

Mattress Slats That Stay Put by Terry Landry

I first saw this method on an antique bed about 15 years ago and have used this on most of the beds (there have been many) that I've built since then. We've all seen the beds that have a wood ledge attached at the bottom edge of the side rails. The mattress is supported by slats which rest on those ledges. That system does a fine job of supporting the mattress but does nothing for the structural integrity of the bed itself.

With the ends of the slats dovetailed into the ledges, two things are accomplished. The slats don't move around as your trying to maneuver the mattress into place and the slats actually hold the side rails together, preventing them from ever bowing outward. I recently completed a set of twin beds and in the photo below you can see the slats dovetailed into the ledge on the side rails.



In the process of cutting the dovetails on the ends of the slats and the sockets into which they fit, there is one very important consideration, I want any slat to fit in any location on either bed. In order to ensure that the slats are interchangeable I used a template to route the sockets into the ledges.



The router template (left) and the template clamped to the ledge (right). The ledge has not yet been attached to the side rail. The dovetails are cut on the table saw using the miter gauge with a stop to locate each slat in proper relation to the blade.

