

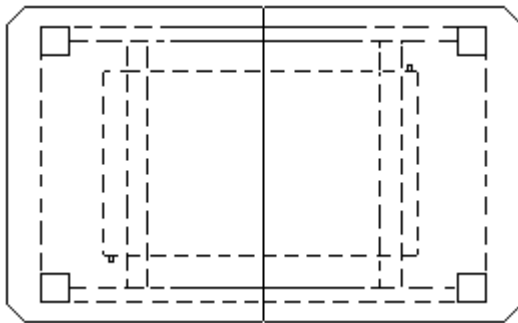
THE BIGGEST QUILTING TABLE IN YOUR HOUSE . . .

. . . is your dining-table!

Many dining-tables are extendible by separating the two halves of the top and inserting an extra leaf or leafs. If yours is, then maybe the handyperson in your life, or the one next door, could make you the proud and happy owner of a very large and comfortable quilting table.

The idea is simple . . . make a cheap imitation of the extra leaf and then cut a hole in it to accommodate your favourite sewing machine, with the machine's needle plate level with the table top.

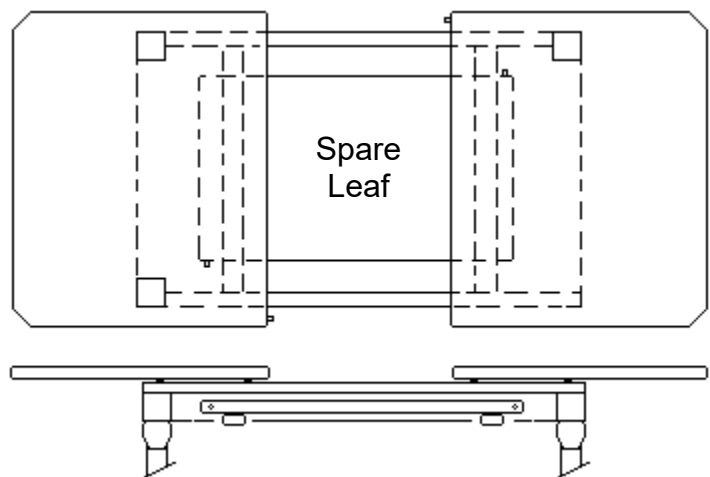
Two provisos need to be satisfied . . . firstly some way to support the machine below the level of the table top . . . and secondly, that you and the family will be happy to eat on the space left around the machine!



Our dining-table top is in two halves which, when pulled open, reveal the table sub-framework and support for two spare leafs stored under the top.

In use, a leaf, or both, and the top halves locate together with pegs in holes and are then firmly locked together with spring catches.

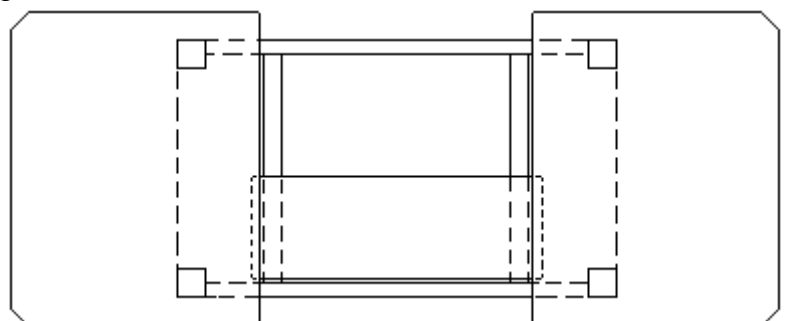
Yours may be similar and if so, you're half way there; even if perhaps you have to store spare leafs elsewhere, there will still be sub-framework under the top to allow the extension of the top and to support the inserted leaf.



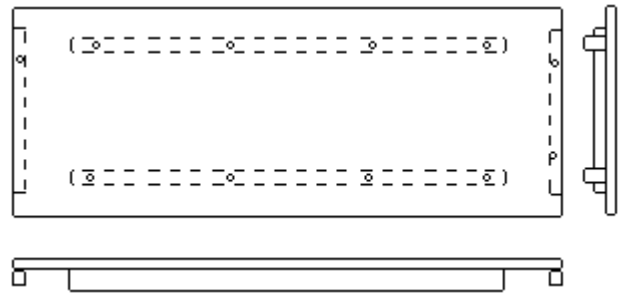
The basic idea is to use this framework to support a firm board to go under the sewing machine, and then to fit a false, modified leaf to fill the space around the machine at the table-top level.

So, how to go about the job? Open up the top – is the leaf gap big enough to accommodate the width or length of the machine? Fairly certainly, so onwards. Is there enough depth in the gap, and some framework below, so that the machine can be supported with its bed top (needle plate) level with – rather, a touch below, since later we put in some packing – the table top? If yes, we're away and if not, perhaps the support board, to be described, might be hung from the frame rather than resting on it?

Next, open the table as far as it will go and design, make and fit a firm support board to go beneath the table top, bigger all round than the machine and (preferably positively) located onto fixed elements of the table sub-frame.

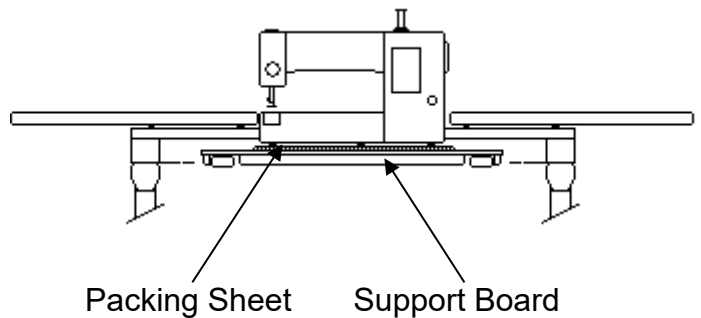


A support board made of 12 -15 mm MDF, ply or chipboard with a couple of soft-wood ribs to resist it bending would probably do the job, with locating pegs or a rib at each end to prevent it shifting left or right.



Maybe this support board needs to hang from the frame? If so, a similar structure should do, stiff and unbending and positively located. In either case, the machine's working surface – the needle plate – should be just below the table top, say by 5 -10 mm.

Then put the machine in on the support board and make a suitable non-slip and sound reducing packing sheet, so that the machine's working surface – the needle plate – is level with, or perhaps a touch (1 or 2 mm) higher, than the table top, certainly not lower.



We were lucky, in our case, that if a spare leaf was left in the storage space, its top surface was almost the perfect distance below the table top for the machines that Judith uses.

A packing sheet of 4 mm hardboard under the machine's feet, on this leaf, sufficed to position her second-best B*rn*n* exactly – that is, with the needle plate level with the table top. And a sheet of 12 mm chipboard did the same job for her big 'longer-arm' J*n*m*. (Other machines are available and, indeed, Mrs W has several others!)

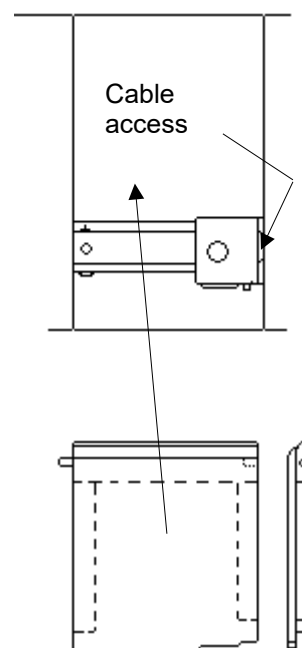
Slippage (and any 'drumming'!) is reduced if the packing sheets have non-slip sheeting on each side; Judith says the perforated rubbery stuff we used is sold as drawer liner.

Also, at this stage, you need to decide where the machine is to be sited with respect to the edge of the table and to the centre line across the table; preferably one or other end or edge of the machine should be located against either or both of the moving leaves of the table. So, close the table leafs gently to embrace (3 mm gaps at the most) the machine end-to-end or side-to-side, and to not trap the power or foot-control cables and (typically) the on-off switch which always seems to be low down on the machine.

For example, as sketched, the right-hand leaf is 2 cm away from the machine's r-h end, to allow the mains cable to be plugged in! Now we know the width of the false leaf to be made.

Our dining-table's leafs are all 3 cm thick solid oak, not ideal nor the cheapest of materials for what is to be a work table, so the false leaf pieces were made of 15 mm MDF on a soft wood frame, with the framed edge finished to 3 cm thick. The edges of the table are 'ogee' rounded, so a little effort was spent in matching the profile where the false leaf shows at these edges; a simple chamfer will probably do for many tables.

The false leaf is made in 2 pieces, one behind, one in front of the machine. Make cardboard patterns for these pieces, snuggling them up to the machine and allowing a 2 – 3 mm gap away from the machine body; this gap we later 'filled' by sticking E-section draught proofing strip to the MDF, so providing a vibration cushion between MDF and the metal/plastic of the machine body.



In cutting the patterns don't forget to allow, if necessary, for cable access and access to the on-off switch, and also to go round those odd little sticky-out bits designed to locate the soon-to-be-redundant plastic extension table! Also, a tiny chamfer all round the leaf pieces will ensure no snagging to ruin madame's magnum opus.

Carefully measure up and drill the peg holes, if any, or fit suitable locating catches to both edges of both false leaf pieces, and then locate them in the table and close the leaves around the machine and false leaf. Some packing or extra pegs and holes may be needed to keep the false leaf horizontal and lined up with the table top.

Judith doesn't use one, but we did find that a knee-operated foot-lifter arm could have been fitted by drilling a small (6 mm) hole through the table frame at the appropriate place; not ideal though, the machine may shift enough to jam the arm. Better would be, by experiment, to position the machine so that the arm projects down without going through or fouling the frame.

The final operations were to stain and varnish the false leaf so that it roughly matched the table top, (mixed teak & walnut varnish streaked onto the MDF matched the oak grain surprisingly well!) and to stick on that E-section rubber cushion (white edge in the photos) around those bits that touch the precious machine.

The photos show our table, with one leaf and the false leaf in place, which provides Mrs W with 120 cm by 90 cm (12 square feet!) of space to her left and at least 70 cm x 90 cm (another 7½ sq ft) to her right!

Now all that's needed is to persuade your family that they can eat off a dining-table with a sewing machine in the middle!!



Ray Wilson 2016