

The tall and short of a good workbench

Noden Adjust-A-Bench

The trouble with establishing the “right” workbench height is that it’s a moving target. The old rule of measuring up from the floor to your palm doesn’t take into account the many tasks expected of a workbench. A “standard-height” top may be fine for hand planing and general project assembly; but detail work, like laying out joints and routing, is easier with a higher work surface. Within this range, even a few inches can make the difference between efficient ease or a backache. In response, woodworkers have built leg-prop blocks, single-use benches, and even top-sitting risers. But these solutions lack flexibility.

The Adjust-A-Bench’s ratcheting leg system allows a top to adjust in height from 27” to 44”, in 1½” increments. But can the adjustment be done without compromising the rigidity demanded of a serious bench?



The Setup And Use

The core of the Adjust-A-Bench is its legs, which can be outfitted to any benchtop. (If you don’t want to make a top or rails, the company offers complete bench packages.) Having built my own top, I made a pair of rails and grooved them to accept the ¾”-diameter threaded rods used to pull the rails and legs together. Assembling the base, optional casters, and top took a few hours.

Once assembled, the bench works like any other, with a big plus. The pair of interlocking, sliding “trays” outfitted with a ratchet mechanism allows a 16½” range of adjustment. To raise the benchtop, you alternately

lift each end until you reach the desired height. To lower it, first lift the top a bit, step on the pedal to disengage the locking bar, lower the top, and then release the pedal to reengage the bar at the desired height.

Best Applications

The bench’s height-adjustability makes it perfect for assembling large workpieces at its lowest position, routing dovetails at its highest, and performing all sorts of operations in between. Factor in mobility (with optional casters), and the bench compounds in shop value as a multifunctional outfeed table or project staging platform.

Tester’s Take

After several years’ use, the Adjust-A-Bench has proved to be one of the best tools in my shop. And, yes, it’s solid as a burro and does not shudder under the heaviest work. The legs aren’t cheap, but compared to the cost of other commercial benches that don’t offer height adjustment, the Adjust-A-Bench is a smart investment.

Adjust-A-Bench \$430 (top and rails not included)
Caster Set \$160

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