Here we'll show you how to install faux tenons to conceal an easy-to-make, screw-reinforced butt joint.

First, cut a shallow mortise

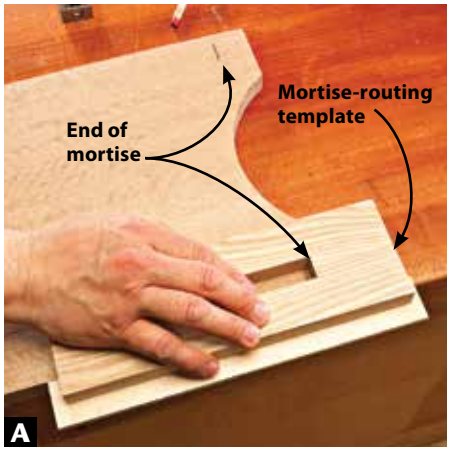
To rout a quick, accurate mortise, create a template from two pieces of ¾"-thick scrap. Each piece should be about half as wide as your router base and about 8" longer than the length of the mortise. To mimic a real mortise-and-tenon joint, make the mortise length ½" shorter than the part that will butt against the face opposite the mortise. The mortise width will equal the thickness of the part it complements.

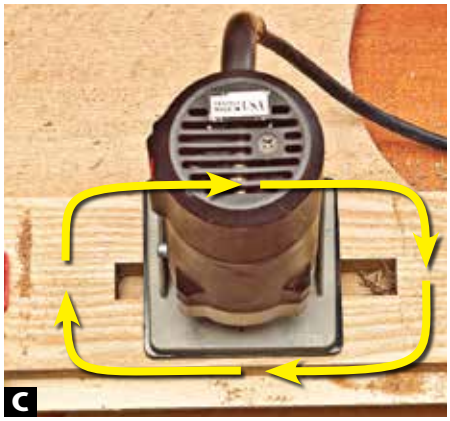
Divide the mortise width in half and make that dimension your dado depth. Then cut a dado as wide as the mortise length, as shown **[Drawing 1]**. Edge-glue the halves to make the routing template **[Drawing 2]**. Then attach a stop underneath to hold the template the correct distance from the workpiece edge.

Pattern bit

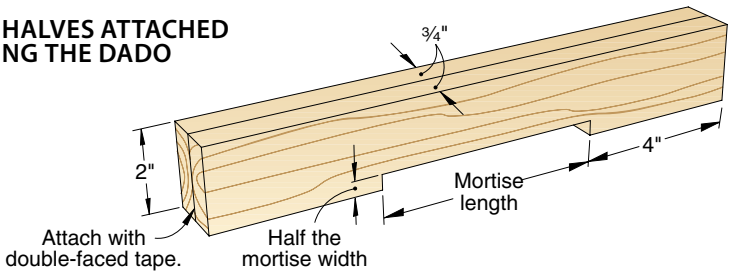
Clamp the ends of the template to a piece of scrap, and install a ½"-diameter, ½"-deep pattern bit, as shown at *near right* (see **Sources**), in your router. Adjust the depth-stop setting until the bit cuts ⅛" deep and the bearing rides against the sides of the template opening.

After marking the mortise ends on the workpiece, position the template with one end of the opening over an end mark **[Photo A]**. Carefully plunge the bit into the workpiece near the center of the template opening **[Photo B]**. Then cut the mortise by moving your router clockwise around the opening **[Photo C]**, with the bearing riding firmly against

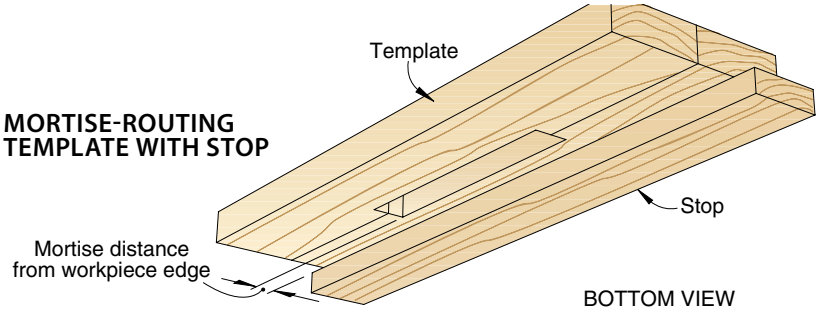




1 TEMPLATE HALVES ATTACHED FOR ROUTING THE DADO



2 MORTISE-ROUTING TEMPLATE WITH STOP

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the sides of the template opening. Vacuum out the debris, and leave the template clamped in place.

Now square off the mortise corners using a ½" straight chisel or corner chisel (see **Sources**). Use the template as a guide to chisel dead-on 90° cuts **[Photo D]**. Repeat these steps to cut the remaining mortises on each workpiece.

Now cut the tenons

On the blank you'll use to make your faux tenons, rout 45° chamfers on all four sides at both ends **[Photo E]**, starting with the edges, followed by the faces to reduce tear-out.

Next, clamp a stopblock to your tablesaw fence, as shown **[Photo F]**, and adjust the fence to cut your tenons to the desired length. We made ours ⅜" long for a mortise ⅛" deep. Use a miter-gauge extension to reduce tear-out **[Photo G]**, and cut the tenons from both ends of your blank.

Test-fit faux tenons into the mortises, and sand them until they're snug. After you screw together the butt joint on your project, apply glue to the bottom of the mortise, and insert the faux tenon, as shown on *page 1*.

Cap drilled mortises with a rabbeted tenon

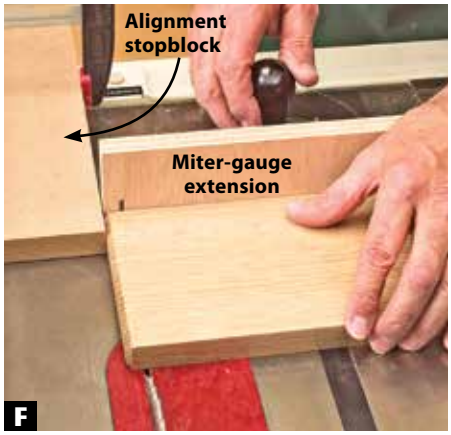
If you're more comfortable drilling mortises with a Forstner bit than routing them, here's a way to hide the mortise edges beneath the lip of a rabbeted tenon for a clean look. To start, mark your workpiece to show the mortise ends and centerline.

E

Next, install a Forstner bit as wide as the tenon thickness, minus ¼". Then position a drill-press fence so the bit spur touches the mortise centerline, and set the drilling depth to ⅛".

Drill holes at both mortise ends, followed by overlapping holes along its length **[Photo H]**. Using a straight chisel, cut the corners square **[Photo I]**, and remove as much of the scalloping along the edges as possible.

To make the faux tenons, cut a blank to the desired thickness and width, and chamfer the ends, as shown earlier. Set your fence for the distance you want the tenon to extend above the surface of the mortise piece—¼" in this case—and cut ⅛"-deep kerfs on both edges and faces **[Photo J]**. Because you're not cutting completely through the workpiece, it's safe to use the fence in combination with a miter gauge.



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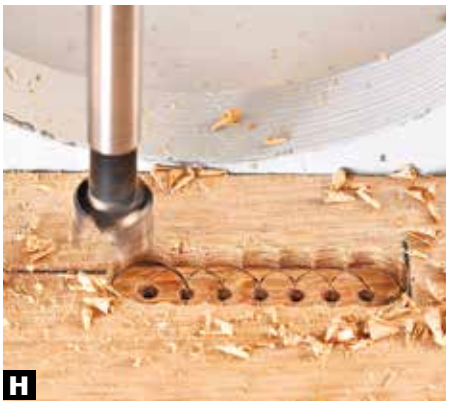
Now slide the rip fence aside and attach a stopblock to the miter-gauge extension to cut off the faux tenon leaving a ⅛×⅛" rabbet **[Photo K]**. Check that the tenon fits snugly within the mortise, then glue it in place.

Sources

Pattern router bit. ½"-diameter × ½"-long bit no. 6509, call MLCS at 800-533-9298; mlcswoodworking.com.
Corner chisel. Ray Iles 9⁄16" corner chisel, call Tools for Working Wood at 800-426-4613; toolsforworkingwood.com.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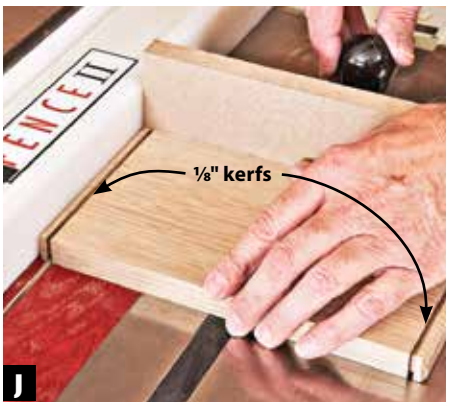

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