Simple Chop Saw Stand

by Carl Hagstrom

To get the most out of a chop saw, you need a good saw stand. While there are a lot of saw stands on the market, I've had the best luck with a homemade design I've copied and refined over the years. This saw stand is inexpensive, rugged, and simple to build using one 4x8 sheet of 1/2-inch lauan plywood. I like lauan because it's flat, smooth, relatively light, and only costs about $40 a sheet. The saw stand consists of two side pieces, a top, and four "webs" that tie the sides and top together (see Figure 1).

Three Easy Pieces

To build the stand, first rip two 8-foot side pieces from the full sheet of plywood (Figure 2, next page). The width of these two side pieces is equal to the height of the chop saw's table, plus 6 inches. The 6 inches represents the throat of the saw stand, and will provide enough depth to span between a pair of sawhorses. I rip these side pieces from each edge of the full sheet, giving me a straight factory edge on each piece to fasten the top to. Next, rip a 14-inch-wide top piece from what's left of the full sheet. The top can be any width you'd like (check the footprint on your saw) — I've found that 14 inches provides an adequate work surface without adding too much bulk to the saw stand.

To lay out and cut the throat notches

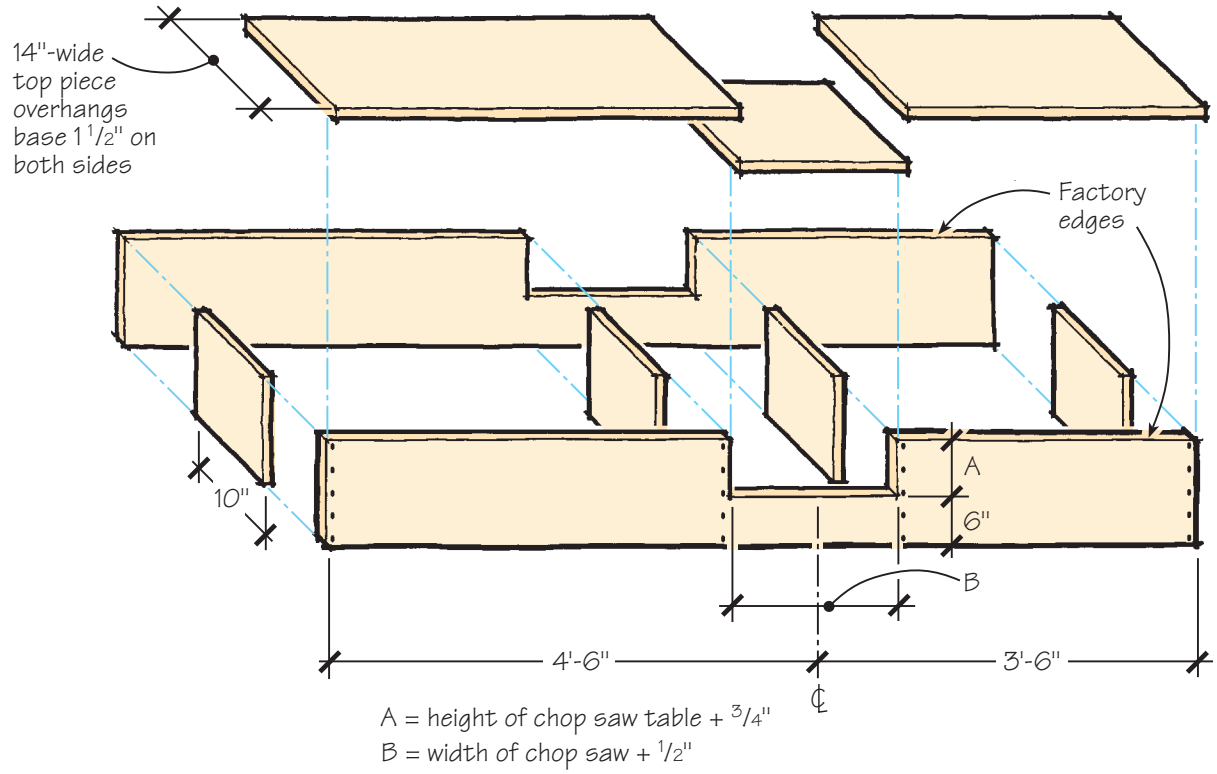

Figure 1. You could try giving this sketch to your new helper, or just do it yourself in less than an hour. Either way, you should come out with a good saw stand.

TOOLBITS

Job Radio and Battery Charger

Undoubtedly the most popular tool unveiled at the recent NAHB Homebuilders' show was the weather-resistant *Heavy-Duty Worksite Radio/Charger* from DeWalt. With steel speaker grilles, a rollbar cage and a flexible rubber antennae, this looks like a radio that can take a lot of abuse. The oversized knobs designed for gloved hands are particularly inventive; with luck, the dial won't get stuck on one station like most other job radios. DeWalt says the DW911 will run the radio all day on a single charge. Better yet, when plugged into the AC, it will recharge all DeWalt 9.6-volt through 18-volt NiCad batteries in less than one hour while cranking out tunes loud enough to be heard over the rest of the noise on your site. The DW911 is available for about $150.

Contact: DeWalt Industrial Tool Co., P.O. Box 158, Hampstead, MD 21074; 800/433-9258; www.dewalt.com.

Stud Marking Tape Measure

Framers might want to check out the *Stud Marker*, a 25-foot tape measure with an ink roller in its base that automatically marks stud locations as they're laid out. The Stud Marker can be set for either 16- or 24-inch on-center layout, and the manufacturer promises 2,000 marks before the ink cartridge must be replaced. With the ink roller cover closed, the $26.95 Stud Marker can be used like any ordinary tape measure. Replacement ink cartridges are available in a package of 2 for $7.95.

Contact: Kaufman Tools, 1622 South Washington, Wichita, KS 67211; 316/269-3724 or 877/788-3627.

Spray-Foam Dispenser

If you've ever gotten a face full of spray foam because the plastic straw popped off, you might be interested in Hilti's new *CF 116 Filler Foam Grip System*. Staking out the middle ground between disposable cans and expensive specialized tools, this affordable spray rig consists of a pistol grip dispenser, reusable nozzles (in place of straws) and Hilti's own high-yield, low-expanding foam. A trial set consisting of three 12-oz. cans of foam, three nozzles, and the dispenser lists for $68, and quantity discounts are available through Hilti's field sales force or by direct order.

Contact: Hilti Inc., P.O. Box 21148, Tulsa, OK 74121; 800/879-8000; www.hilti.com.

Reusable Batter Boards

Eventually contractors will probably lay out even the smallest additions with lasers and Global Positioning Satellites. In the meantime, *Lifetime Batter Boards* might be an improvement over the old-fashioned kind. Available in 4-, 6-, or 8-foot lengths, the galvanized bar is quick and easy to set up on rebar stakes, and features an adjustable string guide that looks like it would make the layout process a whole lot more efficient.

Contact: Fabricated Metal Products, Inc., P.O. Box 2196, Ocala, FL 34478; 800/765-4145.

in the two side pieces, position the centerline of the notch at 4 feet 6 inches from the left end (Figure 3). This allows "hands off" support for stock up to 9 feet long on the long side of the table, and 7-foot-long stock (door casing) on the short side. I also overcut the depth of this notch by about 3/4 inch. This provides shim space to fine-tune the final height of the chop saw table. The width of the notch depends on the width of the chop saw. I overcut the width by about 1/2 inch so the saw will slip in and out easily. If your saw swings past 45 degrees either way, you might need to provide additional clearance.

Figure 2. Both factory edges are used to provide a true plane for the top.

Quick Assembly

Cut four webs out of 3/4-inch plywood scraps, sized so the finished width of the frame is 3 inches less than the width of the top (Figure 4). This provides a 1 1/2-inch clamping lip on both sides of the saw stand. After fastening the two sides and the webs together, cut the top into three pieces, and glue and nail them to the frame (Figure 5). Finally, cut and fasten the shim strips to the throat deck (Figure 6), and pack up your tools.

A good carpenter can crank one of these stands out in an hour (I've found it's a good way to test a new hire). Site-made jigs and stops can be clamped or

Figure 3. Notches in sides are the width of the saw plus clearance, and the depth of the saw table plus a little for shims.

Figure 4. Four webs establish the width of the base.

Figure 5. And the three-piece top holds everything together.

Figure 6. Shim strips precisely set the saw table height to the workbench.

Figure 7. Clamped stops for productivity.

Figure 8. And it's a toolbox.

screwed to the top (Figure 7), and I've often blown a temporary stop in place with a finish gun, yanking it off with a hammer when finished. When it's time to move on, I toss the stand in the truck upside down, and pack it full of tools (Figure 8).

If you do a lot of finish work, you can add auxiliary fences, attach tape measures, and wire in outlets (for the coffee pot). I prefer to keep it simple. That way, when somebody backs over my saw stand with their pickup, I just explain how easy it is for them to make me another one.

Carl Hagstrom *is a builder in Montrose, Pa., and operates WOODWEB (www.woodweb.com), a Web site for the woodworking industry.*