

Fret Board Jig

When building a fret board you should always start with a straight piece of wood and cut the fret slots before any tapering is applied. That is the understanding on which this jig is based.

Note: This jig, as with all jigs, will only be as accurate as you make it and as you use it. Built and used with care and attention to detail you will find this jig will serve you well in your guitar building.

BUILDING THE JIG...

The drawing shows two versions of the jig. Version one is for a conventional, six string guitar and allows for fitting standard type 'T' shaped fret wire. The second option is used where the builder wishes to cut grooves either for solid inlay or colored epoxy type inlay as fret markers for a steel guitar.

The jig consists of a base board with two guides for the fret board material and two guides/supports either for a saw or a router depending on the version built.

I suggest that the components of the jig are screwed and glued together as appropriate. It would be easy to make one of the guide pieces adjustable to allow for different widths of fret board blank is desired.

When building the jig, start by marking the reference line along the center of the base board. All of the other parts will be mounted either parallel or at right angles to this line.

If you choose to build version one of the jig please remember not to fit the second aluminum angle before choosing the saw which you will use with the unit. This saw should have as small a 'set' as possible.



While saws are available with depth-of-cut guides built in it is easy to attach a pair of wooden strips to the sides of the saw using model makers clamps over the back of the tool and these will be perfectly fine in practice. Just check that they have not slipped during the process.

Fit the second guide piece to suit the saw chosen.

Likewise, if building the second option, for use with a router, fit the second base plate support to suit the actual router used.

USING THE JIG...

Prepare a full size reference drawing of the fret board. This can be hand drawn or produced on CAD software as desired. At minimum it can consist of a center line with cross markings for the fret positions. Firmly tape the drawing to the jig baseboard as shown on the drawing using the center line as a reference.

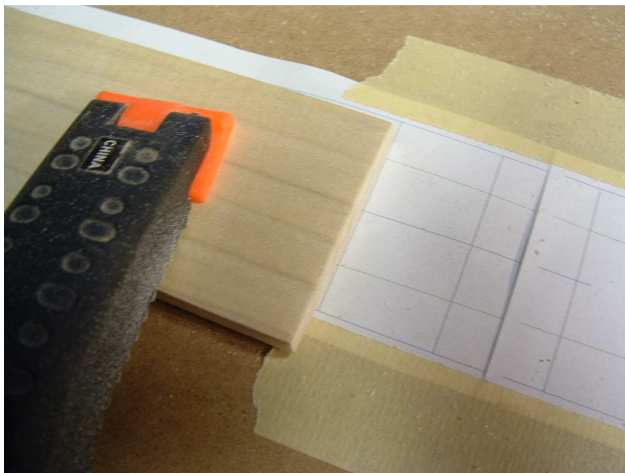
Once everything is checked and ready, the jig should be attached to the bench.



Any scrap piece of wood, of the same thickness as the fret board material, may now be used to check the depth of cut.

After the depth has been set we are ready to begin cutting or routing the fret board.

Slide the 'raw' board into the jig from the left (reference the drawing) until the right end of the board aligns perfectly with the nut position and clamp it in place. You can now make the first cut with your tool of choice.



Release the clamp and move the board to the right until it lines up with the next fret position, clamp and cut as before. Repeat these last operations for each fret position.

Once all of the fret slots have been cut or routed the waste wood beyond the nut position should be carefully removed. The fret board is now ready for the application of the fret wire or fret inlay as desired.

On my own jig I am currently using a 'Milescraft' mini router base with the 'plunge' springs removed. The base of this router is compatible with the 'Turn Lock' guide collar system which works well with the jig as detailed. The router motor is either a Dremel Rotary Tool or a Black & Decker Wizard motor tool. Either of those units will fit into the base with no problems.



<http://www.milescraft.com/product/1000.html>

<http://www.dremel.com/en-us/>