

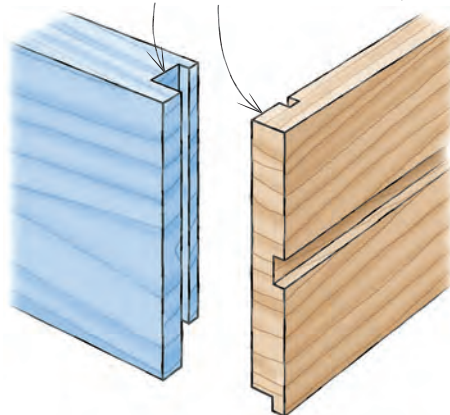


An Ideal Joint for Small Drawers

All the cuts are made on the tablesaw.

by Alan Turner

THESE DIMENSIONS MUST BE EQUAL



WHEN YOU SLIDE OPEN a small drawer that fits nice and tight, it's a pleasure to see well-crafted joints. Small, handcut dovetails answer well, but sawing and chopping them requires a lot of skill and practice. Here's a joint that's far easier to make: a half-blind tongue and rabbet. It's all done on the tablesaw.

This joint is perfect if you're making a set of drawers of different widths, because width doesn't matter. You can cut all the sides and all the fronts at the same time.

This joint can easily be adapted for material of any thickness. I'll show you how to make it for drawers with 3/8" sides and 3/4" fronts, the dimensions I used in a small tool chest (see "A Craftsman's Tool Chest," page 46).

Start by cutting a dado across the drawer sides (**Photo 1**). The dado is only 1/8" wide, so the easiest way to make it is to use a standard-kerf crosscut blade. Set the distance from the blade to the fence at precisely 3/8", or just a hair larger. Make a test cut and use a dial caliper to verify the measurement.

The cut made by this blade won't leave a flat bottom, of course, so if you want a joint without any tiny gaps in it you'll want to shave the bottom of the dado with a small router (**Photo 2**, see Source).

Next, cut a dado in the ends of the drawer fronts using a dado set (**Photo 3**). This cut begins to form the joint's tongue and rabbet. Three settings are critical. Make them in this order:

1) The width of the dado set. This must exactly equal the distance from the end of the drawer side to the dado. Verify the dado set's width before you cut any drawer fronts and add a shim if necessary. Make a test cut in a scrap of wood first and place the scrap directly on a drawer side to see if the width is correct.

2) The height of the dado set. This must equal the thickness of the drawer side material; here, it's 3/8". Again, make a test cut before proceeding.

3) The distance of the dado set to the face of the tenoning jig. This must equal the width of the dado in the drawer side: 1/8". When you cut the drawer-front dados, be sure to place the *inside* of the workpiece against the face of the tenoning jig.

Finally, shorten the tongue on the drawer front to fit the drawer side (**Photo 4**). This completes the tongue and rabbet. It's best to cut the tongue a bit long at first, then adjust the fence until it fits perfectly. The drawer front and side should lock together, without any gaps. 🐦

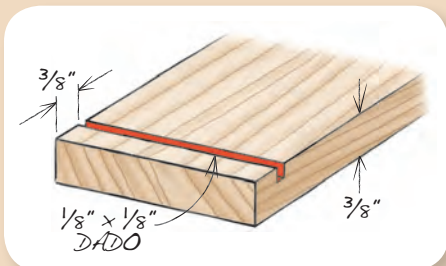
SOURCE

Lee Valley, leevalley.com, 800-871-8158, Veritas Miniature Router Plane, #05P82.01, \$39.50.



Watch a video on how to make these joints at AmericanWoodworker.com/WebExtras

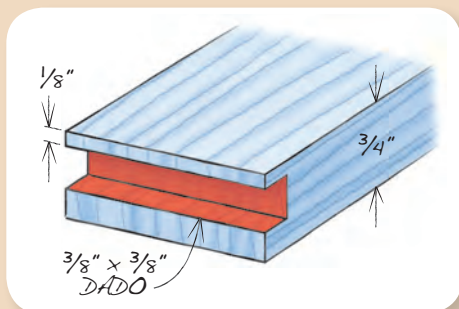
- 1** Saw a 1/8" wide dado across the drawer side, using a standard-kerf crosscut blade.



- 2** Use a small router plane to give the dado a flat bottom. This is an optional step.



- 3** Cut a 3/8" x 3/8" dado into the end of the drawer front using a dado set. Support the piece with a tenoning jig. Use a fresh backup board to prevent tearout.



- 4** Trim the tongue on the drawer front to exact length, again using the dado set.

