

Dovetail Square Adds Accuracy to Marking Joints

Hand-cut dovetails can be tricky at first, so anything you can do to eliminate marking errors will improve your joints.

One of my favorite marking tools for dovetails is the Woodjoy Precision Dovetail Template. This simple and elegant layout tool allows you to mark both the straight and angled lines of a dovetail joint with one square. Switching between a try square and a sliding T-bevel to mark a dovetail joint is a royal invitation to error.

Another advantage of this all-in-one square is that it can be used to mark the angled part of the joint in both hardwoods (a 1:8 ratio) and softwoods (a 1:6). Also, the tool is sized so you can mark dovetails in stock up to 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick—that's more than I ever need (until I start building coffins I suppose). And finally, the all-metal construction makes it durable enough to live in my shop apron.

The only complaint I have about the Precision Dovetail Template is that it can shift a bit, left-to-right, as you mark out your work. This

is a problem with all metal marking gear, but there is a way around the problem. I added a thin slice of "Super High-friction Tape" to the brass face of the working surface. This inexpensive tape (\$2.50 for a 12" roll from Lee Valley Tools, 800-871-8158 or leevalley.com) is peel-and-stick, durable and makes this square (and some other layout tools) hang onto the work like a bulldog while I'm marking out joints.

With the tape added, the tool is near-perfect. I hold the square on the work with my left hand and mark with a knife in my right.

In dovetailing, the ultimate goal is to get to the point where you don't need layout tools like this. But until I can dovetail with my eyes closed, I'll keep the Precision Dovetail Template handy. —CS



SPECIFICATIONS

Precision Dovetail Template

Street price: \$25

Performance: ●●●●○

Price range: \$\$\$

Woodjoy Tools : 508-669-5245 or
woodjoytools.com