

Buying Guide – Band and Table Saws



Band and Table Saws: More power with bigger tools

Even though hand tools are an essential part of your toolbox, band saws are the workshop workhorses. When you are starting serious projects on a daily basis, you must have that extra power and durability provided by a band saw or a table saw. Band saws and table saws are prized not only for their speed, but their accuracy when it comes to complex cutting tasks.

Band Saws

A band saw is the perfect tool to cut curves and slicing through thick stock. Smaller band saws should be able to slice through lumber 4", with bigger saws being able to handle 6" cuts. Band saws can do ripping, cross cutting, bevelling, and cutting aluminum, plastic and other materials.

For a saw with impressive cutting capacity, you may expect a tool with a big motor. However, the band saw's efficient cutting action means it can get its power from a surprisingly compact source. Even on the biggest models of band saws, you will rarely see a motor larger than a 3/4 horsepower. Band saws come in two types: stationary models with cast-iron frames, and portable saws that can be moved easily and placed on a tabletop or a workbench.

Our recommendation: [Laguna - Italian LT18 Bandsaw - LT18](#)



Band Saws: How They Work

The key component of a band saw is the blade guide system. The lower and upper guides minimize sideways movement of the blade, and prevent the blade from deflecting backward when feeding wood for a cut. However, you need to carefully check this system before you buy. Look for one that is actually easy to adjust, but will hold a setting despite vibration. It should be substantial enough to resist force but small enough that it does not obstruct your view of the cutline.

There are two other aspects that you must take into consideration : the depth of cut and throat. Depth of cuts is the distance from the table to the upper blade guides. This determines maximum cutting thickness, and can range from 6" to 12" with an optional riser for lengthening or shortening cuts. In the meantime , throat is the distance from the blade to the saw frame, and determines width of cut. Throat can go from 12" on some models, to more than 18" on larger band saws.

Choosing a Blade

A band saw produces a continuous cutting motion, but such efficiency depends mostly on choosing the right blade for the job. Most of the time, it is best to use the coarsest and widest blade your project can allow. Generally, beginners opt for fine-toothed blades, not realizing that almost every cutline will need sanding anyway. On the other hand, a coarser blade will get the job done a lot quicker. If cuts you make that should be straight but end up wavy, you might to use a wider blade. A wider blade will give straighter results because the metal behind the cutting teeth stays in the saw cut (kerf) much longer, and keeps the blade on straighter track.

Our recommendation: [Laguna - Resaw King 1" x 125" Carbide Tipped Bandsaw Blade - RSK125](#)



Band Saws: What to Look For

Tilt Table : Tilted tables will help you make angled cuts. Be sure that the table on bandsaw you want to buy tilts easily and locks positively. Also, check that it does not flex out of square when locked in its 90-degree normal position.

Cast-Iron Table and Stand: A cast-iron table and stand will help minimize vibration when you cut. They are an absolute must for larger band saws, and helpful for smaller ones. Should you need to buy a stand, you might want to consider the advantages of adding a mobile base beneath it.

Riser Blocks: Some band saws allow you to increase their capacity to slice a board through its width by adding an accessory riser block. This cast-iron block can bolt into the middle of the saw's column. Depending on your saw, you may be able to add 4" to 6" of capacity.

Dust Collection : Some models of band saws have a plastic turbine blade to their lower wheel to create a suction that pulls dust into a bag, while other models have a built-in port that you can connect with a hose to a shop vacuum or a dust-collection system.

Table Saws

Table saws are the centerpiece of most professional and home woodworking shops. They can perform a variety of cuts, including cross cuts to rip cuts, to dado cuts, a can cut straighter, smoother lines, and larger workpieces, than other types of saws.

How They Work

Table saws consist of a circular saw blade mounted on an arbour that's powered by an electric motor. The blade extrudes through the table's surface, which helps provide support for the material that is being cut (typically large timbers). The cut's depth can be varied by moving the blade up and down, and the angle of the cut changed by adjusting the angle of blade.

Types of Table Saws

There are many types of table saws to choose from, and the choices you make should be largely determined by how you plan to use your saw. Most of the time, there are three types of table saws : stationary cabinet, contractor and portable table saws. Each type provides different degrees of mobility, power and performance, but also, with a different price tag.

A table saw is a bigger investment, so if you anticipate your use may increase or change, you may want to spend more on it now to make sure you get the capabilities you might need for the future. For lighter use, a basic saw with moderate power may be enough.



Stationary/Cabinet Table Saws

A stationary/cabinet saw is perfect for frequent and demanding use. Most of the time, it features high-performance parts and design; an enclosed base, 3 to 5 horsepower induction motors, an extra-large work surface, and 10" to 12" blades that can handle thick cuts. This type of table weighs between 400 and 800 lbs and requires installation of a heavy-duty circuit for power. They generally offer the greatest in cut capacity, stability and workpiece support.

Our recommendation: [General - 10" - 3 HP cabinet saws \(left tilt\) - 50-275RLKM1](#)



Contractor Table Saws

Contractor table saw provide enough power to handle medium-to-heavy-duty tasks, and are often used by homeowners and hobbyists, because they can be plugged in any standard electrical outlet. Most of the time, they feature an open, attached stand or base with wheels; 1- 1/2 to 3 horsepower induction motors; a spacious table to support large timbers, and 10" blades for accurate, precise cuts. These table saws usually weigh between 200 and 300 lbs and might require the assistance of another person to move them.

Our recommendation: [SawStop - 1.75HP Contractor Table Saw w/52" Rails - CNS175-TGP52](#)

Portable Table Saws

Portable table saws are made for light-to-medium cutting tasks, and carry the lowest price tag compared to other types of table saws. Most of the time, they have 3 to 15 amps universal motors, 10" diameters blades, a folding mobile base for easy transport between jobsites, and steel aluminum and plastic parts for a compact, lightweight design. They tend to have a more narrow table surface than stationary and contractor saws, so the width of stock than can be ripped is reduced. Portable table saws can cut through softwood, but may struggle on thicker boards, or hardwoods like oak and walnut.

Our recommendation: [Makita - 10" Table Saw w/ Stand - 2705X1](#)



Saw Type	Power	Recommended Application	Key Benefits
Stationary/Cabinet Table Saw	3 to 5 hp or more	Frequent, demanding professional or home use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durable, high-performance parts and design • Greatest cut capacity, stability and workpiece support • Cabinet contains dust, protects motor and muffles noise
Contractor Table Saw	1-1/2 to 3 hp	Medium-to-heavy-duty home or professional use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be easily brought to jobsites • Power, stability, cutting capacity and support for big workpieces • Long-lasting and durable performance
Portable Table Saw	3 to 15 amps	Light-to-medium-duty home or professional use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily portable, compact, space-saving • Less expensive • Standard voltage for homes, shops and jobsites

Table Saws: What to Look For

Mitre Gauge: The mitre gauge is a removable guide that is used for accurate and fast mitre cuts and crosscuts. Be sure to look for a table saw with positive 45 and 90 degrees. Finally, check the mitre gauge slot on the saw table, it has to be perfectly parallel to the blade or your mitre cuts will not be accurate.

Bevel Capability : Generally, table saws allow you to tilt the blade to the left for angled cuts; though some right tilt models, available on the market, are there to accommodate personal preferences. Keep your eyes open for easy adjustment and positive stops at common angles; this way, you can make accurate and fast bevel cuts.

Rip Fence: Rip fences are guides for cutting parallel to the edge of the workpiece. However, longer fences provide better control. The fence must fit snug, slide freely, lock down solidly, and be perfectly parallel with the blade at every setting.

Dust Port : It is well-known: table saws produce a lot of sawdust. However, those with cabinets keep dust fairly well contained. On other table saws types, look for a dust port if you want to connect to a dust collecting system.

Check out our brands for band saws and table saws!



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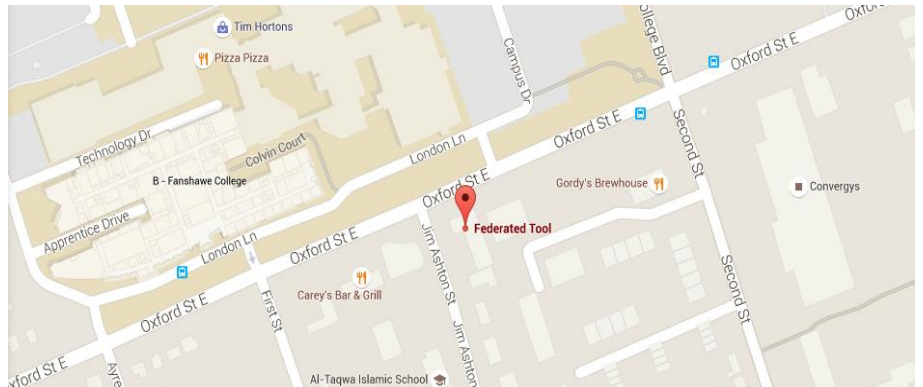
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