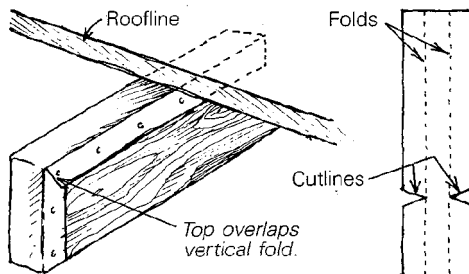


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details, sketches or photographs with negatives to Tips and Techniques, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Copper caps for rafters

The ends of exposed rafters that extend beyond the roofline will decay if they're left unprotected. Paint or stain works for a while, but both have to be renewed from time to time.

Copper end caps are a good solution to this problem. I've used them on several jobs, and



they are easy to install. They cost about the same as gutters, and look better with each passing year. I used 16-oz. copper sheeting, cut to the pattern shown and nailed in place with brass ringshank nails to avoid any galvanic action.

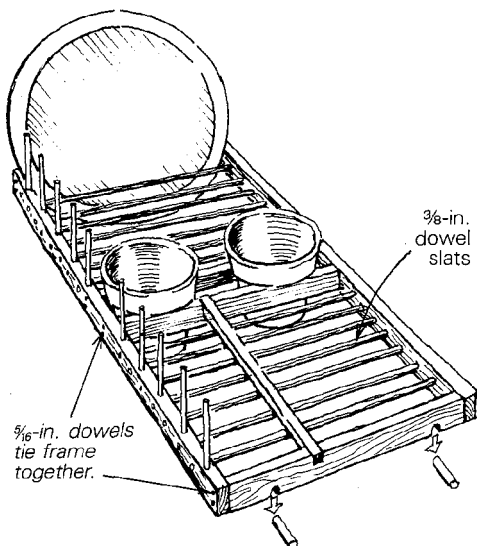
—Angelo Margolis, Sebastopol, Calif.

Dowel dishrack

Our kitchen counter had about 6 sq. ft. of usable space on one side of the sink, and virtually none on the other side because of a bulky dish drainer. I reclaimed the drainer spot by building the European-style over-the-sink dishrack shown in the drawing below.

I made the rectangular frame with 2-in. by 3/4-in. mahogany, and doweled the parts together with 5/16-in. maple dowels. The two cross-pieces in the center of the frame cradle the silverware containers—two terracotta flower pots. Scrounged from the garden and scoured back to their original brownish red, the pots look good, hold a generous helping of flatware and come with their own drain holes.

The cross slats are 3/8-in. maple dowels, about



1 1/2 in. on center. The spacing of the slats and the width of the frame were determined by the diameter and depth of our dishware. At one end, I let a curb into the frame perpendicular to the dowel slats and resting on top of them, to keep small plates from falling through.

Vertical dowels about 6 in. long across the front of the rack are for glasses and mugs. The entire rack rests on four dowels drilled into the ends of the cabinets above the counters on either side of the sink.

I tapered the dowel ends slightly with 80-grit sandpaper to ease assembly. Then I tapped the entire rack together without any glue, reasoning that the constant exposure to water would swell the unfinished wood and hold the parts snugly together.

—Charlie Woodhouse, Kensington, Calif.

Airflow gaskets

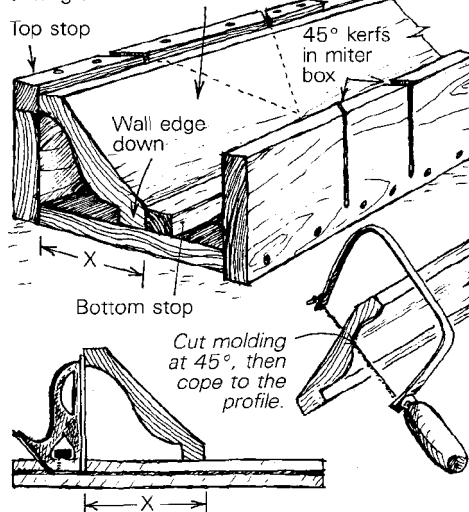
Last summer I put gaskets around our electrical outlets to cut down on air infiltration, and I recycled our egg cartons at the same time. I bought the first gasket, then I used it as a pattern to mark the outline on the lids of our plastic-foam egg cartons for all the rest. The recycled material makes a good seal.

—Jackson Clark, Lawrence, Kans.

Crown molding, another way

For cutting crown molding I use a fixture made from an ordinary wooden miter box and two 1x stops. First, find the horizontal dimension (X in the drawing below) of the crown molding,

Crown molding in position for cutting an inside miter



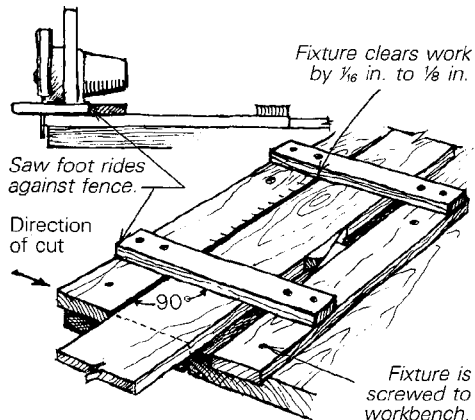
then screw the bottom stop in place so that its rear edge is that distance from the back of the miter box, as shown. Cut the other 1x wide enough to support the upper edge of the molding. Screw it in place, making sure that the screws are out of the saw's path.

Cut outside or inside mitered corners by setting the molding against the stops, wall edge down. Unlike Harry Stangel (*FHB* #10, p. 12), I think it's more accurate to cope inside corners to the molding's actual profile than to a penciled line, so after I cut the inside 45°, I cope that profile as shown in the drawing.

—Peter Sacks, Somerville, Mass.

Cutoff fixture

I made this bench-mounted cutoff fixture for a circular saw out of scrap materials in less than an hour, and it saved me the price of a saw protractor and a trip into town. It's simply a pair of parallel rails, held in place by two crossbars. One of the crossbars doubles as a fence to guide



the saw's foot. I made the one shown in the drawing for 90° cuts, but it's easy to nail the fence at some other angle.

The distance between the rails depends on the width of the stock being cut. I positioned them so I could use two wedges to keep the stock from slipping, giving me a free hand to catch the cutoffs. I made reference marks on the near rail so that I could mark the length needed for the next cut without using a tape measure each time.

—G.R. Livingston, Firestone, Colo.

Form-fit vapor barrier

When I install a plastic vapor barrier over a wall or ceiling, I ignore the electric outlet boxes until I'm finished hanging the sheet. Then, rather than cut the plastic on the outside of the box, I make the cut 1/4 in. to 1/2 in. inside the perimeter of the box. I stretch the plastic around the outside, which gives me a nice tight fit that cuts down on cold-air infiltration.

This trick works for other utilities that poke through the vapor barrier, such as ductwork or plumbing. A bead of caulk or a duct-tape collar can make the seal even tighter.

—Susan Caust Farrell, Searsport, Maine

Built-up roof blade

I've installed a lot of skylights in tar and gravel roofs. As a consequence, I've gummed up plenty of circular-saw blades trying to burn through the built-up roofing. Since this kind of cutting ruins the blades anyway, I decided to modify a blade so that it would work better.

I selected my dullest combination blade, and set the teeth way out—1/4 in. or more. This radical set allowed the blade to clear itself with each revolution, and worked even better than I'd hoped.

—Bob Whiteley, San Rafael, Calif.

Caulking in tight spots

A piece of plastic sheathing from a 12 or 14-ga. wiring cable (such as Romex) makes an effective caulking-tube extension when the tube's nozzle doesn't have the flex to reach the spot in need.

—Malcolm McDaniel, Berkeley, Calif.