

FastCap Best Fence Pro Saw Stand

Best Fence Pro
FastCap
888.443.3748
fastcap.com
Web price: \$500 to \$2,000

by Tyler VanKatwijk

I've tried a number of saw stands over the years, but none of them have quite met my needs as a deck builder. When I was just getting started and working out of the back of my pickup truck, I thought my Trojan Work Center was perfect because it fit into a space about the size of a briefcase when it was folded up. But its portability (the legs clamp onto any 2-by material) proved to be its downfall: As I cut and moved decking around, the clamps would tear into the wood and the whole stand would loosen up. And in order to cut 20-foot lengths of decking, I needed three extra support rollers on each side of the saw stand, in addition to the pair of rollers that are provided with the Trojan system.

Next I tried DeWalt's DWX723 saw stand, which took up more room but was much more solid, thanks to its simple and sturdy fold-down leg design. In order to slide a full piece of decking from one side of the saw to the other, however, I still had to add three portable rollers to each side of the stand, and inevitably, those rollers would tip over.

Then I met Paul Akers of FastCap, an innovative company that makes all sorts of tools, glues, gadgets, gizmos, and—of most interest to me—miter-saw stands. FastCap's Best Fence Pro series of modular saw stands aren't specifically designed for decking, but they're all based on the same frame and they all have sturdy legs that swing down and lock into place. When ordering a stand, you specify the saw that you'll be using; the saw can then be permanently mounted on the stand, which saves set-up time.

Beefy wheels on each end of the stand

allow it to be moved wheelbarrow-style by one man (**Figure 1**). I was able to roll the stand—with saw attached—in and out of a full-sized pickup truck by myself, and the wheels are big enough that the stand can roll over rough and varied terrain on the way to a backyard deck project. Once the stand is in position, a pin can be placed in the axle so that the unit doesn't roll, and if the saw is set up on a slope, the legs can be adjusted for it with a simple press of a button. No more flimsy blocks, or digging around with a hammer to level the stand.

The base model has a single 64-inch fence, but the stand can be accessorized with additional fence sections and support stands—called Upper Hands—to suit your specific needs. We customized my stand in Akers' manufacturing facility in Ferndale, Wash., which is a bit like Willy Wonka's factory but for tools instead of chocolate, with engineers in lab coats

Figure 1. The saw stand has integral wheels that allow it to be easily moved over rough terrain, and it can be customized with additional fence sections and supports to fit long decking stock.





Figure 2. FastCap's optional molding stop is used here to keep the decking from sliding off the fence.

flying around on scooters from station to station.

Starting with a Pro 4 series saw stand (which already has four fence sections), we added a pair of fence sections to each side of the stand, along with additional Upper Hands to support them. The resulting eight-section fence measured a whopping 512 inches (almost 43 feet), enough to easily accommodate 20-foot-long decking. I wanted to be able to roll the material from one side of the saw to the other, so Paul and his team went back to the drawing board and designed some wheels that could be dropped into the fence. They were able to print the wheels out with their 3D printer and install them the next day.

When sliding the decking from one side to the other, we discovered that the



Figure 3. The optional chop-saw hood contains dust and can be used to help keep the saw dry in wet weather.

decking would sometimes want to slide right off the fence. To prevent this, we attached FastCap's molding-stop accessory to the fence (**Figure 2**).

Another problem I run into is that deck fascia is usually too wide to be fully supported by a saw stand. Again, we just adapted one of the stops to act as a support by removing the upper part of the stop and using the stop base as a fence extension. Molding stops can be attached along the fence anywhere they're needed, and quickly removed when they're not.

The stand has a mount for a power strip, so you can have multiple tools plugged in at your work station. There's a simple cut-list pad, which is handy for measurements and lists, and a small work table to give you extra space.

Another feature I really like is the chop-saw hood (**Figure 3**), which not only collects dust and scrap, but also keeps the saw dry (which is important up here in the Pacific Northwest).

All these features don't come without a price. The Pro 4 Fence lists for \$1,000 on the FastCap website (fastcap.com). As configured for this review, the stand would retail for about \$2,300. I'm told that a similar setup, called the Best Fence Pro Deck Build System (\$2,000), has just been added to the company's lineup. It's not cheap, but this saw stand is far and away the best one I've ever used, and should more than make up for that cost in improved efficiency. ❖

Tyler VanKatwijk owns Artistic Decks in Bellingham, Wash.