

# What's New: Tambour Bit Set

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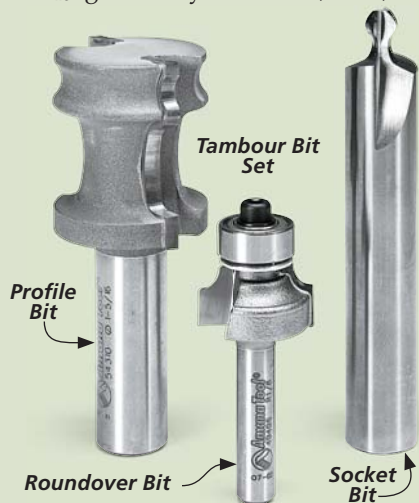
I really like roll-top desks, but I was never happy with the conventional method of gluing strips of wood to a canvas backer to create a flexible roll-top. The resulting tambour door can become stiff and difficult to bend. And if any of the strips slip out of position when you apply the glue, there's just no easy way to correct the problem later.

Amana's new locking tambour bit set offers an interesting alternative. The photo below shows the three-bit set. The two larger bits are used to make the interlocking profile. The third bit in the set is just a small roundover bit used to soften the edges of the last slat that often incorporates a handle or pull.

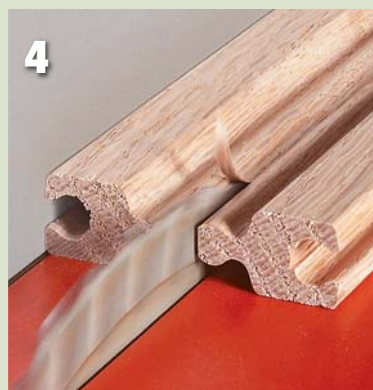
**INTERLOCKING TAMBOUR.** The photo in the lower right corner of the page shows you the finished product. You can see how the individual pieces of the tambour lock together using a ball-and-socket joint. This alleviates the need for a canvas backer to hold the slats.

**SETTING UP.** I have to admit that when I first headed to the shop to try these bits out, I anticipated a long and tedious setup. I couldn't have been more wrong. The illustrated instructions were clear and accurate, spelling everything out. In fact, I completed my first tambour door in under an hour.

**START WITH THE STOCK.** Successful setup begins with properly milled stock. The bit set is designed to produce a 1/2"-thick tambour to ride in a 3/16" groove in your cabinet, desk, or



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1. Starting with an oversized workpiece, make two passes on both sides to form the profile.

2. A kerf cut on the table saw paves the way for routing the socket.

3. The ball-shaped bit forms the socket that will house the matching ball.

4. Complete the tambour by ripping the oversized workpiece down the middle.

other project. To get started, you'll first need to plane your stock to 1/2" thick. Then rip the stock into 1 5/16"-wide workpieces.

Each blank will yield two completed tambour slats. The oversized workpiece is also much safer to work with. It's a good idea to cut a few extra blanks to use for setting up the router and fence.

I started by setting the fence so the inside edge of the large, shaping bit barely made contact with the workpiece. Then you'll need to raise the height so the bottom edge of the workpiece just kisses the cutter. Step 1 above shows this setup.

**ROUT THE PROFILE.** With the workpieces prepared and the router table set up, you're ready to start routing the slats. The step-by-step photos above outline the process. For both safety and accuracy, make sure to use a featherboard.

After making the first cut, you simply flip the blank end-for-end and rout the other edge. Then repeat both cuts on the opposite side. You'll see

the two slats take shape (separated by a flat spot) after the last pass.

**KERF CUT THE EDGE.** Now you're ready to move to the table saw and make a small kerf (Step 2). This cut reduces the strain on the ball-shaped bit you'll use next to cut the socket.

**ROUT THE SOCKET.** Back at the router table, it's a pretty simple setup for Step 3. You just adjust the fence to center the bit on the workpiece and rout the socket.

**SEPARATE THE SLATS.** Now all you need to do is head back to the table saw and cut the oversized workpiece down the center. You can easily see the location for this cut by aligning the flat spot left between the two balls with the saw blade.

A little sanding is all it takes to produce an attractive and smooth sliding tambour door. **W**

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