Combination Gauge

Function

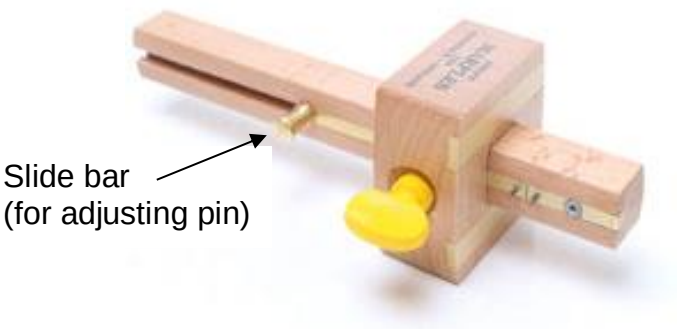
A combination gauge is used to score a single or double line parallel to the edge of a piece of timber.

Description

The marking gauge (below left) scores a single parallel line, the mortise gauge (below right) scores two parallel lines. The latter is typically used to mark out a mortise and tenon, with the two pins being adjusted to the thickness of the joint. Combination gauges (above) are commonly available incorporating both of these versions in one tool. The gauges with screw adjustment are far superior to those with a simply slide bar (below right), as they allow for greater accuracy.

Care must be taken when marking with a gauge, as the lines do score the timber and a significant amount of wood will need removing in order to get rid of them. There are versions available with a cutting knife, for the purpose of marking across the grain in order to avoid breakout.

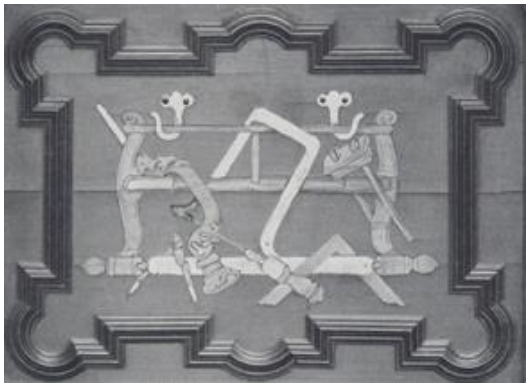
Marking Gauge



Mortise Gauge

History

The earliest record of the marking gauge being used is around 1600, by the engraver Hieronymus Wierix, with apparently no method of fixing the adjustable fence. Wedges were later used to rectify this omission and the thumbscrew added in about 1816. Early eighteenth gauges do not always have a pin, but rather the workman held a spike or knife against the end of the stem. Nicholson mentions that separate gauges must be set when marking mortise and tenon joints, but on the Continent over a century earlier, a "double gauge", as they were then called, was in common use.[1]



A marking gauge with two stems, can be seen in this inlaid panel from a Danish chest of 1679, in the Dansk Folkmuseum, Copenhagen.

Health & Safety

Care must be taken with the sharp pins, which should be maintained to a fine point.

[1] Glossary Marking Gauge (woodworkinghistory.com)