

Flip stick is secret to perfect-fitting hinges



I discovered a simple way to use a router table to create perfect-fitting hinges. The secret is a notched stick—I call it a flip stick—that positions the router-table fence and stop blocks.

Make the stick about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick, roughly double the width of the hinge leaf, and the same length as the box. Decide where the hinges will go and mark that distance on the stick. Only one hinge location needs to be marked.

Raise the tablesaw blade so it's just slightly below the barrel of a hinge. Standard butt hinges typically require the mid-point of the barrel to be on the edge of the stick, but the hinges I use have built-in stops, so the entire barrel must be outside the stick. Now, make a series of cuts to create a notch.

Install a $\frac{3}{16}$ -in.-dia. straight bit in the router. Adjust the bit height until it's just under half the thickness of the closed hinge. Now, butt the edge of the flip stick against the fence and position the stop blocks as shown below.

Rout the hinge mortises, first on the lid, then the box. Now, flip the stick end over end and reclamp the stop blocks. Cut the second mortise in the lid and box.

1. MAKE THE FLIP STICK

Cut the stick to length. The stick is cut to the same length as the box; use the box as a template to mark the length.



Notch the stick. Stowe uses his table saw to cut a precise notch to accept the leaves of the hinge.



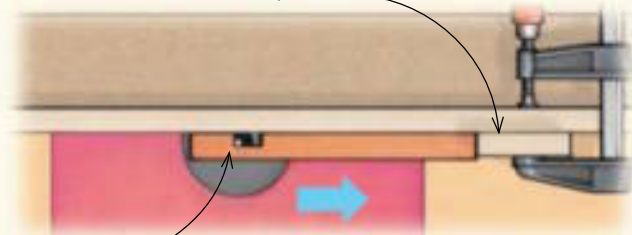
A perfect fit. Nibble away slowly until the hinge leaf fits snugly in the notch.



2. USE THE STICK TO SET UP THE ROUTER TABLE

Position the stop blocks. With the flip stick serving as a template, clamp a pair of stop blocks to the router fence.

1. Slide the flip stick to the right to locate the first stop block.



$\frac{3}{16}$ -in.-dia. straight bit

2. Slide the flip stick to the left to locate the second stop block.



3. ROUT THE HINGE MORTISES



Mortise in two steps. With the stop blocks in place, cut one mortise in the lid and a second on the box. Flip the stick and reposition the stop blocks; then cut the remaining mortises on the lid and box.



Square the corners and install the hinges. The router bit leaves rounded corners, so you'll need to square them with a chisel. The fit will be perfect.