

7 GREAT UPGRADES TO MAXIMIZE

Band Saw Performance

Turn your band saw into the precision cutting tool you've always wanted.

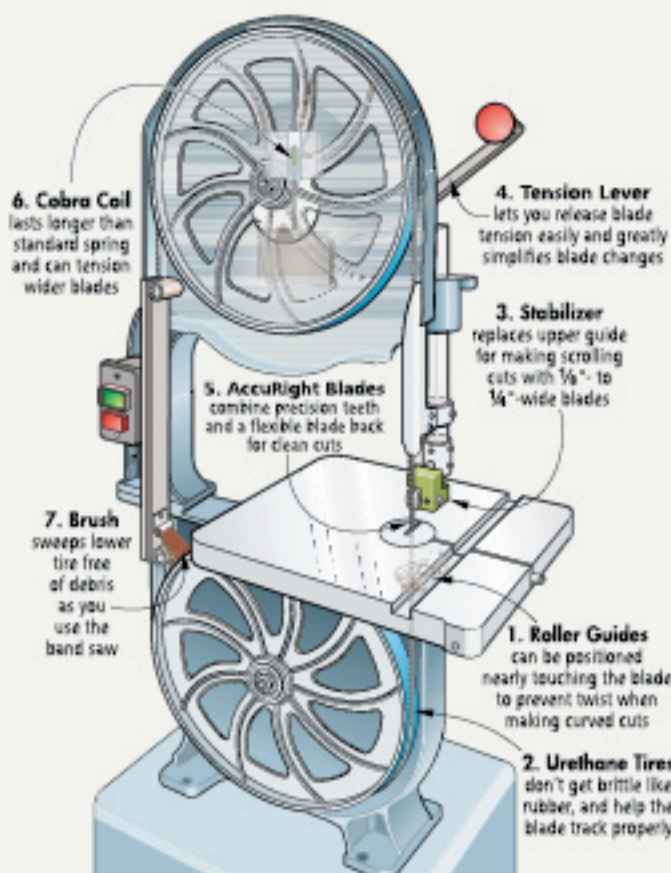
For more than 15 years now, Steve Curtis, *Workbench* craftsman, has used the same band saw to build many of our projects.

This saw has always been very reliable, but recently it became increasingly difficult to make accurate cuts. Not only that, the blade ten-

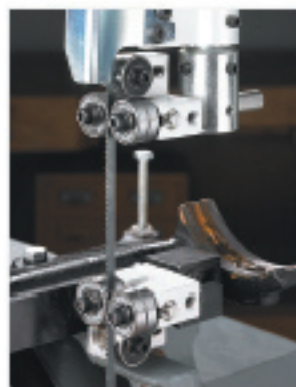
sioning and tracking adjustments just didn't work as well as they used to.

Being an experienced band saw user, though, Steve knew his saw had life in it yet. To revive his saw, he installed the seven accessories shown at right and got it running like new again.

Of course, these accessories aren't just for old saws. They'll also boost the performance of a brand new band saw.



These seven accessories will breathe new life into an old band saw or improve the performance of a new saw right out of the box. Sources for all accessories are listed on page 92.



1. Install Roller Guides

To produce an accurate cut, the guides on a band saw are designed to keep the blade from twisting. Some do that better than others.

Take these roller bearings from Carter Products, for instance. The round bearings can be set much closer to the side of the blade than the

standard guide blocks on many saws. This limits blade twist, especially when cutting a tight curve, producing a much more accurate cut.

Installing upper and lower roller bearings (sold as a kit for \$150) takes only minutes. They just bolt on in place of the existing guides.

2. Change Tires

On a properly tuned band saw, the blade "tracks," or rides, in the middle of the wheels. If it runs erratically, many people fiddle with the tracking adjustment but overlook the #6s on the wheels. But the fact is, the rubber tires on most saws get brittle, so it's hard to maintain the tracking adjustment.

For about \$50, you can replace the rubber tires with urethane tires from Carter Products. These tires are soft and pliable, which improves tracking. Better yet, they retain this flexibility over time.

To change tires, just pry off the old ones and slip on the new. No adhesive is required.



3. Control Scroll Cuts

Sometimes even the best guide systems fall short when making intricate scroll cuts with a narrow blade ($1/8"$ to $1/4"$).

The Stabilizer (\$75), also from Carter Products, has a grooved wheel that fully supports the back of the blade. Just replace the upper guides with the Stabilizer when scrolling.

4. Install a Tension Lever

It's common knowledge that you're supposed to detension a band saw blade after use. By removing tension, you prolong the life of the blade, wheel bearings, tires, and tension spring. Even so, most of us don't actually do it.

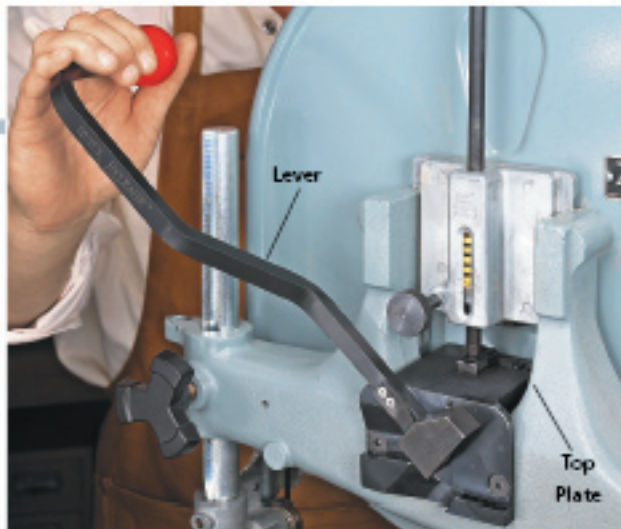
One reason is that detensioning a blade means you'll have to *retension* it when you're ready to use the saw, and that takes time and effort to crank the tension back up. You also wipe out that critical tension setting you so painstakingly set in the first place.

Carter's Quick-Release Tension Lever (\$150) takes the hassle out of the whole business. It allows you to detension the blade when you're done using the saw, and then return to the same tension setting with the flip

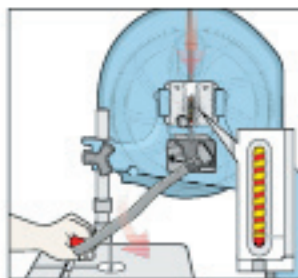
of a lever. The existing tension knob can still be used for fine-tuning.

In addition to "tension" and "detension" settings, the lever has a "mid-tension" setting that makes blade changes easier (*Illustrations, below*).

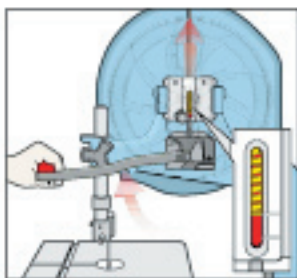
The lever bolts in place on the arm of the band saw. A top plate accepts the end of the tension rod (*Photo, right*).



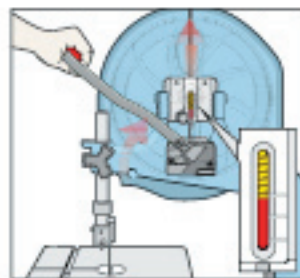
This Quick-Release Tension Lever makes it easier to detension the band saw blade when you're done using the saw.



1] The "detension" setting takes pressure off the blade when it's not in use.



2] Positioning the lever at the "mid-tension" setting is handy for adjusting blade tracking.



3] Finally, shift the lever to its "tension" setting to restore the preset tension.

5. Buy a Better Blade

Recently, we had the opportunity to try out some new band saw blades from Carter Products, called "AccuRight."

These blades have precision-milled teeth for clean cuts and a flexible back for longer blade life. We haven't used the blades long enough to confirm their longevity. But the crisp, clean cuts they deliver are outstanding.

You can get AccuRight band saw blades in widths ranging from $\frac{1}{8}$ " to 1" and in lengths from 82" to 136" for \$20 to \$30.



6. Replace Tension Spring

As a complement to its tension lever, Carter also makes this yellow "Cobra Coil" tension spring (\$19).

This spring is made of stronger steel than a standard spring. As a result, it's not as prone to "fatigue," so over

time, it will maintain its ability to hold the proper tension.

The Cobra Coil can also better tension wider blades than the spring that comes with many saws. So if you frequently use $\frac{1}{2}$ " or $\frac{3}{4}$ " blades, it's a good investment.

7. Make a Clean Sweep

It's often overlooked, but dust and debris on your band saw's lower tire can shorten its life. Not only that, but as the pitch builds up on the tire, it can affect the tracking of the blade, as well.

To prevent that, simply install this handy wheel brush (\$6) so that the bristles press against the tire. As you make a cut, the brush sweeps off the tire to keep it clean.



BAND SAW
ACCESSORIES
BUYER'S GUIDE

CARTER PRODUCTS
888-622-7837
CarterProducts.com

WW'S SUPPLY
800-645-9292
Woodworker.com

ROCKLER
800-279-4441
Rockler.com