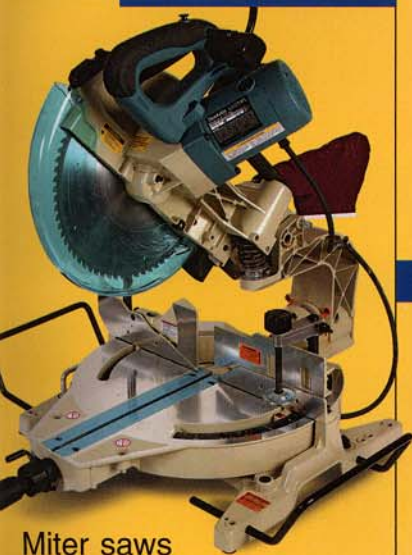


2009 TAUNTON'S TOOL GUIDE



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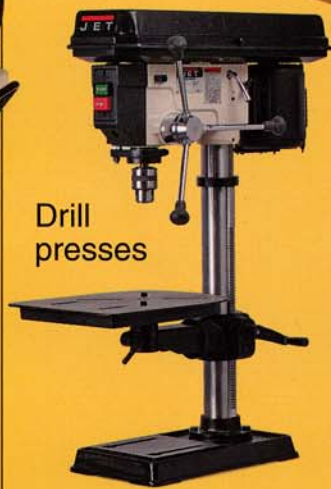
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Taunton Product #015006

Benchtop Drill Presses

The best are as good as floor-standing models

This head-to-head test told us two encouraging things about benchtop drill presses: You do get what you pay for, but you don't have to pay a lot to get power and precision.

We tested an array of medium to large models, limiting the field to those with at least a 1/3-hp motor and a plunge at least 3 in. deep.

Testing for accuracy and power

To get consistently straight, perfectly placed holes, the important parts of the

machine must line up. All of the models come with tables preset at zero (90° to the spindle) for left-to-right tilt, which can be adjusted by loosening a bolt beneath the table. None needed adjusting.

Front-to-back tilt is another matter, since there is no adjustment for it on any of these drill presses. Five of the models were off-level, front to back. Although none was off by more than half a degree, even that slight deviation gives you a good reason to attach an auxiliary table (use plywood), which you can shim level.

Accuracy also requires that the drill bit spin without significant runout, or you'll get oversized holes and, possibly, tearout at the rim. Using a straight rod held in the chuck, we found that every machine had at least a small amount of runout. But when we drilled holes with 1/2-in. brad-point and twist bits, each model made clean, accurately sized holes.

To test power, we set each drill press at an appropriate speed (500–600 rpm) and recorded how long it took to drive a 2-in. Forstner bit 3/4 in. deep into maple with-

MODEL/SOURCE	STREET PRICE	MOTOR	CHUCK-POST DISTANCE	RUNOUT	2-IN. HOLE TEST	DEPTH-SET EASE	COMMENTS
Craftsman 21914 www.craftsman.com	\$200	2/3 hp	6 in.	0.004 in.	18 sec.	Excellent	Laser, swivel knob, offset table crank, work light, digital depth readout, difficult speed change
Delta DP350 www.deltaportercable.com	\$220	1/3 hp	6 in.	0.004 in.	23 sec.	Fair	Best work light, offset table crank, variable speed
General Int'l. 75-100 www.general.ca	\$450	3/4 hp	8 1/2 in.	0.002 in.	10 sec.	Excellent	Least runout (tie w/Shop Fox), belt-change handle, light, deepest chuck-post distance
Grizzly G7943 www.grizzly.com	\$225	3/4 hp	7 in.	0.004 in.	12 sec.	Fair	Medium-size base, work light, belt-change handle, lowest speed for large bits
Jet JDP-15M www.wmhtoolgroup.com	\$425	3/4 hp	7 1/2 in.	0.004 in.	12 sec.	Excellent	Largest table, large base, work light, belt-change handle
Ryobi DP121L www.ryobitools.com	\$170	1/3 hp	6 in.	0.008 in.	17 sec.	Excellent	Laser, variable speed, digital speed readout, easy depth set on pull-arm axle, work light
Shop Fox W1668 www.woodstockint.com	\$300	3/4 hp	6 3/8 in.	0.003 in.	15 sec.	Fair	Oscillating spindle sanding, difficult speed change
Shop Fox M1102	\$320	1/2 hp	6 1/2 in.	0.002 in.	18 sec.	Good	Largest base, work light



GENERAL INT'L 75-100

The General stands out for performance and ease of use. It tested best for drilling power, and it was one of two models with the least runout (0.002 in.).



JET JDP-15M

The Jet shares top honors with the General for its own standout performance in our tests. Its table is also the biggest of the bunch.



GRIZZLY G7943

The Grizzly G7943 earned high all-around marks, matching the Jet for drilling power. Yet it's one of the least expensive benchtops, at \$225. The only deficit is a weak depth stop.

out slowing down obviously or vibrating. The results varied pretty much according to motor power, from 10 to 12 seconds for two of the most-powerful (3/4 hp) models, all the way up to 23 seconds for one of the least-powerful (1/3 hp) models.

Ease of use is important, too

We rated each model for how easy it is to set the plunge depth and to change drilling speeds.

Setting the plunge—All but two of the models use threaded stop rods and stop nuts for setting plunge depth. Problems arose on some models with thin, hard-to-turn hex nuts or bendable stop brackets that yielded an unwanted extra 1/64 in. to 1/16 in. of depth. The Delta DP350, the Shop Fox W1668, and the Grizzly G7943 fell short in this area, making depth setting difficult and/or slightly inaccurate.

Two models made strong showings with different kinds of depth-setting systems. The Craftsman has its depth stop on the shaft of the pull-down arm mechanism, so there are no thin brackets or hex nuts to worry about, and its electronic, digital

readout is pinpoint accurate. The Ryobi DP121L has a scale ring on the pull-down arm shaft, and a depth-set mechanism in the form of a large winglike handle that turns and locks in smoothly.

Changing speeds—Six of the models require manual speed changes, which involves moving drive belts to different pulleys. The Ryobi and the Delta come with variable-speed mechanisms. Both let you change speeds effortlessly, by turning an arm while the motor is running.

And the winners are ...

The General International 75-100 tested best for drilling power and all-around performance. If you can afford the \$450 price, this model is the best you can buy. The Jet JDP-15M rated second for power (tie with the Grizzly G7943) and among the best for speed-change and depth-set ease. It also has the largest table. We rated both of these models best overall.

We gave the best-value award to the Grizzly G7943. It scored among the highest for drilling power and speed-change ease. Its range of 12 speeds offers the lowest set-

READERS' RATINGS: BENCHTOP DRILL PRESSES

Readers and editors agreed on one top pick: the Jet. The General, meanwhile, finished in the middle of the pack.

3.76	JET JDP-15M
3.75	SHOP FOX M1102
3.68	GRIZZLY G7943
3.68	GRIZZLY G7943*
3.65	DELTA DP350
3.53	GENERAL INT'L 75-100
3.51	CRAFTSMAN 21914
3.42	RYOBI DP121L
3.20	SHOP FOX W1668
3.20	SHOP FOX W1669*

*Find reviews of these drill presses at FineWoodworking.com.

ting of all the test models, 140 rpm, ideal for driving circle cutters and the largest of bits. And its \$225 price is among the lowest of the pack. □

Charlie Reina contributed to this article.