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Tool Preview

Leigh RTJ400 Router Table Dovetail Jig

by Chris Marshall

Leigh's newest dovetailing jig solution produces up to a dozen dovetail and box joint sizes with quick setups, foolproof repeatability and minimal fuss.

The RTJ400 provides an inverted configuration compared with many typical dovetail jigs: you steer the jig and workpiece over the bit rather than balancing a handheld router on the jig.



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VIDEO For a quick video overview of the Leigh RTJ400 Router Table Dovetail Jig, please visit woodworkersjournal.com and click on "More on the Web" under the Magazine tab.

Some dovetail jigs are frustrating to learn: hours upon hours of test cuts, multiple adjustment variables to resolve and the sinking feeling that you'll have to repeat the laborious setup process for every new project. Ugh.

Thank goodness Leigh is making router dovetailing substantially easier with the new RTJ400 Jig I tried recently. In about an afternoon, and thanks to the clearly

written manual, I milled the six different glue-ready joints you see on the facing page. That included jig changeovers, just two or three test cuts per joint and no previous experience. Impressive.

The RTJ400's basic design isn't altogether revolutionary: it consists of an aircraft grade aluminum template fashioned to mill pin slots on one side and tails on the other. That styling has been around for decades. But,

Leigh's refinements to the template principle include a number of standout features that set it apart from other router table-specific jigs of this sort, and those are key to its simple and repeatable performance.

For one, Leigh has incorporated its patented cam style "eBush" guide bushings into this system. Sized for typical 1 $\frac{3}{16}$ " router plate openings, they have numeric index marks that allow you to adjust

a loose- or tight-fitting joint by simply twisting the base collar left or right. Its elliptical bushing widens or narrows in .001" increments to help dial in a perfect cutting width for the template slots. Even better, in most cases you can make the first side of a joint, then refine the fit of just the mating piece by changing the eBush setting, rather than re-routing both parts.

Leigh has designed the vertical fence portion to unclamp from the template. Then, pin locators under the end handles fit into various holes and slots on the template. Those are well-marked and automatically position the fence for different joint setups. No trial and error process here. This pin-and-slot index enables the jig to cut five sizes of through dovetails in two pitches, three sizes of half-blind dovetails and four box/finger joints in workpieces up to 16" wide. Be aware that the pin and tail pattern produced by the RTJ400 is regular — there's no variable spacing option.

Another handy feature is the side stops: when you center a board over the template to cut the first half of a joint and tighten the side stop against it, that sets the mating board's position, too. It's particularly useful for half-blind dovetails — probably the trickiest router-made joint to dial in well, because the pins and tails are cut in one operation.

Sturdy cam-action clamps lock workpieces securely, and a handle on each end of the fence makes the jig stable to move around your router table top. While a "business-end-down" jig like this has gravity working in your favor — no tippy router to steer and balance — the cutting



Numeric indexing on Leigh's "e10" eBush makes adjusting the fit of a joint's mating parts as easy as twisting the elliptical bushing left or right and re-routing one piece.



A pin under each handle enables the vertical fence to be repositioned in template holes to well-marked, automatic settings for various joint sizes and styles.

action happens in front of the jig, so you do need to lean forward to monitor your progress. Luckily, the stance doesn't feel awkward.

The RTJ400 comes with four carbide bits, "e10" guide bushing, other necessary supplies and a tutorial DVD for around \$359. An accessory kit (\$175) provides nine more bits, an "e7" bushing and a 1/2" to 8 mm collet reducer, in order to cut the jig's full range of dovetail and box joint sizes.



Stepped side stops position pin and tail boards accurately — very helpful for half-blind dovetails where both joint parts are milled simultaneously.

Chris Marshall is Woodworker's Journal's senior editor.



You can form both dovetails and box joints with this new RTJ400 Jig from Leigh.