

# Tool Test Cordless Sliders

BY MARK CLEMENT

**A**s a remodeler, I build everything from finished basements to business offices. Given the decent availability of power at my job sites, the latest offshoot of cordless technology that's been applied to miter saws struck me as a rather expensive option I could do without. Even so, I understand the need. Someone has to build malls and office buildings where the nearest working outlet might be a hundred feet away. There are also carpenters who have to trim out tract homes where several trades spend their workdays fighting over one or two outlets. Plus, everyone wants to spend less time setting up, and eliminating cords is a big help.

Even though I'll admit to being skeptical initially, I've had a few months to use the half-dozen cordless sliders—some full-size 10-in. and 12-in. models, some smaller 7¼-in. and 7½-in. models—currently on the market. Consider me a convert. I found the smaller sliders useful as a superportable second saw, and the larger ones could even replace your corded slider. □

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Meet the new class of miter saws.  
From big to little, we tested them all.



# BIG SAWS, BIG CAPACITY

The 10-in. Milwaukee and the 12-in. DeWalt saws have all the features common to corded sliders, including tall fences and large, easy-to-read bevel and miter scales. Both saws have the power and cut capacity to replace your corded saw, but they're far from equal.



## DeWalt DHS790AT2 (12 in.)

This big DeWalt uses a completely new battery technology. It accepts a pair of dual-voltage (18v and 56v) batteries that also work on DeWalt's 20v MAX tools. The big battery packs detect the tool they're being used in and supply the correct voltage automatically. The kit even includes an AC adapter, so you can plug the saw in when you have access to power. Combined with rock-solid features borrowed from its corded brother (DWS780), this tool offers both performance and value. The saw is big enough for cross-cutting 14.-in.-wide 2x stock and for cutting up to 7 1/2.-in.-wide nested crown. It's well designed, powerful, accurate, and even comes with a decent blade. The louvered guard prevents dust buildup and the slide mechanism is smooth and flex-free. Miter and bevel adjustments are intuitive and hold securely while visibility of the cutline is excellent. This is the tool to beat.

Price:	Weight:	Bevel:	Miter:	Battery:
\$799*	56 lb.	49° left / 49° right	50° left / 60° right	Two 56v

\* with two batteries and an AC adapter

### CLOSER LOOK

DeWalt's big cordless sliding miter saw is virtually identical to the company's corded 12-in. slider, and its two big batteries give the saw as much power as its corded brother. When power is available, the saw's two 56v battery packs can be swapped for an AC adapter that's included in the \$799 kit, providing the best of both worlds: corded-saw ability with cordless convenience.





### Milwaukee 2734-21HD (10 in.)

Unfortunately, this saw is a disappointment. For starters, there's movement in the saw head because the slide tubes can flex when they're extended halfway or more, particularly when the saw head is set for steep bevel cuts. Milwaukee claims their saw isn't any worse than other sliders and at first we didn't think the movement was affecting our cuts, but we later realized we sometimes had gaps in mitered outside corners and compound cuts. Other problems include having to remove the upper sliding fences when making steep bevel and compound cuts. Even the dust collection seems like an afterthought. The chute moves with the rails, so it shifts farther away from the dust source as you make the cut. The result is very little dust in the bag at the end of the day. It's too bad that Milwaukee didn't perfect the design before launching the saw, because this tool is not up to snuff.

Price:	Weight:	Bevel:	Miter:	Battery:
\$599*	45 lb.	48° left / 48° right	50° left / 60° right	One 18v
* without battery				

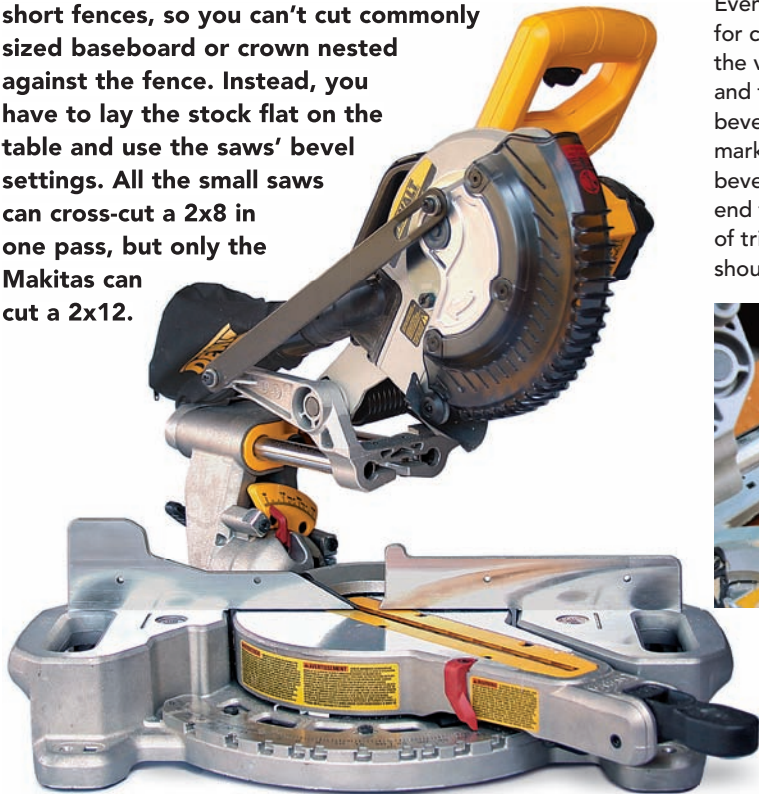
### CLOSER LOOK

The Milwaukee slider has a 10-in. blade, allowing it to cross-cut a 2x12 and cut up to 5/4-in.-wide crown nested against the fence. The saw's vertical motor allows it to bevel 48° in both directions. The bevel lock is mounted on top of the saw and the lever's intermediate position engages one of the saw's nine bevel detents.



# GO SMALL, GO FAST

Although they're light and easy to handle, the 7¼-in. and 7½-in. saws have tiny tables and short fences, so you can't cut commonly sized baseboard or crown nested against the fence. Instead, you have to lay the stock flat on the table and use the saws' bevel settings. All the small saws can cross-cut a 2x8 in one pass, but only the Makitas can cut a 2x12.



## DeWalt DCS361M1 (7¼ in.)

Even with a single battery and no bevel stop at 33.9° (a common setting for cutting crown), this tool performed accurately and smoothly. We liked the visibility provided by the louvered blade guard and LED worklight and the saw has a good-sized fence and an easy-to-read miter scale. The bevel scale isn't as hard to read as those on the Makita saws, but the small markings are a little tough to see. The only real downside is that the saw bevels in only one direction. While you can always flip the stock end over end to make a cut with a single-bevel saw, swinging around long lengths of trim can be a problem in tight spaces, which is where these small saws should have an advantage, not a drawback.



### CLOSER LOOK

The small DeWalt can cut 3⅝-in. crown nested against the fence. Like the Makitas, this saw only bevels to the left, which means flipping stock end over end. Bevel settings are changed by loosening a star-shaped handle at the back of the saw. Miter settings are held with a quick-adjusting lever-type lock.

Price:	Weight:	Bevel:	Miter:	Battery:
\$399*	32 lb.	48° left / 3° right	48° left / 48° right	One 18v
* with one battery				

## Ridgid 48607K (7¼ in.)

This is the most versatile small saw in the group and it did everything we asked of it with no drama. The slide/plunge action is not as smooth as the Makitas', but it has big-saw features, including an easy-to-read bevel scale, an adjustable miter scale, solid detents, and a reasonably-sized fence. Despite an abrupt blade brake that jerks the saw head slightly when it activates and somewhat stiff movement in the bevel lock, it's a good saw. It's the same price as the little DeWalt, but it bevels in both directions. Compared to the twin-battery Makita XSL02 (\$567 without batteries), it's a bargain. The Ridgid is easily our favorite among the small saws.

### CLOSER LOOK

Perfect for small jobs and quick setups, the Rigid can cut 3½-in. baseboard upright against the fence and 3½-in. crown in a nested position. The action is smooth enough to pass muster, and the motor has plenty of power even though it sports a single battery.



Price:	Weight:	Bevel:	Miter:	Battery:
\$399*	24 lb.	48° left / 48° right	48° left / 48° right	One 18v
* with one battery				

## Makita XSL01 (7½ in.)

While there are some things to like about this saw that can also be found on its two-battery counterpart, like its comfortable handle and trigger and smooth slide/plunge mechanism, this unit is underpowered for cutting anything but narrow trim and strip flooring. Cutting framing lumber took far too long to be practical, and the saw even labored while cutting a cedar 2x6. The fence is too short and we found the blade guard frustrating, as it's nearly impossible to see through when you're lining up a cut. Compound cuts were also a challenge because the saw doesn't have bevel stops and the bevel scales are so small they're hard to read.



Price:	Weight:	Bevel:	Miter:	Battery:
\$530*	27 lb.	45° left / 5° right	47° left / 57° right	One 18v
* without battery				

## Makita XSL02 (7½ in.)

Every power-tool designer should check out this machine for its supersmooth slide rails and head-plunge mechanisms. This saw shares the comfortable handle and trigger of its one-battery counterpart, but unlike its underpowered sibling, it has ample power provided by two 18v batteries. Unfortunately, it also shares the short fence and barely-readable bevel scale, plus the blue-tinted guard makes it hard to see a pencil line. Once again, there are no detents for common bevel cuts, and, like its sibling, it only bevels 5° to the right, which means a lot of flipping stock.



Price:	Weight:	Bevel:	Miter:	Battery:
\$567*	29 lb.	45° left / 5° right	47° left / 57° right	Two 18v
* without batteries				



### CLOSER LOOK

Unlike all the other cordless sliders, which have two, the Makitas have four slide tubes, giving the saws a surprisingly small footprint and an extra 4 in. of cross-cut capacity with 2x stock (12 in.). The newer model (XSL02) accepts two 18v battery packs and has a brushless motor, giving the saw noticeably more power than its single-pack sibling. Both saws are easy to carry because of their small size and comfortable handles and they have silky smooth slide rails and an easy-to-use bevel adjustment.

