

WOOD

The Shop-Proven Woodworking Magazine

3-piece modular home office

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Hang doors that fit perfectly!

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Unbiased ratings on **11** Monster Routers



our editors test

23-gauge pinner

Why buy?

23-gauge pinners punch fasteners so fine (about the same diameter as a household straight pin) that they won't split even thin or brittle stock. Unlike 18-gauge brads or finish nails, the pins lack heads, so the tiny entry hole can be filled with a quick swipe of a wax filler stick after finishing. Despite their headless nature, we found that pins hold surprisingly well—in fact, a pin driven more than halfway into hardwood proves almost impossible to pull out. Still, for a long-lasting hold, in most cases you should apply glue to parts pinned together. Pinnerers have another advantage over brad nailers: There's no safety tip to keep the tool from getting tight into corners. However, 18-gauge tools drive fasteners up to 2" long, where the largest-capacity pinners max out at 1½".

23-GAUGE PINS WIN IN MATERIALS NARROW OR THIN



This fragile laser-cut molding (made from ½" plywood) didn't split, bulge, or splinter when attached with a 23-gauge pinner. That .010"-diameter pin hole will virtually disappear into open-grained woods, with a smear of filler.



Even in thin solid wood, such as this piece of oak that tapers to ½", splitting rarely occurs. We also drove pins to within ⅙" of the edge or end of a solid-wood workpiece, regardless of its thickness, with little risk of splitting.

QUICK TIP



Without heads to tell top from bottom, clips of pins have arrows to identify the beveled end, which loads "down" in the pinner. Before loading, mark clips with a felt-tip marker to help you orient partial, arrowless clips.

Grex P635, \$200



Editor test-drive:

As far as I'm concerned, the Grex P635 is the Loxus of pinners, with a ton of great features that put it at the top of the pack. For example, with some pinners, you must manually adjust the magazine for different fastener lengths: This tool self-adjusts for pins from ½" to 1½", so you just load and fire. The P635 has no adjustment for setting the drive depth of fasteners, but regardless of the length of pin or hardness of the wood, it set them to perfect depth.

This is the only pinner we tested that provides a removable no-mar tip to reduce dimpling, and it does a good job protecting even soft woods when using moderate pressure. That tip also sports index lines on all four sides for precise placement of pins in a narrow workpiece.

—Tested by Chuck Hodlund, Master Craftsman

To learn more:

888/447-3926, grexusa.com

Porter-Cable PIN100, \$125



Editor test-drive:

The PIN100 compares to the Grex P635 with a self-adjusting magazine and a rear exhaust to keep oil off your work. In softwoods and softer hardwoods (such as cherry and poplar), this pinner properly sets its full range of ½–1" fasteners with a light touch—basically the weight of the tool—and imperceptible marring. In oak and ash, however, I had to use firmer pressure to avoid leaving the pins just a whisker proud of the surface. I was pleased to see that the additional pressure didn't cause any workpiece marring.

I was skeptical about the value of a pinner in my shop, but the PIN100 made me a believer, performing almost flawlessly in my tests. Its reasonable price includes 2,000 pins and a storage case.

—Tested by Bill Kiser, Editor-In-Chief

To learn more:

800/487-8665; porter-cable.com

Central Pneumatic 45658, \$60



Editor test-drive:

For half the price of a typical 23-gauge pinner, the compact Central Pneumatic 45658 delivers reliable results without a lot of frills. At 7" long and 6½" tall, it's about 3" shorter in both dimensions than my 18-gauge brad nailer. In hardwoods, such as cherry and white oak, I observed little workpiece marring, and that sanded away easily with a few strokes of fine-grit sandpaper. Soft woods dimpled regardless of my hand pressure, so I wouldn't use this tool on them.

Two minor sources of irritation: The crude safety switch is either "on" or "off", so care is required to not accidentally fire a fastener. And, the magazine requires manual adjustment for different pin lengths (½–1"), but the scale is metric, not English. I found it easy to eyeball the setting, though.

—Tested by Dave Campbell, Tools Editor

To learn more:

800/423-2567; harborfreight.com