

Clamps – Never Enough!

Thought I'd pass along a some lessons learned and what clamps I choose to use. This isn't an end-all, be-all list, but what rather my experience with household carpentry work, cabinetry, edge banding, and other projects on this site. Your requirements/results may vary.

- 1. Quick-Grip Clamps.** Quick-grip clamps come in a dazzling array of sizes and since they operate one-handed are really useful for lots of tasks. They don't have enough clamping pressure and are poorly built. When I first started buying clamps at Haiku, I made the mistake of picking up [Irwin One-hand Quick-Grips with the yellow markings \(SL300\)](#), thinking they looked pretty decent. Turns out they only have a clamping pressure of about 250 lbs after allowing that you probably aren't going to get full pressure all of the time. Sounds like a lot, but it's not. I've since sold them on Craigslist, and standardized on the [Irwin SL600](#) for general purpose clamping like clamping my jigs or work material to the bench. They are soft jawed, won't mar, and reliably hold well and quickly. I've seldom seen them available in any stores here, and ordered them online after discovering a couple lonely ones in HD, and have never seen them since. I use 6" regularly for all kinds of quick clamping tasks.
- 2. Clamps for Case Work.** For glue-up case work, I now have a good set of [Bessey K Body Revo Clamps](#). They are the go-to for cabinet assembly. Again, I made the mistake previously of trying to save money and bought Brand X, but quickly learned that better precision in manufacturing results in a tool that is easier to use, and more reliable. They are widely available now, too. At the time I needed them, Woodcraft was the only distributor here on island, and they were pricey. Now HD

has added them to their line. Amazon has great pricing. I understand that JET and Jorgensen may have similar, but they are not available locally, so I can't comment.

3. **Edge Banding.** My go-to for edge banding where you need a LOT of clamps are the [Bessey H-style pipe clamps](#). What I like about the Bessey H-Style pipe clamps is that they have wide "feet" and can be set in place to position the workpiece, and they tightened. The 1/2" pipe clamps are all I think I've needed, but they are available to fit either 1/2" or 3/4" black pipe. (I use galvanized pipe here to avoid rust, and they don't move quite as smoothly as they would on black pipe). I use 30" pipe to make up 24" clamps that work well for the type of work I do. They supplement the K-Body clamps.
4. **For light duty, supplemental clamping** I use several [Jorgensen HD 3700 series bar clamps](#), mainly because I like the rubberized handles better than the Bessey handles, but I think they are out of business. They used to have a really good cabinet assembly clamp, but I can't find it any more, either. If you can find the HD 3700 series on close-out, they are handy for a lot of situations. The old wood, parallel jaw clamps were in a class by their own, and what I first learned to use in 6th grade shop.
5. **Face-frames and Edge Clamping.** Sometimes you have to be able to clamp in two different directions, as when you install a face-frame. I only had that need once or twice and picked up a pair of the least inexpensive 3-way edge clamps, and they worked okay, but I had to put blocks under all clamping points to avoid marring the workpieces. A better solution is one of the other padded [edge clamping solutions, either from Bessey](#) or Rockler. Kreg distributes a wide range of special application clamps. I find, for my work, I've only needed the face clamp that came with my K3 master kit, and the [right angle clamp, which is indispensable for case assembly.](#)

There are more clamps out there in the clamping universe. I still think good old Norm's collection in [New Yankee Workshop](#) is the largest I've ever seen. I can't come close! But, I now sorta have what I need.