

# 8-in. Jointers

These machines have the width to flatten almost any workpiece

Someone shopping for an 8-in. jointer won't suffer from a shortage of choices. We found 10 machines to inspect and test, ranging in price from \$600 to \$1,800. All have either 1½-hp or 2-hp motors.

As machines go, jointers are fairly simple in design. The bed consists of a cutterhead flanked by independent infeed and outfeed tables and a fence. And jointers have a simple but critical job: to flatten the face or edge of a board before the opposite one is planed or trimmed.

## The differences are in the details

The quality of these machines is good to exceptional. For the most part, the differences showed up only on close inspection.

**The size and quality of the bed matters**—Among these machines, the overall length of the bed varies from roughly 67 in. to 77 in. A longer bed is preferable to remove bow, crook, and twist in longer lumber. As a rule of thumb, multiply the bed length by two to determine the maximum length of stock that a jointer can flatten effectively. The Sunhill achieves extra length with a pair of 3¼-in. extensions which bolt onto each end of the bed. The General offers pull-out roller extensions on either end of the bed that come in handy for supporting the weight of long boards.

For the machine to work properly, the two table surfaces must be flat and parallel to each other. Using a high-quality 36-in. straightedge and feeler gauges, we checked for flatness on the infeed and outfeed tables in seven locations and calculated an average from the 14 table measurements taken on each machine. The Delta 37-350A, General, Grizzly, and Yorkcraft machines stood out, with nearly perfect tables.

We also used the straightedge to determine whether the infeed and outfeed tables on each machine were parallel, both front to back (width) and left to right (length). Four of the machines (the Bridgewood, Craftsman, and both Deltas) were less than ideal. Some discrepancy can be fixed by shimming the errant table.

**Two basic fence designs**—Eight of the jointers (Craftsman, Delta 37-350A, General, Grizzly, Jet, Powermatic, Sunhill, and Woodtek) have similar heavy cast-iron fences that ride front to back on a square steel bar mounted in the bed. The General, the Jet, the Powermatic, the Sunhill, and the Woodtek have a locking lever in the back that locks the fence in place. Often, however, when we tried to slide the entire assembly forward, the fence wouldn't move because the lever had slipped down and gotten hung up on the back edge of the bed. Craftsman, Delta (on the 37-350A), and Grizzly solved the problem and put the locking mechanism on top. Two machines, the Delta 37-380 and the Yorkcraft,



GRIZZLY G0586



YORKCRAFT YC-8J



POWERMATIC 60B

MODEL/SOURCE	STREET PRICE	BED SIZE	FENCE SIZE	NET WEIGHT	NOISE LEVEL	COMMENTS
<b>CRAFTSMAN 21703</b> www.craftsman.com	\$1,150	9¼ in. by 71 in.	4⅞ in. by 40 in.	422 lb.	83 db.	Handwheel adjustment; knives came nicked; smallish table-lock lever; longest fence
<b>DELTA 37-380</b> www.deltaportercable.com	\$1,150	8⅞ in. by 72½ in.	4⅞ in. by 35 in.	432 lb.	79 db.	Lever-infeed, handwheel-outfeed table adjustment; easiest fence to move; sturdy table-lock lever
<b>DELTA 37-350A</b> www.deltaportercable.com	\$1,800	8 in. by 76½ in.	4⅞ in. by 35¾ in.	490 lb.	81 db.	Lever adjustment; sturdy table-lock lever; longest bed; extralong (42 in.) infeed table
<b>GENERAL INTL 80-200LM1</b> www.general.ca	\$1,500	9 in. by 67 in. (not including extensions)	3⅞ in. by 38¼ in.	432 lb.	93 db.	Handwheel or lever adjustment; knives came nicked; locking lever sometimes hangs up fence; smallish table-lock lever
<b>BEST OVERALL CHOICE</b> <b>GRIZZLY G0586</b> www.grizzly.com	\$600	9¼ in. by 75 in.	3⅞ in. by 38¼ in.	432 lb.	88 db.	Geared handwheel adjusts fence position back and forth; perfectly aligned tables; sharp knives perfectly aligned
<b>JET JJ-8CS</b> www.jettools.com	\$1,000	9 in. by 67 in.	3¾ in. by 38¼ in.	404 lb.	90 db.	Handwheel adjustment; knives came nicked; locking lever sometimes hangs up fence; smallish table-lock lever
<b>READERS' CHOICE</b> <b>POWERMATIC 60B</b> www.powermatic.com	\$1,300	9 in. by 72¼ in.	4¾ in. by 38¼ in.	393 lb.	90 db.	Lever with dial adjustment; locking lever sometimes hangs up fence; switch conveniently placed
<b>SUNHILL CT-204L</b> www.sunhillmachinery.com	\$795	9 in. by 74¼ in. (including extensions)	3⅞ in. by 38¼ in.	402 lb.	92 db.	Handwheel adjustment; knives came nicked; locking lever sometimes hangs up fence; smallish table-lock lever
<b>WOODTEK 907064</b> www.woodworker.com	\$840	9 in. by 66¾ in.	3⅞ in. by 38¼ in.	391 lb.	86 db.	Handwheel adjustment; knives came nicked; locking lever sometimes hangs up fence; smallish table-lock lever
<b>BEST VALUE CHOICE</b> <b>YORKCRAFT YC-8J</b> www.wilkemachinery.com	\$600	8⅞ in. by 72½ in.	4⅞ in. by 35 in.	449 lb.	82 db.	Lever-infeed, knob-outfeed adjustment; rack-and-pinion gear makes fence easy to move; sturdy table-lock lever

have a fence that moves on a rack-and-pinion gear. This type of fence is easier to use. It takes one hand to turn the adjustment knob and effortlessly move the fence back and forth.

**Table adjustments**—Table adjustment is via a wheel or a lever. Proponents of the wheel argue that it's more accurate if you want to fine-tune a setting. We prefer the convenience of a lever; we've never had any trouble using one to tweak a table setting ¼ in. up or down. The Powermatic jointer provides the best of both options—a lever with a built-in dial.

### Choosing favorites

The Grizzly jointer stood out as the best-overall choice of the 10 machines. It was shipped in the sturdiest crate and had the best fit and finish as well as the flattest tabletops. The well-sharpened knives on the cutterhead made smooth cuts right from the get-go. And, if that's not enough, it has the lowest price.

The Yorkcraft is another low-cost option. It has a sturdy pair of table-locking screws and a rack-and-pinion fence that we like a lot. Plus, it was the only jointer in this group that included a rolling base. □

*William Duckworth contributed to this article.*

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### READERS' RATINGS: 8-IN. JOINTERS

Readers' and editors' choices diverged in this tool category. The Powermatic came in at the top of the readers' survey, while the editors' best-overall Grizzly and best-value Yorkcraft finished third and fourth. We couldn't find enough readers who use the Woodtek to provide a reliable rating.

	4.51	POWERMATIC 60B
	4.31	DELTA 37-350A
	4.24	GRIZZLY G0586
	4.22	YORKCRAFT YC-8J
	4.09	DELTA 37-380
	4.05	GENERAL INT'L 80-200LM1
	3.98	JET JJ-8CS
	3.80	SUNHILL CT-204L
	3.62	CRAFTSMAN 21703
	Insufficient Data	WOODTEK 907064