

Rout Perfect Hinge Mortises

A simple jig guarantees
headache-free installation

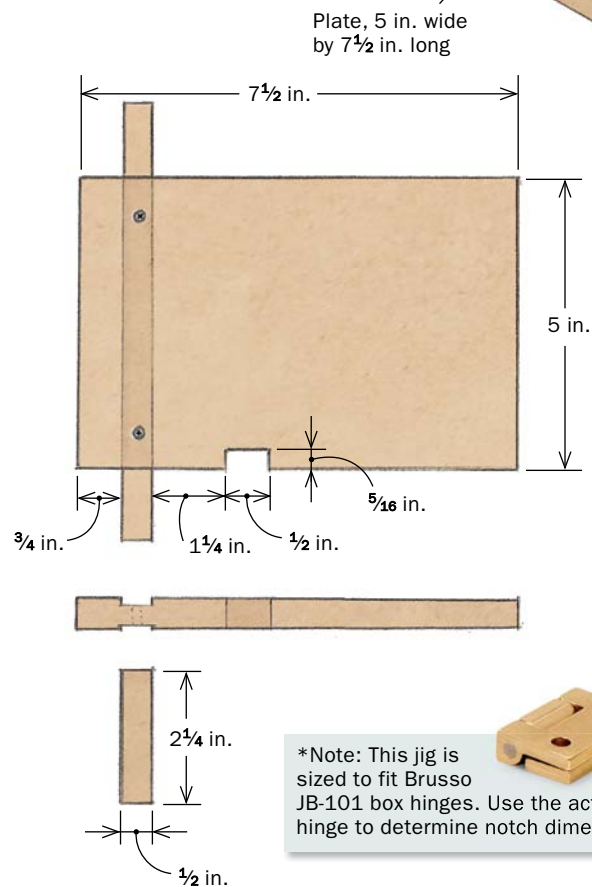
BY MATT KENNEY

If you've ever built a box with a hinged top, you know how tough it is to get the hinge mortises right. Any misalignment in the top or bottom mortise can cause the hinge to bind or leave a gap between the top and bottom when the box is closed. I've made a lot of hinged boxes, and I used to have trouble with the hinge mortises whether I cut them by hand or freehand with a router. Not anymore. Now I use a simple jig that allows me to rout each mortise quickly and then square it up with a chisel. They end up the correct length, width, and depth, and the bottom and top mortises are always aligned perfectly.

The jig is easy to make from inexpensive $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. MDF. The plate has a notch the exact size of the hinge leaf, and takes into account the location of the hinge barrel, which is the rotational axis of the lid. If the barrel is not outside the edge of the box, the lid

Box-hinge helper

Made from ½-in.-thick MDF, this little jig helps you rout perfectly aligned hinge mortises for boxes. The key to its reliability is using a constant reference face for each side.



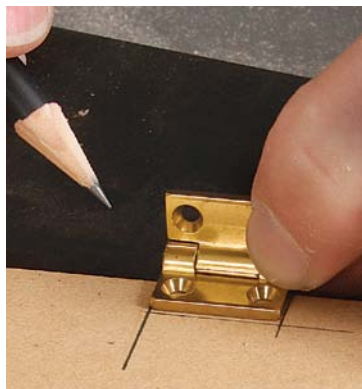
*Note: This jig is sized to fit Brusso JB-101 box hinges. Use the actual hinge to determine notch dimensions.



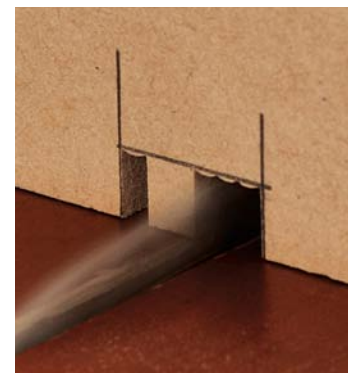
Online Extra

To watch a video on how to build and use Kenney's hinge jigs, go to FineWoodworking.com/extras.

SIZE THE JIG TO FIT YOUR HINGE



Lay out the hinge notch. After sizing the plate and cutting the dados for the fence, mark the notch directly from the hinge. Don't forget to account for the barrel.



Then clear it out. Cut the hinge notch at the tablesaw with a miter gauge. Make the outside cuts first (leave the layout lines) and then remove the waste in between. For a flat bottom, slide the piece sideways over the blade while holding it against the miter-gauge fence.

A mortise in minutes

1. ROUT AND SQUARE THE MORTISE



Set the depth. With the jig plate on a flat surface and the router resting on it, plunge the bearing-guided pattern bit through the notch until it bottoms out and lock it in. Then place a hinge leaf under the depth stop and tighten it in place.



will bind and won't close properly. A small dado on both faces of the plate houses a fence that helps locate the mortise's inset from the box side. You need a dado on each face so that the jig can be used for all four hinge mortises on a box.

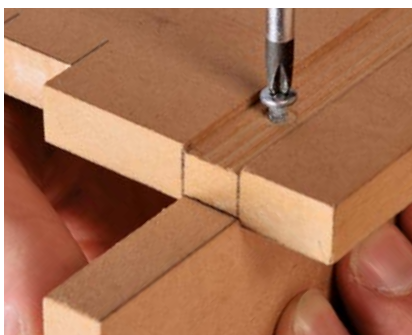
My favorite thing about the jig is that it works for any box that uses the same hinge—no matter how big the box is, the hinge can be inset the same distance (1 in. to 1½ in.). Make the jig once, and use it for years to come. □

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Hold down and rout. Place the fence against the box side and align the edge of the plate flush to the back of the box. Then clamp the jig in place. A quick pass with the router clears most of the waste. Keep the jig clamped in place. Square up the mortise with a chisel (left).

2. FLIP THE FENCE AND REPEAT



Quick-change fence. After routing one mortise on the box and one on the lid, simply remove the screws and flip the fence to the other side. The two remaining mortises can now be routed with the same settings as the first two.

