

Miter-Saw Stands

To stand up to the demands of deck building, a work station needs to be strong, portable, and versatile

Not much goes into a deck that doesn't first land on a miter-saw stand to be cut, trimmed, drilled, ripped, or shot; most builders would agree that a deck would be a lot harder to build without one. But of the herd of stands on the market, which ones best

serve deck builders? To answer that question, we tried out seven models. Although all had desirable features, three were standouts that we would recommend without reservation for professional deck builders.

The ultimate work horse is the Lee Unlimited Power Bench. We were blown away by its strength, versatility, and ergonomics. If you have the budget to pay for it, this stand won't disappoint you.

Another good bet for deck builders is the Saw Helper Ultrafence U1010S from Sawtooth Specialty Tools. It provides sturdy, continuous support 8 feet out from the saw, and its stop system allows repeatable cuts over a range of more than 9 feet.

Finally, the best value is the Trojan TWC-35 Miter-Saw Stand. Its versatility, ergonomics, and strength meet a deck builder's needs, and it's easy to store, transport, and set up. For our current budget, and because we like its small storage size, the TWC-35 is our work horse of choice.

What We Considered

We focused on the following five criteria:

Strength. Because we commonly toss 60-pound 4x8 pressure-treated beams onto a miter-saw stand, it had better be able to handle heavy materials.

Mobility. A stand that's easy to relocate is a must. After as few as three days — and rarely after more than three weeks — deck builders move to greener pastures. Also, leaving a



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by Kim and Linda Katwijk

stand in a backyard overnight isn't always advisable, which means daily set up and take down can be necessary regardless of how long we're in one location. The less time that takes, the better.

Ergonomics. The right height for a saw is different for each person, so

being able to adjust the height of the stand is a plus.

Value. What do you get for your money?

Storage. Space in the truck can be at a premium. Some stands fit behind the seat, but others occupy a significant portion of the bed.

T4B Gravity-Rise Wheeled Miter-Saw Stand

Weight: 77.5 pounds

Storage size: 48 inches by 27.5 inches by 27 inches

Street price: \$328

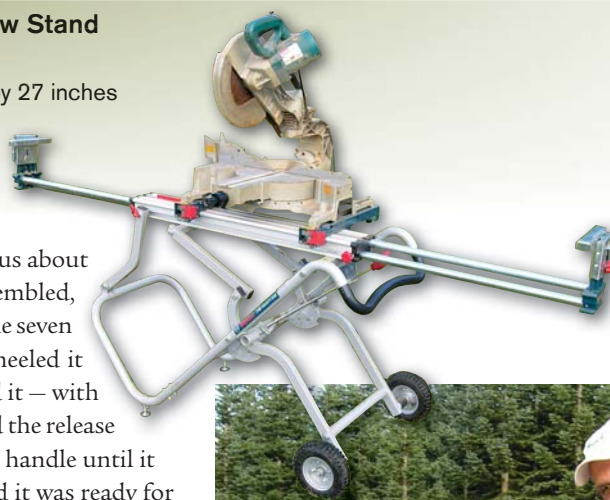
Bosch Power Tools

877/267-2499, boschtools.com

Shipped unassembled, the Bosch took us about an hour to put together. Once assembled, though, the T4B was by far the easiest of the seven stands to set up on a job site. First we wheeled it on its pneumatic tires to where we wanted it — with the saw fastened to it. Then we just pushed the release lever, tilted the stand, pulled down on the handle until it locked, and tightened one cam-lock — and it was ready for work. Extension arms slide out to make an 8-foot-6-inch-long work table and slide in to support short stock. The workpiece supports are flat galvanized-steel plate, and a stop at the end of the arms lifts up for repetitive cuts.

The ability to raise the stand with the saw in place is a great time-saver: You never need to take the saw off the stand, whether to store, transport, or use it. Rubber feet on the saw mount let you set your saw on any surface.

The Bosch is well-built with a wide base that gives it a stable feel. However, the wide base also means that it takes up the most storage space of all the stands we looked at. This stand has a couple of other downsides too: It has no height adjustment and its extension arms literally fall short for the long, heavy materials deck builders use. It would be my first choice for a job where I used lighter-weight materials and needed to set up often — but not for building decks.



You can store your miter saw on the Bosch T4B stand. When you're ready to work, roll the stand into place and loosen the locking mechanism, and the stand pretty much sets itself up.

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DW723 Heavy-Duty Miter Saw Stand

Weight: 37.5 pounds

Storage size: 73 inches by 8 inches by 11 inches

Street price: \$220

DeWalt Industrial Tool Co.

800/433-9258, dewalt.com



The sleek-looking DeWalt DW723 was easy to assemble out of the box; all we needed to do was slip the workpiece support arms onto the extension tube, tighten the wing nuts, and mount the saw. Two quick-release clamps bolt to the saw for attaching the saw to the rail.

It sets up fast too. Its legs fold out and lock automatically when you push a button lock, and the outrigger tubes extend to provide a 12-foot-5-inch-long cutting platform. The workpiece support arms are zinc-plated steel; you can buy

additional support arms and install them on the rail to support shorter stock. Unfortunately, they measure only 2 inches by 7 inches, which we found to be too small for deck work. A stop gauge swings up for repetitive cuts at the end of the outrigger arms.

The DW723 can support up to 400 pounds, according to the manufacturer, though it would sink on soft ground. The clamps that hold the saw to the rail have feet, so the saw can be used on any flat surface.

When the work is done, you just push the button locks to fold the legs in tight to the aluminum rail, making the stand easy to transport and store. Plus, a handle lets you carry it with one hand.



The DeWalt would make a great trim stand, but it's not a good choice for deck builders. Not only are the support arms too small, but when we tried to square the end of a 12-foot pressure-treated 2x8, the extension arms sagged to the point that the cut wasn't square. Clearly, the stand wouldn't be able to manage the 16-foot and 20-foot stock we often work with. Another drawback is the lack of an adjustment to level the stand on rough sites or to set it to your best working height.

Power Bench

Weight: 129 pounds

Storage size: 57 inches by 24 inches by 13 inches

Street price: \$700

Lee Unlimited

866/299-2371, powerbench.com



The Power Bench comes fully assembled. Designed by a contractor who couldn't find a work stand that suited him, and manufactured in South Dakota, this stand will take anything you can throw at it.

Set up is a little more difficult than with other stands. The Power Bench rolls in on wheels but has to be flipped over to be set up. The table unfolds with a scissors mechanism and the wings fold out. The legs store on top of the table and

The most heavy-duty stand in this survey, the folded Power Bench from Lee Unlimited has a dolly plate useful for carting other tools.



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rotate 270 degrees to their support position.

The stand provides a 20-inch-by-9-foot-2-inch working surface; with the included extension, it can reach 14 feet. It's built with 1-inch tubing, and its height is flexible between 28 inches and 38 inches with five intermediate settings. Individually adjusting legs allow it to be set up on uneven ground — in fact, it's the only stand we tested that can be set up level on sloping ground.

Optional rollers can be added to the Power Bench and the extensions, making it easy to roll even a 4x12 20-footer right to the mark to be cut. Also, it can be converted into a table-saw stand, and a dolly plate lets the stand be used as a hand truck when it's folded up. This is not just a stand; it's a work center that can be set up to support other tools — such as a drill press, for example, which would be outstanding for precisely drilling railings.

AC 9941 Miter-Saw Stand

Weight: 92.5 pounds

Storage size: 60 inches by 27 inches by 20 inches

Street price: \$170

Ridgid Professional Tools

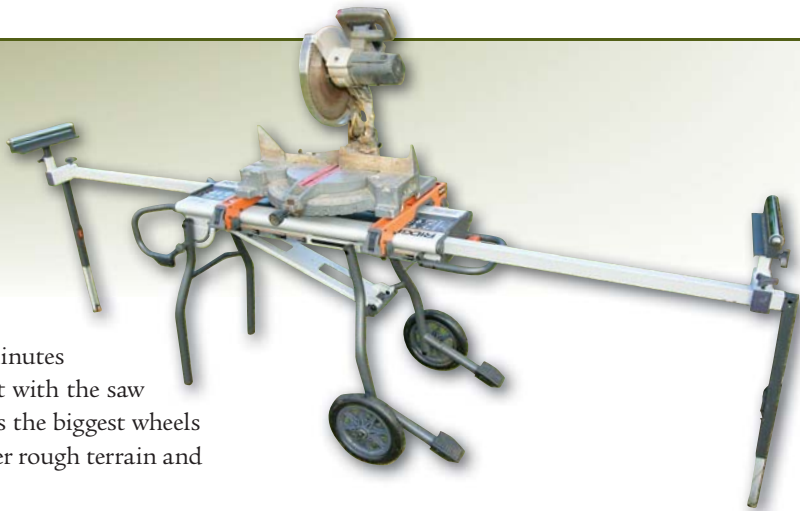
800/474-3443, ridgid.com

The AC 9941 took about 40 minutes to assemble. It can stand upright with the saw attached for ease of storage, and it has the biggest wheels of the group, making it easy to roll over rough terrain and even up stairs.

Setup isn't as straightforward as might be hoped. The operator first opens up the legs at one end of the stand and sets them down, then goes to the other end and lowers the wheeled legs. There's a locking knob on each leg, but though they do the same thing, one is orange and one is gray. First-time users may find this confusing, as

it would seem they should perform different functions. It takes considerable force to unfold and fold the legs — so much so that we feared breaking the mechanism the first time we closed up the stand. The stand's height is not adjustable.

Two quick-release clamps bolted to the saw attach it to the rail; the clamps have feet that allow you to use the saw



Ridgid's AC 9941 stand rolls on the largest diameter wheels of any in this survey, great for negotiating stairs and rough terrain.

on any flat surface. The outrigger tubes extend to provide a 9-foot-10-inch cutting platform. Once assembled, the 12-inch-wide chrome-plated workpiece support rollers stay put and need no adjustment.

Support legs on the ends keep the extension tubes from flexing under a heavy load. To extract the legs, press a button at the end of the tube. For storage, the legs tuck up inside the tubes.

A couple of this stand's features are noteworthy: We are very fond of rollers, so appreciate those, and we like the wide rail because it provides plenty of space to put tools. But the pluses don't outweigh the difficulty of setting the stand up. And although we had no problems with the lower sections of the legs, we question their durability on rough job sites and under heavy loads because they're made from a sheet-metal C-channel.



The authors thought the AC 9941's feed rollers were outstanding but questioned the durability of the C-channel in the lower part of the support legs.

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Saw Helper Ultrafence U1010S

Weight: 84 pounds

Storage size: Three pieces; the table is 27 inches by 39 inches by the saw height, the stand folds to 38 inches by 27 inches by 9 inches, and the legs fold to 5 inches by 9 inches by 102 inches

Street price: \$575

Sawtooth Specialty Tools

800/441-1388, sawhelper.com

The initial assembly of the Saw Helper took us a bit over an hour and a half. The process requires attaching a coupler bracket to the saw, and a coupling plate to the extruded-aluminum wings. (The bracket and plate get joined together when the stand is set up on the job.) You also have to bolt the saw to a tabletop, and bolt brackets to the wings for attaching the legs. For some saws, you need to drill bolt holes in the saw base for the coupler bracket.

Setting up the stand and saw on the job site proceeds smoothly: Open the stand and nest the saw and table in it. Place the legs in their brackets and the wings on the coupling plate pins. A few turns of a hand wheel on each side lock the 100-inch-long wings to the saw, providing an overall length of 18 feet 8 inches. The legs scissor open, with two feet under each leg. The leg height adjusts, allowing for side to side (but not front to back) leveling on uneven ground, and the saw table is a comfortable 34 inches high.

At the end of the day, the Saw Helper Ultrafence breaks down to four easy-to-carry parts: the table legs, the tabletop — which is easily removed from the legs — and two aluminum wings whose adjustable legs lock flat for transport.

The Saw Helper Ultrafence is the only stand I reviewed that had a continuous fence and table. Having a fence to



The Saw Helper's flip-down stop combined with an applied measuring tape speeds cuts and allows repeatability.

push material against is a great help when aligning a square cut on a 20-foot piece of decking, rather than relying on only the short fence of the miter saw. The other big advantage of the Saw Helper's continuous fence results from a combination of a strong flip-down stop and a measuring tape that you set up on the fence and calibrate to your saw. Once you've



done the setup, there's no need to pull out your tape and pencil for every cut. Just slide the adjustable flipstop to the desired measurement and cut; any cut short of 9 feet 4 inches can be repeated. The stop never moved during our trials, yet just a push of its locking lever allows it to slide easily to the next measurement. We were also impressed with this stand's strength.

MS-2008-WB Miter-Saw Stand

Weight: 63.5 pounds

Storage size: 44 inches by 24 inches by 12 inches

Street price: \$345

Trojan Manufacturing

800/745-2120,

trojantools.com



The MS-2008-WB is made in Oregon from powder-coated, welded steel tubing. It came mostly assembled; we only needed to attach the wide pneumatic tires.

Setup requires manipulating a double-jointed locking bar that's a potential pinch point, and tightening several thumb screws. Its height isn't adjustable. Once set up, its 24-inch-by-40-inch plywood table is great for bigger miter saws and is big enough to lay tools on. It sports rollers at either end of the saw table. The extensions measure



Although it folds into a relatively small package, the MS-2008-WB provides a generously sized table for the saw and a full 13 feet of support.

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24 inches by 70 inches, and the overall size is a full 13 feet. It folds up, but needs to be stored lying flat — which takes up considerable space — or somehow propped up on edge or end.

The rollers enable long stock to be moved more easily to get the cut just right. The MS-2000-WB can be used as a

table-saw stand, too, if you are tall enough. While set up, it can be moved on its wheels. As much as we like what this stand had to offer, though, we don't think it's made to take the weight that a deck builder is likely to throw at it.

TWC-35 Miter-Saw Stand

Weight: 32 pounds, plus user-supplied center beam

Storage size: 36 inches by 16 inches by 3 inches

Street price: \$200

Trojan Manufacturing

800/745-2120, trojantools.com

There is no initial assembly of the TWC-35, our personal first choice for daily use. It consists of two folding legs that clamp to the bottom of any length of two-by material, which acts as a center beam. A 16-inch-by-24-inch saw platform clamps to the top of the two-by; two 10-inch support rollers also clamp to the two-by and are easily adjusted to the height of the saw.

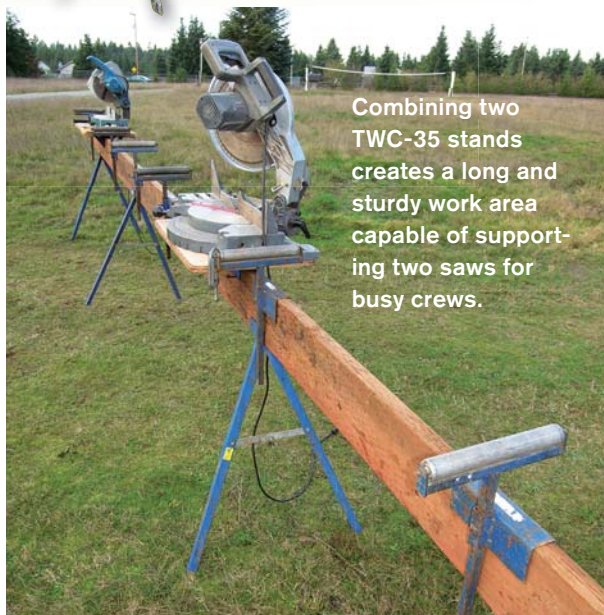
The TWC-35 is 35 inches tall, but the stand also comes in a 27-inch version. I prefer the taller one (I'm 6 feet 3 inches tall). Because the center beam can be any width of two-by, the height of the stand can be adjusted by using, say, a 2x10 instead of a 2x8.

The length of the two-by determines the length of the stand, so that means this stand can be up to 20 feet long and support even the heaviest lumber pieces. When the center beam is a 20-footer, six rollers work the best, three for each side of the saw. Combining two TWC-35s allows for two miter saws in one space, which can save time for deck builders with crews.

It does take a few steps to set up. Spreading the legs apart clamps them securely to the two-by; four little dog ears



The three parts of the TWC-35 stand fit behind the seat of most pickups.



Combining two TWC-35 stands creates a long and sturdy work area capable of supporting two saws for busy crews.

inside the clamp jaws embed themselves in the wood to create an extremely strong grip. Pushing the locking bar with your foot locks the legs into place. Ball-bearing rollers adjust to the proper height and allow you to tweak the material that last 1/8 inch to dial in an accurate cut. The saw table is a little small for big sliding compound miter saws, but it's big enough for a 12-inch miter saw.

A C-clamp secures the saw to the table. It can be easier to move the saw than the workpiece, so instead of bolting the saw down, we use one clamp that we tighten just enough to allow the saw to pivot to make a square cut. ♦

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