

# Freud SD208 Dado Stack

Some days it feels like I'm addicted to my dado stack. I use it to cut almost all my tenons, rabbets, grooves, lap and bridle joints and (of course) dados. So when I went to replace my 15-year-old high-speed steel set — which tended to gnaw the wood instead of cutting it — I was looking for the perfect combination of price and performance. Lucky thing I found it on my first try with the Freud SD208 carbide dado stack.

For about \$85, the SD208 comes with two 12-tooth 8"-diameter outside blades, four 1/8" two-tooth chippers, one 1/16" two-tooth chipper and a set of metal shims. This setup allows you to cut dados between 1/4" and 1 3/16" wide, which is more than adequate for any home shop.

More expensive dado sets have more teeth on the chipper blades for a cleaner cut (and to make balancing easier) and come with a nifty case and a 3/32" chipper. This undersized chipper lets you quickly set up your stack to cut dados for plywood, which can be notoriously undersized. And while these additional features are nice, the more expensive dado sets also cost twice as much as the SD208.

According to Freud, an Italian tool-maker, the carbide in the SD208 is the same grade (H01S) that the company uses in its more expensive sets. The teeth incorporate Freud's nice anti-kickback design and are set at a 15-degree hook angle, which is the same as Freud's Safety Dado (the SD308). This angle helps make the cut more aggressive, which makes it ideal for small or underpowered saws. The company's top-of-the-line dado sets use a neg-

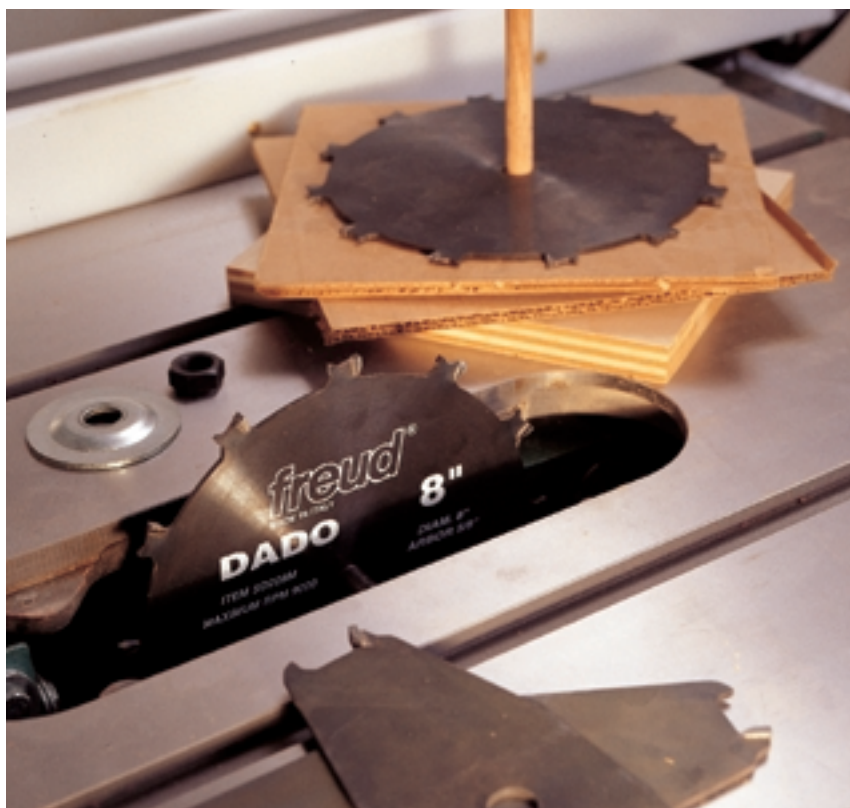


Photo by Al Parrish

ative five-degree hook angle, which actually reduces the aggressiveness of the cut for use in big cabinet saws.

So how does the SD208 perform? In solid wood, the SD208 cuts nearly as well as the more expensive sets. In plywood, you'll see a little more tearout on the underside of your cut than you would with a premium set.

To minimize tearout, take some of the money you saved and buy (or make) a couple of inexpensive zero-clearance inserts for your table saw. This will reduce — but not completely eliminate — the tearout on plywood.

Since you saved money by not buying a case with the set, the other thing to do is

to make yourself something that will store the dado stack without damaging the carbide. The plastic blister-pack the SD208 comes in simply cannot be used for this purpose. I made a holder for my stack that consists of a piece of 8" x 8" scrap with a 5/8" dowel in the center. Then I put pieces of cardboard between each blade to protect the carbide.

After more than a year of routine use, the teeth have kept a good edge and the quality of the cut has remained as high as when I took the blades out of the wrapper. For the serious home woodworker, there is not a reason in the world to spend a penny more than the cost of the SD208. **PW**

—Christopher Schwarz

## RESULTS

### FREUD SD208 DADO STACK

#### NICE FEATURES

- Clean cut in solid woods
- Decent cut in plywood
- Great quality for price

#### RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS

- Buy a zero-clearance insert
- Make a case to protect the carbide blades

## ABOUT OUR ENDURANCE TESTS

When a new tool hits the market we do our best to tell you what the benefits and pitfalls are with that tool. While this is good information, we know that the question you really want answered is, "How long will the tool last?" That's what this column is for. We regularly pick a tool we've used in our shop for at least a year that has stood up to our regular use. We make sure the tools we've tested here are virtually unchanged from the versions in the store today. So when you see a tool written up in here, it has passed the *Popular Woodworking* Endurance Test.

—David Thiel, senior editor