



Steady Saw Stand

by David Cloutier

When I first looked at the *Saw Helper* miter saw stand, I was skeptical. We had always set up a cutting station on a piece of plywood over a pair of saw horses, which worked well enough. I wasn't sure why we needed a slick-looking aluminum stand with inset tape measures and an adjustable stop, especially when I saw the price tag. Nevertheless, I agreed to take a closer look. I've now been using the *Saw Helper* for about a year and I'm glad I bought it.

Package Deal

The *Saw Helper* is made by American Design and Engineering in St. Paul Park, Minn. It was designed by David Price, a general contractor who specialized in trim carpentry. Price wanted a portable saw stand that would set up and break down easily and would support long pieces of stock. His first designs, built on the job site with angle-iron and plywood, soon led to lighter, friendlier versions made of aluminum extrusions. Price eventually left the trade and went into business manufacturing his stands and other accessories about 15 years ago. Since then, the *Saw Helper* has been through at least five generations.

Hitachi Power Tools has now agreed to market the latest incarnation of Price's miter saw stand as an accessory to its popular C8FB sliding compound miter saw. Hitachi's package, called the *Saw Steady*, includes a folding stand

(on which you bolt your miter saw), two 5-foot-long extension tables with built in rules and adjustable legs, and a stop gauge. This accessory package lists for about \$600, but retails for about \$400 (for a Hitachi distributor contact Hitachi Power Tools, 3950 Steve Reynolds Blvd., Norcross, GA 30093; 800/706-7337). Or you can purchase the same package called the *Saw Helper* direct from American Design and Engineering for \$390 (900 3rd St., 123 E., St. Paul Park, MN 55071; 800/441-1388).

Solid Build

The saw stand has four square steel legs and folds flat with a scissorslike action, making it easy to transport. It sets up and breaks down in seconds. The extension tables, with its integral fence, are made of a strong, tempered aluminum. The extensions hang on brackets, which bolt to the miter saw. A single knob on the table tightens a screw to automatically square the fence to the saw. But one word of caution: The edges of the aluminum extrusions can be very sharp. It's probably a good idea to file them down a bit to avoid an accident.

Each extension table has a folding steel leg. The legs are adjustable (a telescoping action) for use on uneven ground.

The stop gauge installs quickly in a groove along the extension fence, and

once in place, it can be flipped up out of the way when it's not needed. It has a hairline pointer for very accurate alignment on a tape measure that runs along the fence. An adjustment on the gauge allows you to fine-tune the cut by increasing or decreasing the length to within $\frac{1}{16}$ inch.

A Saw For All Jobs

The uses for this system are endless. It works for both framing and finish. It has performed nicely to support long framing lumber up to 2x10, and it's ideal for cutting kneewall studs. Once set up in a room, we can cut door and window casing and base-board miters on either end of the material. Using the stop gauge we can quickly measure and cut square ends on trim. With the adjustable legs on the extension tables — a feature that's not found on many portable cutting systems — we can set up quickly for exterior trim and siding jobs, and wind up with a flat bed and straight fence for accurate cuts.

In addition to the 5-foot extension table, American Design and Engineering sells an 8-foot table. This can be added to one of the 5-foot tables for an extra long table, or used by itself. The added length on the 8-foot table extends the use of the stop gauge, so it can be used on longer pieces of trim.

Although Hitachi has chosen this system for the C8FB, it can be adapted to fit almost any portable miter saw. On any saw, you have to drill some holes to mount the brackets on the saw, so it's best if the saw has a cast aluminum base. ■

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Suitable for framing and finish work, the *Saw Helper* miter saw stand features rugged aluminum table extensions with adjustable legs and built-in tape measures (left). The whole rig knocks down quickly for easy transport and storage (right).