Setting Jointer Knives for Flush Cuts in Under an Hour

Setting jointer knives means setting each straight knife level with the outfeed table at top dead center, then proving it with a straightedge drag test. A practical target is about 0.004 in (0.1 mm) of protrusion on a typical 2.5-in cutterhead on a 6-in jointer, which moves a straightedge about 5 mm, according to Woodgears as checked in November 2026. The full table-to-knife setup takes about 1 hour when tables are flat, according to Woodcraft as updated in May 2026. Our how we test process checks that table-then-knife order before recommending setups.

Setting Jointer Knives: How High Should Knives Sit?

Setting jointer knives aims for knife tips about 0.004 in above the outfeed table at top dead center, according to Woodgears as checked in November 2026.

"If the outfeed table is higher than or even with the knives, you'll get a convex edge," wrote Scott Post on WoodCentral as accessed in November 2026. WoodCentral as accessed in November 2026 puts one 6-in jointer about 0.006 in low and a newer 8-in jointer only about 0.002 in low. Treat 0.002 in below the knives as a starting point, then joint two boards and read the gaps, according to WoodCentral as accessed in November 2026.

Setting Jointer Knives: Jack Screws or Spring Heads?

Setting jointer knives differs by head because jack screws lift blades and springs push blades up, according to Woodgears as checked in November 2026.

Jack-screw heads use screws behind each blade to raise it, while spring heads rely on small springs under each blade, according to Woodgears as checked in November 2026. Shops tuning a table saw tenon jig will recognize the slot-cleaning habit. Woodgears as checked in November 2026 cleans each slot so dust will not affect alignment, then sets height beside each jack screw. Spring heads need their factory jig pressed firmly while outer screws are snugged, according to Woodgears as checked in November 2026.

Setting Jointer Knives: What Order Prevents Tapered Edges?

Setting jointer knives follows table flatness and parallelism, then takes about 1 hour total, according to Woodcraft as updated in May 2026.

Shimming feels familiar if you maintain a sliding table on a saw.

1. Disconnect power and remove the fence and guard, as Grizzly Support describes as accessed in November 2026.
2. Check tables for flatness and parallelism, then set the outfeed table level with the knives at top dead center, according to Woodcraft as updated in May 2026.
3. Prove height with a wood stick about 1/2 by 1-1/4 by 18 in, with about 2 in over the cutterhead, according to Woodcraft as updated in May 2026.
4. Snug the outer locking screws first, recheck each knife with the straightedge, then tighten all screws evenly, according to Woodcraft as updated in May 2026.

Setting Jointer Knives: How Do You Prove the Cut?

Setting jointer knives is proved when a straightedge drags about 5 mm without lifting, according to Woodgears as checked in November 2026.

Woodgears as checked in November 2026 equates that 5 mm carry to about 0.004 in, with 0.20 in of carry matching 0.0040 in.

Board symptom | Outfeed meaning | Correction

Gaps at board ends | Outfeed too high (WoodCentral, Nov 2026) | Lower outfeed, retest two boards
Gap in board middle | Outfeed too low (WoodCentral, Nov 2026) | Raise outfeed slightly, retest
Straightedge carries about 5 mm | About 0.004 in protrusion (Woodgears, Nov 2026) | Keep setting, check all knives

Grizzly Support as accessed in November 2026 seats its Jointer Pal on the outfeed table at top dead center before aligning each knife.

Setting Jointer Knives FAQ

How high should setting jointer knives leave knife tips over the outfeed table?

Setting jointer knives should leave tips about 0.004 in above the outfeed table, proved by about 5 mm of carry, according to Woodgears as checked in November 2026.

Why does setting jointer knives still leave a convex edge on boards?

Setting jointer knives leaves convex edges when the outfeed table is too high, so joint two boards and lower it until end gaps close, according to WoodCentral as accessed in November 2026.

How long does setting jointer knives take on a 6-in jointer?

Setting jointer knives takes about 1 hour once tables are flat, including the stick test with about 2 in over the cutterhead, according to Woodcraft as updated in May 2026.