



AngleMag

AngleMag and Veritas Dovetail Guide

Sawing fine joints in wood is commonly felt to reflect a certain level of skill. Personally I find making dovetails in small sizes quite a challenge and so have never really got off on it like some woodworkers do. When you hand saw out dovetails you have to really focus, relax and stay on the case. All this assumes adequate skill in holding the saw and marking out. Because these joints are difficult and time consuming there is a flourishing market for dovetail jigs using routers, and these can do a fantastic job.

Between the hand and the router lie two jigs that ease some of the sawing pain. *Veritas* and *AngleMag* both produce jigs that clamp to the workpiece and guide and hold the saw. The *Veritas* is a small unit available in two different dovetail angles, 1:6 and 1:8. A single large nut locks the aluminium body in place and a single magnet holds the saw against a plastic face. It costs about \$75.

Veritas make a Japanese-style saw to suit the jig which costs \$49. I used this on both the *Veritas* and *AngleMag* for this review. The saw worked well but you may get a better finish with a finer toothed Japanese saw.

The body of the *Veritas* jig can be easily set to saw pins and tails. Sit the jig on the wood where the edge of the tool meets the mark and tighten the clamp. The single magnet holds the saw at the angle and you simply saw down—up to 25mm deep would probably be maximum to ensure good support.

I thought it worked well and once I got into it sawing was fast. It can work on wood as narrow as 40mm but wider is better. Remember the jig only works on an angle. When you need to saw the shoulders on the tails you will have to go back to freehand so you still need your hand skills. Anyway, with dovetails the sawing is only half the job, the rest is chopping out the waste material exactly to the line and neither jig can help you with this.

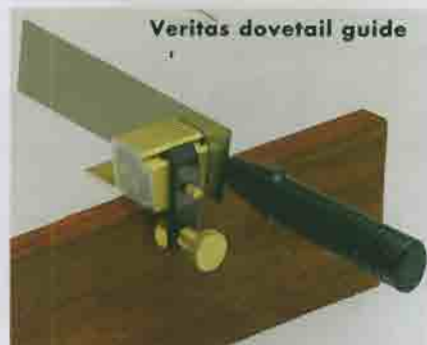
The *AngleMag* is Australian designed and costs about \$149. It is a larger jig which has three screw clamps to fix it. A rod slides in a mounting at the top of the jig. At the end of the rod is a plastic disc containing four magnets to secure the saw. Once the jig is clamped to the workpiece the disc is set and



Joints cut with the Angle-Mag (lower) and Veritas jigs.

locks to any angle between 0 and 90°. There are angle markings but these are very small and are really a guide only. Machined grooves in the rod locate it at 90° positions. This means that the disc can be set to cut one side of a tail, for example, and then flipped and slid up to repeat the other side.

It sawed as well as the *Veritas* and is not limited to one fixed angle. The *AngleMag* lets you saw the shoulders on the dovetails plus it will help you saw any sort of joint. Like the *Veritas* it is designed for sections like drawer sides and rails. However the *AngleMag*, because of its large size, can be more difficult to clamp to the wood. Thin narrow pieces of wood were the hardest to clamp, requiring two other pieces of wood to be clamped with



Veritas dovetail guide

them as an assembly—clamping the *Veritas* to wood like this was a bit easier. Both jigs work best with the wood clamped in a vice and the jig then clamped to the wood, but I did find that it was possible to forget the vice and just clamp on a jig to the wood and hold both on the bench with one hand and saw with the other.

After getting used to both jigs, sawing became quite fast and certainly better and more predictable than I could do freehand. As I mentioned though, you still need to mark out accurately and whilst the jigs guide the saw straight and square they have to be set at the correct mark or you will end up with sloppy joints. Neither jig is foolproof because everything still depends on where you saw and how well the waste is chopped out.

The *Veritas* is simple to use and mounts quickly and easily on wide or narrow stock. It is designed purely for dovetail work at a fixed angle. The *AngleMag* can require more time in initial set-up depending on the size of the workpiece. Once set up though, the long rod can be moved and flipped quite quickly to make a series of cuts. It is more expensive than the *Veritas* but it does much more. Picture framing would be an ideal application for this jig. Both jigs work well, one is simpler but has only one function while the other is more expensive, slower to set up but much more versatile. The *Veritas* jig and saw were supplied by Carba-Tec 1800 658 111. The *AngleMag* was supplied by the manufacturer (02) 9683 6052.

Reviewed by Rafi Nathan