

Tested

Trend Beadlock joinery system

Mortice and tenon joints are great if you have the big and expensive machinery to produce them quickly and accurately, but in the Beadlock system Trend have introduced a joint making technique that is probably as good as the conventional M&T, but at a fraction of the cost. All you need to buy is the jig and then use an electric drill and a twist bit.

How it works

The basic jig consists of a mounting plate and the drill block with a series of predrilled $\frac{1}{8}$ " guide holes. You line up the window in the jig with the centreline of the joint and clamp it in place in the vice. Then with the block slid across to position 'A' you drill the three holes and then slide it across to position 'B' and drill two more overlapping ones. A shield on the jig prevents you drilling more than two holes in position B. To get the depth constant, use a piece of tape on the drill bit as a depth stop.



The finished Beadlock mortice and tenon material.

The resulting mortice is a series of five overlapping holes. All you have to do now is repeat the process on the other half of the joint. The tenon is provided in the form of a length of beaded material that matches the mortice profile. You just cut off a length to fit into the joint you've just cut.

Wide & heavy

Wide joints will require several mortices but the process is so quick to do that this is no problem. If the joint needs to be offset in any way, a series of shims

Drilling the first set of holes using tape on the drill bit as a depth stop.



are provided to space it further away from the mounting plate. You can make your own shims from ply or MDF for special sizes or applications. For smaller joints you can even cut the $\frac{1}{8}$ " tenon down to fewer beads if the components are narrower.

Heavier constructions will need a stronger joint and for this the $\frac{1}{8}$ " block is replaced by one that takes a $\frac{1}{2}$ " drill bit, but in this case you only drill three overlapping holes. Matching beaded tenon material is then used to complete the joint.

The Beadlock tenon material is available ready cut, but if you anticipate using a lot there are special router cutters available for making your own. Both sizes are catered for with a separate cutter for each.

In use

I was very impressed with the ease of use and accuracy of this jig. It's simple to set up and doesn't require the precise accuracy of, for instance, a dowelling jig. The resulting joint is probably as strong as a conventional tenon, and in fact you could argue that the increased gluing area of the fluted tenon actually makes it stronger.

My only reservation is with the size of the locking knobs. If you're trying to drill the overlapping holes into hard end grain, the drill bit tries to return to the first hole you drilled, and unless the locking knobs are really tight the block slides in the jig. Bigger, more ergonomic knobs would eliminate this problem.

A few more different sized shims to help centre the jig on different thickness materials would be handy. I know you can make your own but ready-made ones are usually better.

Tested by
Alan Holtham



Use two joints for wide jobs which can be offset for non central fixing.



Router cutters are available for making your own beaded loose tenons.

VERDICT

Considering the cost of this jig and its ease of use it must surely be a winner for anyone involved with basic joinery work. It makes right angle jointing a cinch, but would be even better with larger locking knobs and with some extra sizes of ready-made shim.

Prices: £24.95 ($\frac{1}{8}$ "), 34.95 ($\frac{1}{4}$ " & $\frac{1}{2}$ ")
Contact: Trend, Tel: 0800 4 TREND or 01923 224657, Fax: 01923 236879 or visit www.trendmachinery.co.uk/cdj

RATING ★★★★★