

Plunge saws seem to be taking over the world, and here's another contender for best buy from the Bosch stable. How well does it perform, especially when compared with the Festool model? Read on...

Bosch GKT 55 GCE plunge saw



Bosch enters the plunge saw arena with a model that looks very similar to the superb Mafell saw, and indeed it uses an identical rail system, sitting on a thin milled upstand on the rail rather than a pressed wide extrusion. The aluminium baseplate has two plastic wear strip inserts that are used to adjust the fit to the rail and allow free movement as well as ensuring a parallel cut. These are adjusted with the knobs on the upper surface of the baseplate. Alongside is a full-length insert that can be slid out to allow the saw to fit on other extruded-type rails such as the Festool version.

The rail allows the saw to move freely along the surface. The underside has full-length round rubber inserts to grip the work surface, compressing and bonding to it as you push the saw through the work. They hold securely without the need for cramps, even when cutting mdf where slipping can often occur.

The right blade

The saw can also work other materials. When cutting aluminium-faced sheets, plastic composites and laminates, having stepless speed control to gain the best cut to suit the material is a great advantage, along with the 48-tooth Freud blade. This resin-filled blade with its heat-reduction slots is ideally suited for crosscutting timber and working sheet stock derivatives. Putting that to the test on some veneered ply, the resulting cuts were exceptionally clean with no grain tear-out.

The saw was also used to cut a water-bar groove in an external

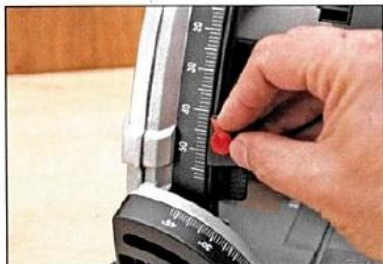
door. As the rails can be bought in various lengths and connected using the flat connector plate, it's very easy to lay the rail tight to the edge of the door, tilt the saw by a couple of degrees and run it up the door on both edges. This gives both a closing and a hinge clearance bevel in a matter of a minute or so.

Simple adjustments

The saw tilts to 45° in its normal tilt setting, but this can be overridden by an additional 2° if you need to gain that bit more; there's also a negative 1° undercut. Both these functions are set using the small buttons on the baseplate protractor scales.

To set the cutting depth on the saw, a sliding adjuster is positioned against the scale. A rotating cursor allows for the depth of the rail so you can set it accurately either on or off the rail – useful for through plunge cuts and decorative scoring features.

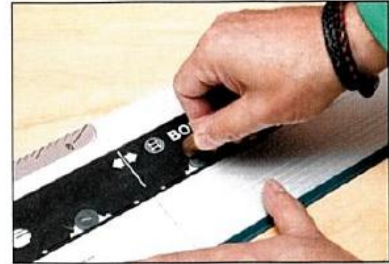
The connector plate is better than any seen on other rails. Its wide, flat profile keeps the rails aligned very well when connected.



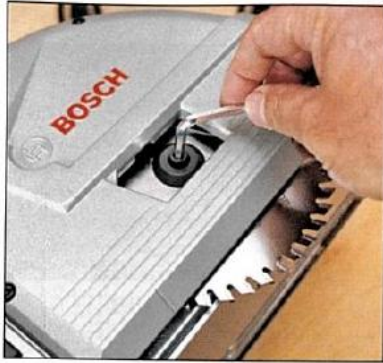
Plunge depths are set on this scale. The cursor rotates to include rail thickness if required



The base can be adjusted to fit the rail perfectly using the dials on the top



The connector plate holds can be tightened with a coin, and can stay on board when not needed

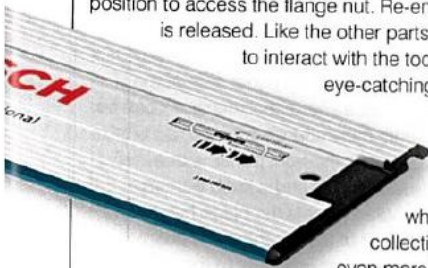


The locking pin sets the blade at the correct position to gain access to the blade retaining flange

It also stores on board without obstructing the saw in use, and you don't need to carry a screwdriver to set it, just a coin.

Blade changes and dust control

It's also very easy to change blades. A lever on top of the handle is lifted and the blade plunged, locking the blade at the correct position to access the flange nut. Re-engage the lever and the lock is released. Like the other parts where the end user needs to interact with the tool, the lever is picked out in eye-catching red.



This saw certainly delivers some dust when it's not hooked up to the shop dust extraction system, but when it is connected dust collection is excellent. To aid this even more there's a small clear sliding window at the front of the saw that drops down to the work to help gain a better vacuum seal.

Summing up

If there is a negative with this Bosch saw, it's the protrusion of the dust outlet. Festool recently redesigned its own model to allow it to sit flush and trim against an adjacent surface, but the Bosch isn't able to do this because of its design.

Aside from this, though, the Bosch is certainly a very user-friendly saw, easy to get to grips with and a great all-round performer. The Bosch rail system is where it really hits the mark, especially when connecting two rails together or using them without cramps. **AK**

SPECIFICATION

MOTOR	1400W	
BLADE DIAMETER	165mm	
NO-LOAD SPEED	3600-6250rpm	
MAX CUTTING CAPACITY	at 90°	57mm
	at 45°	42mm
BEVEL RANGE	-1° to 47°	
WEIGHT	4.7kg	
ACCESSORIES One 1.6m rail, L-BOXX storage case		

VERDICT

This saw is as good a plunge saw as the Festool, and shares similar high-quality attributes.

- PROS**
- Smooth plunge
 - Good dust control
 - Multi-fit baseplate
 - Excellent rail connectors

- CONS**
- Dust port protrusion prevents flat-to-surface cuts

VALUE FOR MONEY

PERFORMANCE

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Bosch
- 01895 838743
- www.boschpowertools.co.uk



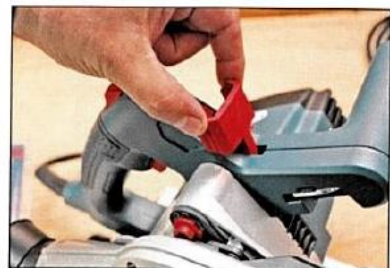
Although ideal for converting sheets, it's perfect for door fitting as well



You can override the standard bevel settings with the small buttons on the protractor scales



The saw operates smoothly on repeat miter cuts using the bevel setter



Blade changing is very easy; lifting this lever engages a locking pin