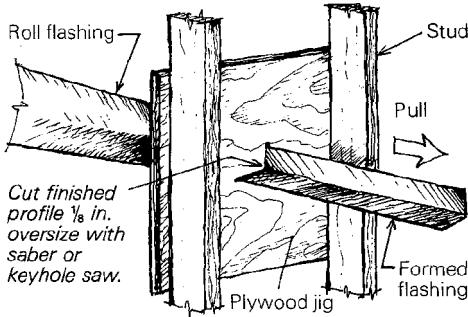


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details, sketches and negatives with photographs to Tips and Techniques, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Extruded flashing

Bending your own flashing on site usually produces wavy, crinkled pieces of sheet metal that make you wish you'd had them made up at a



shop. Here's a fixture you can make on the site that produces near-perfect results.

Using a jigsaw or keyhole saw, cut the full-size cross section of the flashing you want to make into a plywood scrap that's at least 18 in. across. Nail the plywood across the studs of an unsheathed partition at chest level. Then cut a piece of roll flashing to length and insert it into one side of the cut in the plywood. With one person pulling and another supporting and feeding the flashing, this fixture makes the job easy.

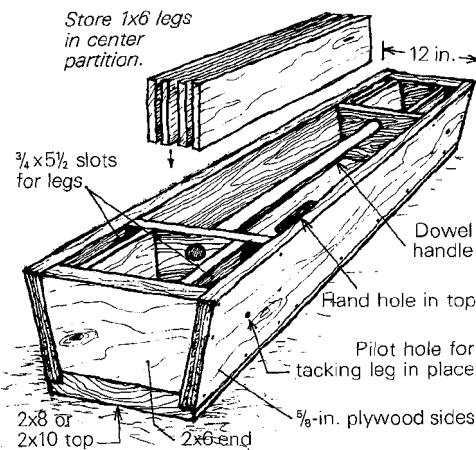
—Mick Cappelletti, Newcastle, Maine

Knock-down horses

I like the convenience of knock-down sawhorses. The commercial ones are generally too flimsy, and their small legs sink into the mud after you've got them loaded. After a lot of experimentation, here's how I build a strong, compact, stackable knock-down sawhorse that doubles as a toolbox (drawing, below).

I use a 2x8 or 2x10 for the top. This gives me a bench surface that I can work on or set my miter box on. I cut a hand hole in the top for moving the horse around when it's set up.

The end caps, central dividers and interior leg supports are 2x6s. The dividers hold a dowel that serves as a handle when the horse is disassembled and inverted. The compartment that is formed by these dividers should be the



length of the legs so that they can be stored there, along with a few tools that you want to bring along.

The slots for the legs are $\frac{3}{4}$ in. by $5\frac{1}{2}$ in., a snug fit for the 1x6 legs. I drill a pilot hole through the legs and the $\frac{5}{8}$ -in. plywood sides so that I can use a 16d nail to hold the legs to the body of the sawhorse when it's in use.

I cut different-length legs for different tasks, and I build different-width horses as well so that they stack easily. Aside from being slightly heavy, there's only one drawback to these sawhorses—you can't leave them on the job.

—George M. Payne, Olney, Md.

Stabilizing plumb bobs

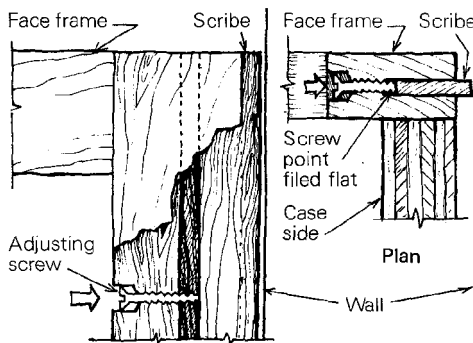
As a construction millwright, I frequently need to establish very accurate plumb lines for machinery alignment in places where a transit is impractical. I rely on my 24-oz. brass plumb bob. When it's not necessary for the end of the bob to be visible, I immerse it in a bucket of oil to reduce motion from vibration and wind.

To avoid the problem of winding and unwinding line, I replaced the string in an empty chalk box with 50-lb. test braided nylon fishing line and tied the bob to the end; it makes a convenient reel.

—Dave Walter, Rossville, Ill.

Cabinet wall scribe

If you don't mind a slight shadow line where the face frame of your cabinet butts a wall, try this system instead of the traditional method of



scribing a pencil line on the face frame and cutting it to fit the contour of the wall.

I use a permanent wooden scribe housed in a slot in the outside edge of the face frame to fit my cabinets to the wall. Since this wooden scribe is located in the center of the frame, it produces a slight indentation (or reveal) from the face of the frame. In plan, this system looks like half a spline joint. I cut the slot the full height of the frame $\frac{3}{4}$ in. deep and $\frac{1}{8}$ in. wide. I cut the wooden scribe the same dimensions for a friction fit. Screw holes and screws are then added from the inside edge of the frame on center with the slot.

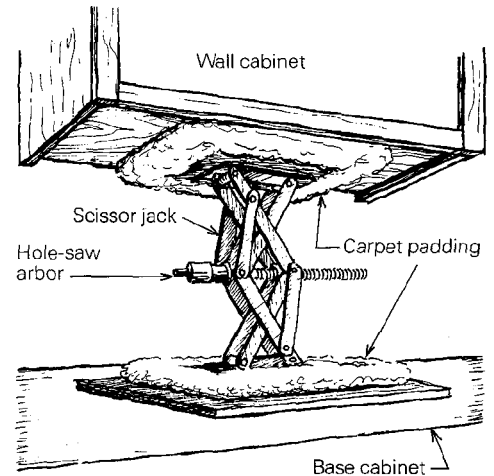
To use the scribe, place the cabinet $\frac{1}{4}$ in. from its wall, and drive the screws. This forces the scribe out of its slot and against the wall. Grind the ends of the screws flat so they don't enter the scribe.

This system copes with out-of-square conditions, and small contours as well because of the flexibility of the scribe. Spring steel clips can be used instead of screws to hold the scribe to the wall.

—Michael Lynch, San Francisco, Calif.

Cabinet jack

Installing heavy kitchen wall cabinets by yourself can be a dangerous juggling act. With the aid of a scissor jack, it's easy to keep them



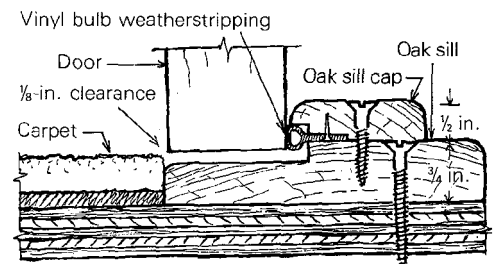
plumb and level long enough to install them. First set the base cabinets. This leaves you with a working surface. Next, lay out level and plumb lines on the wall for the upper cabinets. Place a piece of scrap plywood on the top of the base cabinet and set the jack on the plywood. Then predrill the uppers for the stud layout, set the cabinet on the jack and crank it into position.

To protect the casework from scratches, attach a 12-in. square piece of $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. plywood to the bottom and top of the jack with countersunk flathead screws, and cover the plywood with carpet scraps. I fitted my jack sleeve with an old holesaw arbor so that I can raise and lower the jack with my electric drill.

—Ron DeLaurentis, North Aurora, Ill.

Sill seal

I came up with a solution for weatherstripping a door bottom where a thick rug prevents a spring-loaded bottom sweep from retracting. I used a length of vinyl bulb weatherstripping, intended for a jamb installation, between a two-piece oak sill that I made up in the shop. I tacked the vinyl in place with brads, and then fastened

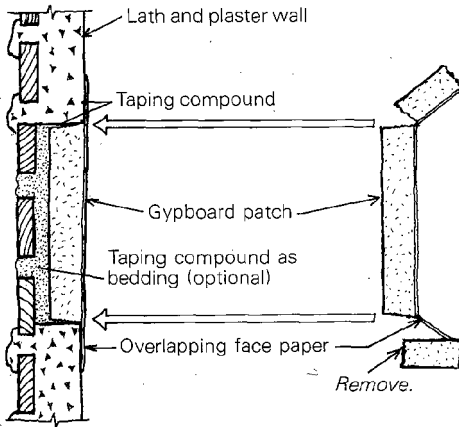


the cap piece to the oak sill with brass screws. This way the vinyl can be easily replaced when necessary. However, there's no foot traffic on the vinyl itself, and it's above the grit line, so it should last quite a while.

—Felix Marti, Monroe, Ore.

Patching plaster

A simple and effective way of patching small holes in plaster or drywall is done without tape. First, cut out the hole until you've got a rect-



angle. Then cut a piece of drywall of any thickness to the size of the hole plus 2 in. in both the length and width. On the back of this patch, score and break the board to the exact dimensions of the hole, and peel away the paper and gypsum from the front layer of paper. You will be left with a solid piece of drywall the size of your hole, with 1-in. strips of face paper on all four sides.

Now apply taping compound to the edges of the hole, and press your patch into the hole until it's flush with the rest of the wall. The face paper acts like tape, and you finish like any other drywall joint. If you cut your patch for a tight fit, you can use this technique on the ceiling.

—Geoff Parkinson, Vancouver, B.C.

Preventing splits

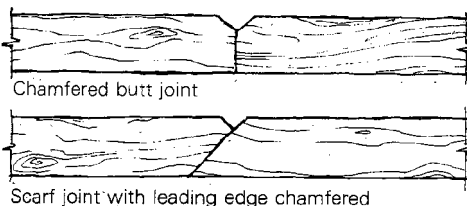
Most people are vaguely aware that the points of nails are diamond-shaped. However, few people know that split boards can often be eliminated by proper orientation of a nail before driving it. This trick, shown to me by an elderly shipwright, has saved me a lot of pre-drilling and split moldings.

When driving a nail close to the end of a board, keep the rows of marks left by the nail-forming machine perpendicular to the grain of the wood. This causes the nail point to cut the wood fibers rather than wedging them apart, thus preventing a split from developing. It's easy to feel these ridges between your thumb and forefinger and then roll the nail to its proper orientation. This can be done so rapidly that you won't lose any time, even when framing. Brads and small finish nails inserted in a brad driver can be aligned by eye, since the diamond shape of their points is even more pronounced than on a box or common nail.

—Steve Harman, Okanogan, Wash.

Improved V-groove

I've come up with a scarf joint for the board ends of paneling that gives a V-groove appearance on the end grain (drawing, below). It has several advantages over a chamfered butt



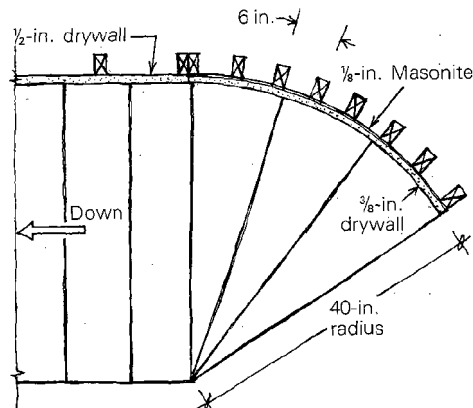
joint. I make an ordinary scarf joint and chamfer the leading edge. This saves the step of the second chamfer, and it conceals the gap between the boards.

—Ezra Auerbach, Lasqueti Island, B.C.

Bending drywall

I recently built a curved wall in a stairway of a new home. The wall and top three treads needed to turn to avoid a chimney and to make a smooth approach to the top of the stairs from any of the upstairs rooms.

The curve was a 4-ft. section of a 40-in. radius, framed with 2x4s, 6-in. o.c., too tight a curve to bend 1/2-in. gypboard without first making an elaborate bending jig. Quarter-inch drywall seemed too fragile for such a heavy traffic area, so I chose 3/8-in. board with an added advantage. I first applied 1/8-in. untempered Masonite to the framing, with widely spaced drywall screws. This took up any irregularities in



the framing and made a very smooth curve for applying the 3/8-in. drywall. To facilitate bending the gypsum, I laid it face up on a dew-drenched lawn for about 20 minutes. I then screwed it to the studs and Masonite, starting along one edge, squaring it to the wall and ceiling. Putting pressure against the sheet well ahead of where you are screwing, and working from the center toward each end of successive studs reduced the chances of buckling. The result was a smooth, very firm, puncture-proof wall.

—Craig Schoppe, Milbridge, Maine

Carpenter's oil

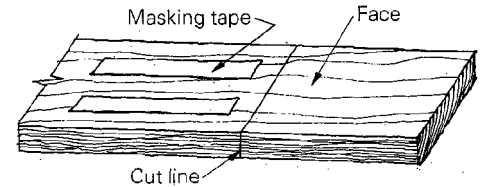
While bending one 8d nail after another trying to install an oak window skirt without predrilling, I was mercifully shown a valuable trick by an experienced carpenter. He took one of the nails, rubbed it quickly through his hair and then drove it through the oak with no bending at all. He assured me that even bald carpenters can strike oil by using the side of their nose.

—Charles E. Lord III, South Portland, Maine

Splinter-free crosscutting

Occasionally in the course of building a home, and sometimes in the shop, it is easiest to use a skill saw to crosscut a piece of trim. With the aid of a saw protractor or some similar device this can be done quickly and accurately.

Usually the face of the work is placed down and the saw base passed over the back of the piece, making a clean cut on the show side. But if it's impossible to cut from the backside, other



measures must be taken to avoid damaging the face of the work.

My commercial-duty Rockwell saw has an aluminum foot that leaves black marks on the wood. I've tried polishing the foot with car wax, covering it with duct tape, and using strips of electrical tape to no avail. The best solution so far has been to place two strips of masking tape on the wood, as shown above. Score the cut line with a utility knife to prevent tear-out (this also works with painted surfaces). Cut on the waste side of the line and get as close as possible without touching it. Remember to remove the tape right after cutting to prevent the adhesive from bonding to the wood.

—Alan Miller, Brush, Colo.

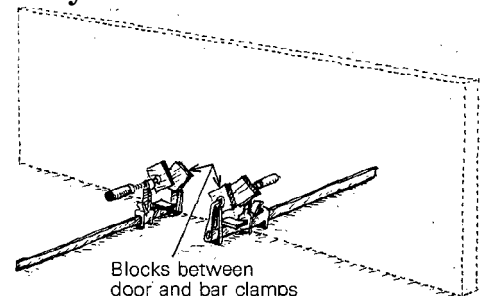
Fixed protractor

I use a saw protractor for many of my cut-off needs. It saves the step of drawing the cutting line on the material, and is highly accurate. I find it particularly useful for cutting bevels such as scarf-jointing 2x fascia boards.

Because most of my cuts are square, I have altered my protractor for long periods of use at 90°. To do this I set the protractor with a reliable framing square, tighten the wing-nut clamp, and drill a pilot hole through the calibrated arc into the arm. A self-tapping sheet-metal screw holds it at a perfect 90°, ready for all square cut-off needs. The screw is easily removable for angle cutting.

—Ralph Dornick, Altoona, Pa.

Easy door buck



Building a door buck (FHB #8, p.35) is a good idea if you find yourself dealing with a house full of door hanging from scratch, but for a quick setup, the answer is right in your toolbox. I use two bar clamps, one on each side of the door. Small blocks between the clamp and the door face will prevent marring.

—Paul A. Jones, Pacifica, Calif.

Securing electrical tape

Whenever you are using electrical (PVC) tape to wrap wire connections, rope ends or repaired power cords, just swab the end of the tape with PVC pipe cement. This will keep it from coming unstuck and unwinding.

—Bill Hart, Templeton, Calif.