

Bandsaw Your Logs Safely

By Anthony Napoli, AAW, CMW

Cut the log with a chain saw slightly longer in length than their width, seal the end grain, and store them until it is needed for a project. For many projects, cutting down the pith is not a critical factor, or the pith will be turned away, or it is not practical/safe to cut it with the chain saw, or you just do not want to get the chain saw out. But trying to cut a log on a band saw is not a safe thing to do, because the log will move in several directions and you cannot control it by hand. The result is the blade breaking or personal injury. Since I like to keep my limbs intact, I designed a simple jig that will keep the log moving in only one direction, through the blade while keeping my hands and fingers, etc. out of the way of the blade.

I have a 14" Delta band saw with the extension block. The table is 16" x 16" and will cut a maximum thickness of 12 inches. I decided to use 3/4" thick melamine because it provides a stable base with a slick surface for the log to slide on and it would be easy to keep clean. To increase the stability of the log during the cutting process, make the jig to be 3 inches larger than the bed

all the way around with a resulting measurement of 22-1/2" long x 22-1/2" wide. You can choose to make it 19-1/2" wide (three sides have the three inch over-hang) but I chose to keep the jig symmetrical allowing for the possibility for other functions as determined later. Cut the corners off and sand the edges to eliminate the sharp edges. Cut an oak strip to fit into the miter slot. Attach a long square to the melamine 3-13/16 inches from the right side edge, position and attach the oak strip with five flat head screws countersunk so they will be flush with the surface. Place the oak strip into the miter slot and slide the jig into contact with the blade and mark the contact spot. Remove from the bandsaw, take the square and make a corresponding mark on the other side of the jig. Mark and punch for dowel holes (for the rails) 3" from the inbound and outbound edges with the first hole on either side of the blade marked at two inches on center and the other holes 1-1/2" on center from the first, for a total of four holes on either side of the center mark. Drill all of the holes with a 29/64" (1/16" over-sized) brad point bit and drill to a depth of a 1/2". Once all the holes have been marked and drilled, turn on the band saw and make a cut so that the jig has approximately three inches over-hanging the band saw table, inbound and outbound. Take the jig to the table saw and center the band saw cut on the table saw blade. This cut will prevent any binding of the band saw blade. The rails are made from 2" x 4" and cut to 22-3/8" long. Cut the piece in half lengthwise and true the two pieces to the same measurements. The rails

will be positioned with the narrow width as the base. Cut a forty-five degree angle down the length of both pieces leaving a 1/2" flat on the top and side. Mark and drill both rails with two 7/16" holes each, one inch deep. Cut four pieces from a 7/16" dowel 1-7/16" long and chamfer both ends. You may choose to use a thicker dowel, just change the size of the holes in the jig to match. Glue the dowels into the rails. To increase holding power take a regular pair of pliers and crimp the dowel between the teeth to create grooves. Only do this to the end that is being glued into the jig.



Figure 1. Shows holes and pens.



Figure 2. Ready for a Log.

The jig will need a way to hold it in place so it does not slide while pushing the log through the blade. A medium size vertical handle toggle clamp (Woodcraft #144313) is attached to the underside of the jig near the front. (See Figure 3) Exactly where is not as important





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as it should not hit anything on the underside of the bandsaw table and it should be close to the front for ease of use. The jig is now ready for use.



Figure 3. Toggle Clamp.

To use the jig first determine that the log is not too big for the band saw. The maximum cut for the band saw with the jig installed is approximately 1-1/2 inches less or 10-1/2 inches or less if the log is an irregular shape. The second consideration is if you left any limbs or stubs attached. Hopefully not but if so, cut them as flush as possible.

The next consideration is the shape of the logs. The best case scenario is that the log has a rounded section. In most cases this will not be a problem but there needs to be a rounded area to slide on the jig rails. Finally, where is the pith? Since the pith is not exactly in the center you will need to determine the best cut. The jig does allow for off center cuts by placing one rail in a hole closer to the blade on one side and further away on the other side. Always cut the wood with your hands on either side of the blade. Do not force the wood into the blade. You should always think before starting the cut, look where you hands and wood are in relation to the blade, and listen for changes in the sound before, during, and after cutting.



Figure 4. The log has been sawn.

Warning: As with any tool or jig caution should be used and all of the manufacturer’s instructions, warnings, and safety rules followed. There is no warranty attached to the design of this jig and the author assumes no responsibility for misuse, accidents, or other problems. This is offered only as a possible solution to cutting logs with a bandsaw instead of a chain saw. As with any tool or jig there exists the possibility of a piece of wood locking the blade or breaking the blade exists or personal injury.