

Good vibrations from a smooth operator

Bosch GEX34-6N Random Orbit Sander

Bosch has revamped its line of random orbit sanders for better dust collection and decreased vibration without sacrificing performance. I got my hands on their 6-inch GEX34-6N to see for myself. I put the tool through its paces, sanding a half-dozen hard maple cutting boards along with the parts for the wall shelf on page 19. Here's what I found.

The well-balanced tool tips the scales at 5.3 pounds, making it hefty but not overweight for its class. The front handle is removable to get into tighter spaces, but is helpful for guiding the tool over large surfaces or when holding the tool sideways to sand edges. Bosch also plans to introduce a 6" polishing pad, which will give the tool even more utility.

The pistol-grip handle offers a long comfortable grip with a trigger lock on the left side. The sander's variable orbit speed ranges from 5,500 to 12,000 orbits per minute. Turn the accessible speed wheel on the motor housing, and the sander moves smoothly through that range while in operation. Even at its highest speed, the unit remained relatively vibration-free, meaning extended use before that tingling sensation in your hand tells you it's break-time.

Bosch achieved this smoothness by rethinking its pad-dampening system while overhauling the pads for better dust extraction. The sander comes with a medium pad, but the company also offers hard, soft, and even extra-soft pads

for various sanding jobs. But they're proprietary, so only Bosch-branded pads are compatible. The sanding pad features an array of small holes for dust collection and hook-and-loop attachment for the paper. The pad's multi-hole design works with virtually any brand of sanding discs. Bosch-branded paper worked well, but every paper brand I tried lined up enough holes that the sander's dust collect worked efficiently.

And dust extraction is where this sander really shines. The unit includes both a microfilter dust canister and a vacuum hose adapter. The canister sits below the trigger handle and contains a replaceable ½-micron filter. Its rigid design does a better job collecting dust

Overview

- Universal multi-hole sanding pad design
- Microfilter dust canister
- Vacuum hose adapter
- Variable speed 5,500-12,000 OPM
- Removable front handle

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than bag-equipped models. When it's time to empty, simply unscrew the cap, pull the filter out of the canister, and tap both on the sides of your trash can to quickly clean them. Then, reinstall the filter and reattach the canister. Replacement filters are available from Bosch retailers.

Though, for truly superior dust collection, attach your shop-vac via the included 1½" vacuum hose adapter. Either option leaves very little sawdust on the work surface, mean-

ing fewer hard-to-remove swirls and longer paper life.

Bosch claims that the increased airflow from the multi-hole sanding pad and redesigned dust extraction leads to increased tool life. At least in my testing, the motor stayed cool even during lengthy sanding operations.

Bosch set out to improve dust collection and decrease vibration in its 6-inch sanders, and has done so with aplomb. ■

—Tester, Derek Richmond



Bosch GEX34-6N, \$249.00, Boschtools.com

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