

FAQs

Buying a Gifkins Dovetail Jig

- What are the Advantages over other jigs?
- What types of joints do the templates cut?
- Will each template cut only one thickness?
- Which templates are best for the most popular thicknesses of timbers?
- Are the cutters ¼" shank or ½" shank?
- Which templates should I get?
- What are the package options?
- Which package would be best for boxmaking?
- Can I add extra templates at a later date?
- Is there a demonstration DVD for the jig?
- Is it best to have a complete jig setup for each of my templates?
- Can I use any clamps with the jig?
- What are the templates made from?
- Do I need to buy a second stop?
- Do I have to use special cutters?
- Are the cutters carbide tipped?

Using a Gifkins Dovetail Jig

- How do I adjust the fit of dovetail joints?
- How do I adjust the fit of finger joints?
- Will the jig cut half blind dovetails?
- How wide a board can I cut?
- How long a board can I cut?
- Can I join pieces that are different thicknesses?
- Can I use the jig for MDF and plywood?
- Is it possible to vary the spacing?
- Can I cut 2 boards at once?
- Can I join boards end to end?
- Is the height setting of the cutter critical?
- If I get the cutters sharpened, will they still work?
- How easy is it to change templates?
- What are the backing boards for?
- Will the jig cut angled joints?
- Can you make boxes with more than 4 sides?

Routers and router tables

- Do I need special fittings for my router?
- Do I need 2 routers?
- Which router do you recommend?
- Does the Triton 1400 watt router have enough power?
- Which router table do you recommend?
- Can I use the jig on a spindle moulder?
- I have a variable speed router, how fast should I set it?
- Can I use the jig with a hand held router?

Boxmaking supplies from Gifkins Dovetail

- What boxmaking plans and DVDs do you sell?
- What boxmaking cutters do you sell?

Boxmaking supplies from other suppliers

- What glue do you recommend?
- Where can I get hinges and small fittings for boxes?
- What finish do you use?
- Where can I get thin timber for boxmaking?
- Where can I find boxmaking classes?

If you have a question that you would like to see added to this list, please [email](#)

Buying a Gifkins Dovetail Jig

What are the Advantages over other jigs?

- Most dovetail jigs use the router by hand. The Gifkins Dovetail Jig uses the router mounted in a table which gives the operator much more control as well as greater safety.
- The jig is simpler to set up and use than any other jig on the market.
- You only need to cut trial joints the first time each template is used. Once set up to give the fit you want, each template will always give that same fit no matter what thickness timber you are using.
- The jig is fully adjustable, so when you get your cutters re-sharpened you can re-adjust the fit.
- No special fittings are needed for your router or your router table

What types of joints do the templates cut?

There are 5 different templates that are all interchangeable on the Gifkins Dovetail Jig.

- The A series, B series and H series templates cut through dovetail joints.
- The F series templates cut finger joints (box joints).

Will each template cut only one thickness?

No, each template will cut a range of thicknesses

- The A10 and F5 templates cover the range from 5 mm up to 13 mm thick.
- The B10 and F15 templates cover the range from 13 mm up to 22 mm thick.
- The H10 template covers the range from 2 mm up to 10 mm thick.
- It is possible to go thinner than given above with any of the templates by changing the procedure slightly.
- It is not possible to go any thicker than given above as the cutters would not be long enough.

Which templates are best for the most popular thicknesses of timbers?

Dressed timber is commonly available in 12 mm (as lining boards) or in 19mm

- For 12 mm use the A10 template
- For 19 mm use the B10 template

Are the cutters ¼” shank or ½” shank?

The cutters for the B templates are ½” shank and all the other templates use ¼” shank cutters. It is not possible to use ½” shank cutters with the A, H or F templates.

Which templates should I get?

The template choice is determined by the thickness of the timber you wish to join.

- For Jewellery boxes, use the A10 or the F5 templates.
- For blanket chests and furniture sized work use the B10 or the F15 templates.
- For small boxes, use the H10 template.
- The A10 is by far our most popular template.

What are the package options?

Our packages include the jig itself with one or more templates (whichever ones you want), the cutters and fittings to suit, 2 Allen keys plus detailed instructions and spare adjusting shim. The current packages are:

- Standard Package: Jig with any one template
- Deluxe Package: Jig with any 2 templates
- Masters Package: Jig with any 3 templates
- Premium Package: Jig with any 4 templates
- “The Lot” package: Jig with all 5 templates. This also includes 2 Bessey clamps, the clamp holders, the Variable Space Upgrade and both demo DVDs.

NOTE: It is a little bit cheaper to buy extra templates as a package than to add them later, so the bigger the package the bigger the saving. With any package you can mix and match the templates.

Which package would be best for boxmaking?

Depending on your budget, the following packages are best for boxmaking:

- Standard package with the A10 template
- Deluxe package with the A10 and F5 templates
- Masters package with the A10, F5 and H10 templates

Can I add extra templates at a later date?

All the templates are available by mail order from Gifkins Dovetail, either as the templates themselves or as template upgrades (template, cutters to suit, backing boards plus any other fittings required for that template).

Is there a demonstration DVD for the jig?

Yes, there are 2 demo DVDs, one for dovetailing and another one for the F5 finger joint. As yet there is not one for the F15 but it is similar in use to the F5. The dovetail demo is very comprehensive (75 min) and is a must for those wanting to get the most out of their jig. It includes chapters that are useful for finger joints as well as dovetail joints (the finger joint templates are not mentioned as such because the dovetail DVD was recorded before they came out). These DVDs are optional extras with all packages except "The Lot".

Is it best to have a complete jig setup for each of my templates?

In schools and busy workshops it is best to set up each template on it's own jig so that everything is always set and adjusted ready to go. For one-man workshops it is only a matter of a couple of minutes to swap templates back and forth on the one jig.

Can I use any clamps with the jig?

There is a wide range of clamps that will work with the jig, both quick action and G clamps. Clamps with a 4" capacity are best. Ideally you want clamps with an offset head and tail so they will reach over the stops on the jig when using thin timber. The clamps that I have found best are a quick action clamp made by Bessey in Germany. These are so easy to use that I have made clamp holders specially to suit, which hold the clamp at the right angle and keep it safely above the cutter. These clamps and clamp holders are available from Gifkins Dovetail as optional extras (they are included in "the Lot" package).

What are the templates made from?

The templates are CNC machined in Phenolic resin, an extremely tough and very stable material, often used where dimensional stability is critical. As there is a bearing on the cutter that runs against the template, you should never wear a template out.

Do I need to buy a second stop?

The jig now comes standard with a second stop, it is only the Old Model that came with 1 stop.

Do I have to use special cutters?

Yes, all the templates use cutters that are specially made for the jig by Carb-I-Tool in Melbourne, and it does have to be these cutters. All our packages come complete with the cutters you need for the templates you are getting. Replacement cutters are available from Gifkins Dovetail and our agents in the US and UK, or from Carb-I-Tool and their agents.

Are the cutters carbide tipped?

The H dovetail cutter is solid carbide and both the F cutters are solid carbide spirals. All the others are carbide tipped. They all come fully assembled with a bearing on the shank.

Using a Gifkins Dovetail Jig

How do I adjust the fit of dovetail joints?

The jig is supplied with 5 shims fitted to the straight cutter side of the jig behind the Backing Board. The first time you use a dovetail template, you need to cut a trial joint to adjust the fit. If the joint you cut is too loose, simply remove some of the shims from behind the backing board. If the joint is too tight, add shims to get a looser fit (10 extra shims are provided). Once the required fit is obtained, you will always get the same fit no matter what thickness timber you are working with.

How do I adjust the fit of finger joints?

The finger joint cutters come with an set of 5 adjusting sleeves, with the middle size fitted to the bearing on the cutter. The first time you use a finger joint template, you need to cut a trial joint to adjust the fit. If the joint you cut is too loose, simply change to a smaller sleeve. If too tight, change to a larger one. Once the required fit is obtained, you should always get the same fit no matter what thickness timber you are working with.

Will the jig cut half blind dovetails?

No, the jig will only cut through dovetails. This keeps the jig very simple to set up and use, with no fiddley adjustments to change between joint types. However, you can achieve the appearance of a half blind joint for drawer fronts by adding a false front to the drawer after it is glued up.

How wide a board can I cut?

All the templates have a maximum board width of between 290 mm and 310 mm. The instructions do give 2 methods for working with wider boards.

How long a board can I cut?

Board lengths up to 1 m are straight forward, and up to 1.5 m can be handled with care. More than this is possible but it certainly does become more difficult.

Can I join pieces that are different thicknesses?

Yes, it doesn't matter if the pieces you are joining are the same thickness or not. You simply set the height of the cutter accordingly, and no other adjustments are necessary.

Can I use the jig for MDF and plywood?

The jig is designed for working with solid timber, and will work well in any timber. It is possible to work with some plywoods although tearout on the outside face can be a problem. Generally marine ply will work well. MDF is less successful, with tearout common on the outside face. See the jig instructions for more details.

Is it possible to vary the spacing?

Yes, even though the spacing on the template is fixed, with our Variable Spacing Upgrade it is possible to vary the layout of the joint. This is particularly useful if splitting a box in half to form the lid, as you can allow for the saw kerf.

Can I cut 2 boards at once?

No, as a general rule you only cut one end of each board at a time.

Can I join boards end to end?

Yes, with finger joint templates you can join boards end for end or at right angles. With dovetails, the jig will only join boards at (or near to) right angles.

Is the height setting of the cutter critical?

No, with through dovetails and finger joints the height of the cutter has no effect on the fit of the joint. This is unlike half blind dovetail jigs, where the height setting is critical to get a good fit. With the Gifkins Jig you simply set the height of the cutter to the thickness of the timber plus the thickness of the template or a little bit more. I usually set it about ½ mm higher so the joint sits ½ mm proud and sand this off after the joints are glued up.

If I get the cutters sharpened, will they still work?

Yes, but you will need to cut another trial joint to adjust the fit, as they will be slightly smaller in diameter. With dovetails you can sharpen either one cutter or both, and either way you can re-adjust the jig. The finger joint templates use spiral cutters which are very difficult to sharpen successfully and it is recommended they be replaced when blunt.

How easy is it to change templates?

The templates are held in place with 2 socket head bolts, and an Allen key is included for these. When changing templates it is also best to change the backing boards, as the different templates would cut into these in different positions. The templates locate accurately onto 2 guide pins, so when swapping back and forth between templates you don't lose any settings.

What are the backing boards for?

The jig comes with 2 MDF backing boards, one fitted to each side, to prevent tearout as the cutter goes through the workpiece. The first time the jig is used you will cut into these boards, but with subsequent use they will still protect the back of the cut. All our template upgrades come with a pair of backing

boards. If you do need to replace the backing boards, you can make them up yourself out of 12 mm MDF, or you can get replacements from Gifkins Dovetail.

Will the jig cut angled joints?

Yes, it is possible to make a project with all 4 sides sloping in or out by up to 15 degrees. It is also possible to have 2 sides vertical and the other 2 sides sloping.

Can you make boxes with more than 4 sides?

It is possible to make boxes with 5, 6 or more sides but it is considerably more involved. This technique was developed by Greg Lawrence, and details on this procedure will be posted on the web site when available.

Routers and router tables

Do I need special fittings for my router?

No, the Gifkins Dovetail jig will work with any router in any table, and all the fittings you need are included in the packages.

Do I need 2 routers?

No, but for dovetail joints you do need 2 router bits, which both come with any dovetail package. You simply cut all 4 sets of dovetail slots with the dovetail cutter and then change over to the straight cutter to cut all 4 sets of pins. This means there is only one cutter change needed to finish all 4 joints for a box.

Which router do you recommend?

I have used many different routers over the years, but I have now changed all my tables over to Triton routers. They have some unique features that make them quicker and easier to use than any other router when mounted in a table:

- You can change the cutter above the table rather than having to reach underneath.
- They have a automatic spindle lock so you only need 1 spanner.
- They have a quick height adjustment as well as a fine height adjustment.

Does the Triton 1400 watt router have enough power?

Yes, for most boxmaking work you are using small cutters, so you don't need much power. The jig can be used with a 400 watt trimmer for the smaller templates, although you do need a ½" router to use the B templates.

Which router table do you recommend?

The jig will work well on any router table, although the flatter the table and the more rigid the table the better the results will be. The instructions for the jig include detailed plans for building your own router table, and these can also be downloaded from our web site. Gifkins Dovetail are now manufacturing a router table for the Triton router and designed specially for boxmaking work, details on web site soon.

Can I use the jig on a spindle moulder?

Yes, you can as long as the speed is at least 12,000 RPM (15,000 is better).

I have a variable speed router, how fast should I set it?

For dovetail and finger joints, the router should be set to it's maximum speed. For other work, you only need to slow it down if you are using cutters more than about 35 mm diameter.

Can I use the jig with a hand held router?

It is possible to hold the workpiece in a vice and clamp the jig across the end so you can use the router by hand, but it is not recommended. You get a much better joint and it is a lot safer to use the router in a table.

Boxmaking supplies from Gifkins Dovetail

What boxmaking plans and DVDs do you sell?

1. Plans #1 & DVD #1 [Introduction to Small Joinery](#)

2. Plans #2 & DVD #2 [Dovetailed Boxes](#)
3. Plans #3 & DVD #3 [Special Jewellery Box](#)

What boxmaking cutters do you sell?

- 1.

Boxmaking supplies from other suppliers

If you know of other suppliers for timber, fittings, classes etc. please [email](#)

What glue do you recommend?

For boxmaking a slow setting PVA glue is best, as assembly can take quite a few minutes before you can pull the joints up with clamps. In my written plans I recommend AV 140 but this is no longer readily available. I now use #T-3223 from A J Blackwoods in Sydney, ph 02 9982 8028. They will do mail order on 500 ml bottles. Another slow setting PVA is Tightbond original which you can get from Bunnings.

Where can I get hinges and small fittings for boxes?

[HARDWARE FOR CREATIVE FINISHES](#) (Michael Mogy) PO Box 136 Dungog NSW 2420 ph 02 4992 3068. For brass butt hinges, concealed hinges, small wood screws, brass pins, locks, stays, chain etc. I use his 8 mm concealed hinges which are fantastic! Quicker than any other hinging method and very neat in appearance. This is the only place I know where you can get this style of concealed hinges that are small enough for jewellery boxes.

[GERNER HINGES](#) (Melbourne) Anton Gerner has designed a range of high quality hinges specially for small boxmaking work. Brass and Silver plated brass, for that special box.

[EMPIRE BEADS](#) For chain and fittings for jewellery boxes, they have a vast range of chains on their web site. The ones that I use for jewellery boxes are: Budget Curb Chain (60604-1002-MT), Jump Rings (60704-1086-OS) and Tag Ends (60706-1150-OM)

[McJING TOOLS](#) ph 02 9709 8805 For drilling holes in confined spaces, I use their pin vice. I couldn't find it on their web site, but they do sell one, so email them. Email address on the web site. They also sell lots of other hard to find tools for engineering and woodwork.

What finish do you use?

My favourite finish for all the boxes I make is Organoil's Danish Oil, [ORGANOIL](#) Ph 02 6685 8896. Unlike other Danish Oils, it doesn't have any drying agents added, so it is much slower drying. This makes it much easier to apply, as it won't set in those "hard to reach" corners as other oils do. It's based on orange oil, so it smells nice in the finished piece, and you can wash the brush out with hot water and soap. Also, because it doesn't have drying agents it never goes off in the tin, unlike other oils. Available through most big hardware stores. Enter your postcode on their web site to find your nearest stockist.

Where can I get thin timber for boxmaking?

I use the following suppliers for my boxmaking. They will all do mail order:

[LOGGERHEADS](#) (Graham Naughton), 10 Seawitch Cres, Cooloola Cove Qld. ph 07 5486 2201 Good photos of the timber on the web site. He has a wide range of desert timbers from western Queensland, thickened to around 8 to 12 mm. Nice finish on the boards from a sanding thicknesser. Some beautiful timber and very well prepared and thickened. I use his timber at the seminars and when I am teaching.

[MISAN CRAFTWOOD](#) (Mike & Sandra Berwick), 4 Teakwood Close Lake Clifton WA 6215 ph 08 9739 1985 Tasmanian timbers thickened to your requirements, beautifully prepared and some stunning timber.

[DJARILMARI TIMBER PRODUCTS](#) (Colin Payne) P.O. Box 550 Denmark W.A. 6333 ph 08 9848 2020. He will cut timber to whatever thickness you want. He has some beautiful Lace Sheoak and Fiddleback Jarrah. I often use his timbers for feature panels in boxes.

J & C THIN TIMBERS (Jeff Birt) Gympie QLD. ph 07 5482 8561 Wide range of traditional cabinet timber thicknesses to your requirements from 2 mm to 19 mm.

[TREND TIMBERS](#) (Sydney) Wide range of Australian and imported cabinet timbers, some of which are available in thin sections. Some stunning timber.

Where can I find boxmaking classes?

[WOODCRAFT MANNINGHAM](#) (Templestowe, Melbourne) A very active woodworking club that runs boxmaking classes, introductory and advanced. It also runs training sessions on the Gifkins Dovetail Jig. For Boxmaking contact Ken Morrison ph 03 9723 5030

WOODWORKERS OF THE HUNTER (Newcastle) Greg Lawrence runs a boxmaking class every Friday. Phone the Club House on 02 4962 5777

[NEIL SCOBIE](#) Neil runs evening, weekend and week long classes on all aspects of woodworking, including boxmaking. He has a number of Gifkins Dovetail Jigs set up for use by his students in their projects. Check the web site for class details or ring 02 6654 3548

Gifkins Dovetail
www.gifkins.com.au