

NEW
Department!

GREAT Gear

miter saw upgrade Laser Saw Guides

Like most woodworkers, I'm always looking for that something extra that will improve my skills. Lasers are popping up on all sorts of tools nowadays, so I wanted to see how well saws with lasers really work. But I didn't want to outfit my shop with a new miter saw. Fortunately, there is an add-on laser kit by *Laserkerf* that will attach to most miter saws.

How It Works. The laser unit itself is about the size of a Zippo lighter (see the photo at right). Looking at the front of the box, you can see the laser. When the laser is on, it looks like a red cat's eye peering out, as shown in the photo at the top of this page. The black band around the front provides extra protection against dust.

The standard model comes with an AC adaptor, but I liked the one

powered by two AA batteries. I have one less cord in my shop to worry about and don't have to have two plug-ins every time I move my saw around. The kit comes with plastic ties to help keep the wires secure and out of the way.

I also like the on/off switch that you also see in the photo below. It

can be mounted almost anywhere on your saw (within reach of the wire, of course). I mounted mine near my saw's trigger, where it's safely away from the spinning blade. I can turn the laser on and then use both hands to get everything aligned before turning the saw on and making the cut.



Easy Installation. This laser unit is pretty much one-size-fits-all. Mounting brackets and wedges are available so the laser will fit most miter and radial arm saws. The brackets and wedges attach with adhesive tape that is essentially permanent after a couple of days — no drilling required.

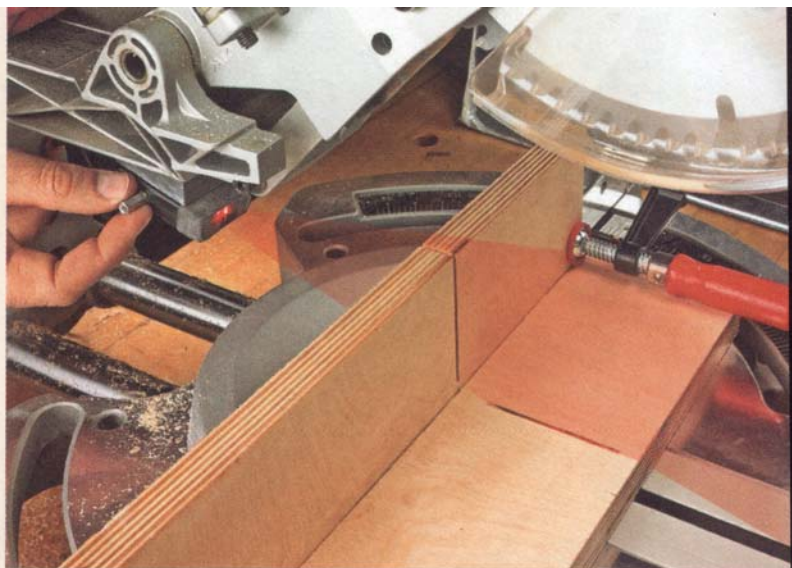
Laser Alignment. Before you stick the laser on your miter saw, you need to build the alignment jig that is pictured in the photo on the right. The kit comes with instructions on how to build and use it. There are two things to remember. First, don't cut completely through the jig. And, second, don't unclamp the jig until you've completed the alignment process.

When you attach the unit, you'll want to align it as close as you can on the first try. But don't worry if you're not exact, because the laser has two adjustments to help you fine-tune the alignment.

Underneath the black band is an angular adjustment ring, which

helps rotate the beam vertically through the kerf slot. Sticking out the side of the box is a horizontal adjustment knob, which moves the beam left or right. Once you get the beam shooting through the slot and filling the kerf on the horizontal board, you're set to go. And because the laser mounts to the saw body, its alignment should stay true at any angle you need. But I'd hold onto the jig so you can double-check the alignment from time to time.

The Beam. Another thing I like about this laser is the kerf-wide beam it shoots across my stock. While the beam width itself is not adjustable, the laser is available in two widths — one to match the standard $\frac{1}{8}$ "-wide kerf and one to match thin kerf blades, whichever you use. So, not only do you know which side of your layout line the



blade will cut, but you can also tell exactly how much wood the saw blade will eat up in making the cut.

Now with the laser on my miter saw, I don't have to "eye-ball" the cuts anymore. The laser not only improves my accuracy with my miter saw, it also makes the cuts easier, faster, and safer.

To find out where to get the this add-on, as well as the blade-mounted laser below, turn to page 51. 🐿

▲ **Straight Shooter.**
Use this jig to ensure the laser beam lines up with the blade.