

WoodRat Corner No.5

Putting Legs on Tables

One of the easiest joints to make on the WoodRat is the Sliding Dovetail. Instead of chopping a mortice, you pull a single slot into the end of each table leg. Three passes make a stopped dovetail tenon, and using the WoodRat guideRails, you should have a perfect joint. This is all so quick that building a table makes a nice week-end project.



There are many configurations for making tables. The simplest has four legs with two rails dovetailed into each leg. Our design shows just one top and bottom rail dovetailed into each end frame. The stretcher rails go between the top and bottom rails, not into the legs.

I made this table to match a work-bench that I made some time ago, to act as a gluing table and general bench, so it's designed with as much useful room as possible in the space beneath it. The rails and stretchers need to be deep, to give the rigidity needed for heavy workshop use.



Gauging the joint: The depth of the joint is always crucial for sliding dovetails, so start by making the block thickness to the depth of the socket needed. That way you can use that block depth and width for future projects.

Cutting the Slots: you'll need a MitreBox, GuideRails and Stop, a sharp pencil, clean stock with nicely squared ends. If the table legs are heavy, a roller will support the free end, as shown above. Make sure that the leg is held truly flat up against the underside of the plate, before pulling the cut, and that everything is firm and square.

The Block width: after making all the dovetail slots to that depth in the legs, you can find the width of the block to use against the Stop on the GuideRail for the tenons. With your vernier gauge, add the width of the bottom of the slot to that of the neck of the slot, transfer the total measurement to the block and that's the width to make it.

Making the tenons: now use the block to make the tenon in the way described in Corner No.1 or in the GuideRail instructions. Work from one face, and cartwheel the rail to cut the other end. Make the stopped end to the tenon to cover the rounded end of the slot.



In this case, the sliding dovetail trench in the rails for the stretchers needs to be less deep than that for the rails into the legs, so I made two blocks; the second being less deep. A shallower slot means a narrower block width.

The photo above shows the rails and stretchers with the dovetailed tenons, and the legs with the sliding dovetail slots. Having done this, I ran the appropriate edges past a 45° bit to chamfer them. The cut stock starts to feel like furniture after it's been chamfered. Now they go together to form the frame.

We'll leave making the table top for another time.

Happy' Rattng,
Martin Godfrey