TOOTH SET PROBLEMS

A PRACTICAL TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

How to recognize incorrect tooth set, what it can do to your cut, and what to check before you keep sawing.

What is tooth set?
Tooth set is the slight alternating bend of the blade teeth to the left and right. That set creates a kerf wider than the blade body so the blade can move through the wood without excessive rubbing or binding.

Common Signs of a Tooth Set Problem

Wavy or uneven cuts	The blade drifts up and down instead of holding a straight line through the log.
Blade pulling to one side	A difference in set from one side of the blade to the other can cause the blade to steer.
Rough or ridged lumber	Inconsistent tooth set can leave an uneven surface or visible saw marks.
Binding in the cut	Too little set may not create enough clearance for the blade body.
Excess heat	Insufficient clearance can increase friction and heat in the blade.
Inconsistent cutting after sharpening	If the edge is sharp but the cut quality is still poor, tooth set may need to be checked.

What Can Cause Incorrect Tooth Set?

- Wear from repeated use and multiple sharpening cycles.
- Uneven setting from side to side.
- Damaged or bent teeth.
- Improper setup or calibration of the setting equipment.
- Running a blade after it has become dull, overheated, or stressed.
- Blade damage from hitting metal, dirt, rocks, or other debris.

What to Check Before You Keep Cutting

1. Look at the cut pattern

If the blade consistently drifts the same direction, leaves waves, or binds, note what the cut is doing before changing multiple adjustments.

2. Inspect the teeth

Look for missing, chipped, bent, or obviously uneven teeth. Damage in one area can affect how the blade tracks through the wood.

3. Compare left and right tooth set

The set should be consistent from side to side. A blade with one side set differently can pull or wander.

4. Check the mill setup too

Blade tension, guides, tracking, feed speed, and alignment can create symptoms that look like tooth-set problems.

5. Stop if the blade is binding or overheating

Continuing to run a blade that is rubbing heavily or heating up can shorten blade life and increase the chance of cracking or failure.

Important: There Is No One Set Number for Every Blade

Correct tooth set depends on the blade design, tooth profile, blade width and thickness, the wood being cut, and the sawmill manufacturer's recommendations. Avoid using a generic setting just because it worked for another blade. When in doubt, start with the blade manufacturer's specification.

When It Is Time to Have the Blade Reset

- The blade is sharp but still wanders or pulls.
- Cut quality changes even after checking tension, tracking, guides, and feed speed.
- The tooth set is visibly inconsistent.
- The blade has been sharpened several times and no longer cuts like it should.
- You want the blade sharpened and set together so both are checked before it returns to the mill.

NEED PROFESSIONAL SHARPENING & SETTING?

Cutting Edge Sawmill sharpens, sets, and inspects bandsaw sawmill blades. Local drop-off and mail-in service are available.

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This guide is for general troubleshooting. Always follow your sawmill and blade manufacturer's setup, tension, and tooth-set specifications.