

Key cabinet

The **Editor** holds the key to a simple project

A simple, but very useful, small-scale project for keeping all your keys organised and easy to find. There are a number of router-based operations that are used to create this key cabinet. It can be made from solid wood or multi-laminate birch ply, and at a size to suit how many keys you have – you've no excuses for losing them ever again.

The jig

1 The keyhole cutter is a natty little tool for making a hidden slot for a screwhead to sit in so we can hang this cabinet on the wall. However, the catch is that the head is obviously larger than the slot cutting section above it. To avoid mistakes, we need what you might call a 'tray jig' in which the router will sit to restrict movement.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GMC/ANTHONY BAILEY



2 Glue and fix battens in place on to your plywood base so they allow the router to move in one direction only.



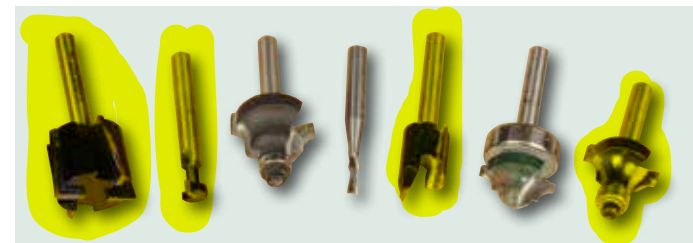
3 Work out the desired limit of travel for the router and then glue and fix battens between the battens in step 2, to allow the router to travel that distance in the jig.



4 Place the tray jig on the back panel to ascertain the correct position and then fit a crosswise batten underneath the tray jig at the chosen position. ➤



5 With the jig resting on battens lifting it clear off the bench, place the router at the top end of the tray jig. Switch on and plunge the cutter so the widest part that will create the keyhole entry point goes into the jig base, and slide the router along to create the full-length slot – you may need a deeper second pass to machine right through. You now have visual access to the slotting area and the jig is ready for use on the back panel of the cabinet



The cutters

I have used no fewer than seven cutters on this project, several of which are non-standard, but fun to use.

- The basic joint work is rebating, done with the small but excellent Wealden tenon cutter, which gives a very good result.
- Next is the smallest size Wealden keyhole cutter.
- The projecting top section of the back has a small Trend stopped ogee profile on a bearing guided cutter.
- A Trend 3mm spiral cutter was used to drill the holes for the piano hooks.
- The hinge cutter gives a good, clean finish and minimal edge tear-out.
- The door has a pattern made with a face mould cutter – this has a bearing mounted on the shaft for template following. This must be used with a thick template so you can take shallow passes while the bearing can still contact the template edge.
- The door edge has a small ovoid moulding created by setting the cutter down enough to make slight step shapes.

MAKING IT

1 Cut and plane all components to width and length, except for top and bottom pieces and the door, which is trimmed to size later. If using solid wood for this you may need to carefully edge joint pieces together for the door and back panel – which should be thick enough to accommodate the piano hooks.



6 The resulting keyhole slot is neat and very functional

'Necked' cutters

Home woodworkers, unlike specialist tradespeople, seldom use narrow-necked cutters like the keyhole cutter, but there are times when such cutters are very handy. They are great for making dovetail housings, which are often used for casework and bookshelves.



The downside of necked cutters of any kind is that they have to cut at full depth in one pass. You simply cannot plunge in several depth passes like a straight cutter can.

To remove the bulk of the waste, first use a straight cutter that is narrower than the width of the opening into the joint, and do repeated passes to near final depth. Fit the desired necked cutter and make the cut from the end, thus creating the final profile while taking out a minimal amount of wood. It avoids burning, chip clogging, and cutter breakage – plus it improves blade life and your working experience.



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2 Mark out the cabinet top position on the backboard and the shape for the projecting top, also the keyhole positions on the reverse side. Use the keyhole jig to machine the keyhole slots while the top is still square.

3 Jigsaw or bandsaw the top curves and sand to a smooth, even, finished shape. Use a small bearing-guided ovoid cutter to run around the top edge, making sure you start and finish before the marked line of the cabinet top.

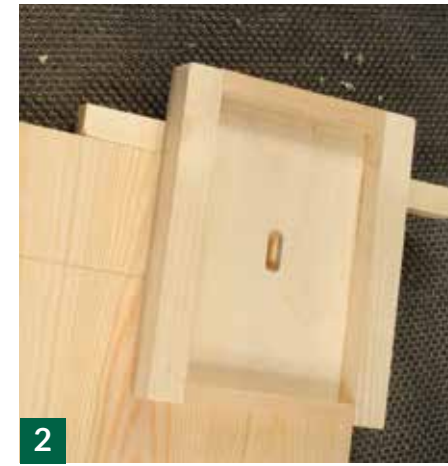
4 To make accurate holes for the piano hooks that hold the keys, a 3mm spiral cutter is ideal for drilling with the router. Use some abrasive taped to the baseplate if necessary to stop the router from wandering.

5 Use a tenoning cutter, or a 19mm straight cutter with a through fence in place, to machine a rebate on the ends of the cabinet side pieces. Use a square-cut push block behind for accurate support and to avoid breakout.

6 The cabinet sides are also rebated so they sit along the sides of the back panel without projecting too far, for aesthetic purposes. Do this at the same cutter and fence settings.

7 Now cut the top and bottom to fit when the side pieces are in place. All components can be sanded and glued and pinned in place. For simplicity, the hinge recesses can be machined to the full depth of the folded hinge into the cabinet carcass, and simply surface-fixed to the door. You don't need a jig for just two recesses, but you do need to clamp a batten along the cabinet side to give more support for the router and fence.

8 The door is cut to size and a template made for the bearing-guided face moulding cutter. Make sure you use an offset in the middle for support and keep the router tight to the edge of the template and machine at an even pace. The template is pinned to the door blank and the blank sits on a rubber router mat. The edge has an ovoid shape routed on it. Finally sand, apply a finish, and fit the hooks, hinges, knob and a catch. ■



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