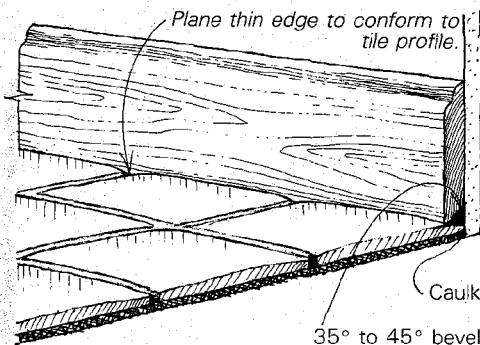


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Baseboards for tile floors

The cost of tile cove base is surprisingly high—about \$3 to \$4 per running foot. On the other hand, scribing a wooden baseboard to a tile floor is very time-consuming. The method I use to install wooden baseboards gives me a water-resistant joint where tile and wood meet, and a fit that looks painstakingly scribed, but isn't.

First, I bevel the back of my baseboard material as shown in the drawing below. The thin



edge on the front of the baseboard will usually conform to a well-laid tile floor with a few taps of a hammer—no scribing is necessary. Be sure to use a piece of scrap wood to cushion the hammer blows.

After dry-fitting, I tack the baseboards in place. As I remove them one at a time, I carefully lay a bead of good caulking compound in the void behind the bevel. I like Geocel caulk (Box 398, Elkhart, Ind. 46515). Any caulk that oozes out can be cut away after it sets up. Pre-finishing the baseboards saves time, and usually gives better results than trying to paint or varnish them in place.

—M. Felix Marti, Monroe, Ore.

Cleaning paintbrushes

I've been a builder for many years, involved in all phases of construction, and at some point in nearly every job I've had to get out the paintbrushes. I admit I'm no artist, but I have learned a few techniques along the way.

When I purchase a new brush, I get a pure-bristle one with an unpainted handle—there's no store-bought finish to peel off the raw wood, and the oil from my hands preserves the handle. I usually put a small nail above the ferrule and bend it down toward the bristles at a 90° angle. This allows the brush to hang in a can of paint or thinner without touching bottom, so the bristles won't warp.

When it comes time to paint, I take a 16d nail and punch a ring of holes in the deep part of the groove at the top of the opened paint can. These holes allow the paint that accumulates when you wipe the excess from your brush to drip back into the can, rather than overflow and run down the outside. When the lid is replaced, the holes are sealed inside.

Whenever I use a brush with oil-base paint, I clean it with paint thinner and liquid laundry

soap. First, I pour about ½ cup of thinner into a pan, and I work the brush back and forth in it to remove most of the paint. Next, I pour this first batch of thinner into a storage container (a 3-lb. coffee can is fine). Then I rinse the brush in ¼ cup of thinner. I work the bristles with my fingers to get out as much paint as possible, and return the thinner to storage. In the container, the paint solids will settle to the bottom, allowing the clear liquid on top to be poured off and used again.

At this stage in the brush cleaning, I pour about a tablespoon of laundry soap into a pail, wipe it up with the brush and work it into the bristles with my fingers. Next, I fill the pail with water and rinse out both brush and bucket. I repeat this soap sequence one more time, and then I shake out the brush thoroughly and return it to its jacket to make sure that its bristles remain straight. Using this cleaning method, I've been able to use the same brush to apply both paint and lacquer, with no paint residue spoiling the clear finish.

—Chris Thyrring, Halcyon, Calif.

Scratch scriber

Don't throw out deformed Phillips-head screwdriver bits. Grind them to a sharp point, and use them in a pencil scriber for scratch scribing.

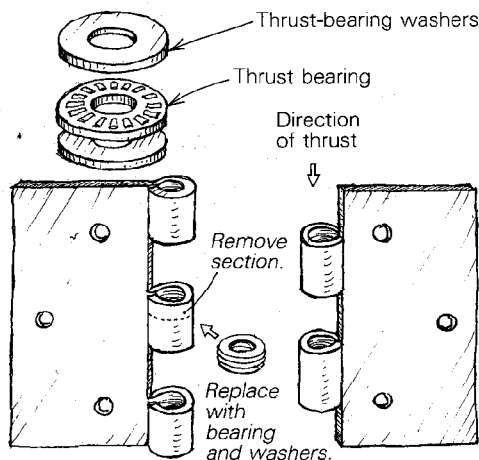
—Tom Law, Davidsonville, Md.

Frictionless hinge

For me, the most frustrating part of making and installing a heavy, handmade entry door has been finding the right hinges. Even with a good set of heavy butts, the hinge barrels begin to grind down after a while. Soon, the door sags so much that the bottom rail drags on the threshold. A solution to this problem became obvious when I discovered thrust bearings at a bearing-supply outlet recently. Thrust bearings (drawing, below) are simply a set of needle bearings captured in a circular metal collar. They come in a variety of sizes. These bearings are used in conjunction with a pair of thrust-bearing washers, which are machined to close tolerances.

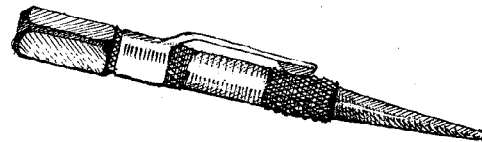
To fix the door, I used a hacksaw to cut a section out of the appropriate barrel of each hinge leaf, replaced the section with the thrust bearing and the washers, then reinstalled the hinge pins, as shown. My hinges show virtually no wear after six years of use.

—Clint Lewis, Woodland Park, Colo.



Clip-on nail set

I used to lose nail sets constantly. They always fell out of my nail bags while I was on the job. To solve the problem, I took a remov-



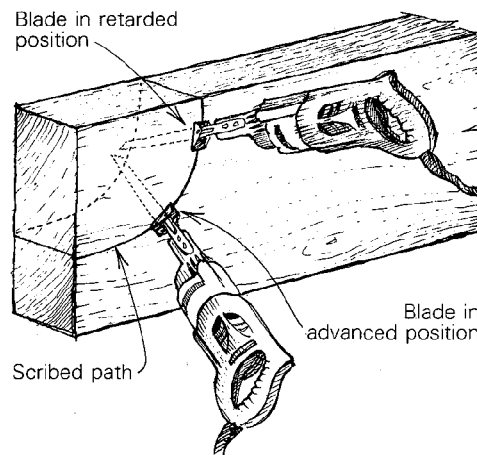
able clip from a mechanical pencil and slipped it on my latest nail set. I haven't lost it yet.

—Greg Halverson, Eugene, Ore.

Cutting curves in big beams

Last year I designed and built a house that uses seven cantilevered 6x20 beams to hold up the second floor. The beams are exposed to view on the outside, so I wanted a decorative cut on each one to dress it up. The simple 12-in. radius arc I chose turned out to be a lot easier to draw than to cut with the tool at hand—a Sawzall with a 9-in. blade.

The basic problem with cutting curves in thick stock with a reciprocating saw is that



the free end of the blade tends to drift outward, cutting an arc larger than the one that is being followed. After much trial and error, including guiding the protruding blade with a pair of lineman's pliers, I developed the technique explained below.

Begin by scribing each beam carefully on both sides with the aid of a cardboard template, and then place it upside down on a pair of sawhorses. Once approximately ¼ in. of the cut has been made, the operator can advance or retard the blade on the scribed path by leading the cut with either the heel or the tip of the blade. This develops a torsion within the blade that affects its course.

Have a helper stand on the opposite side of the beam and describe the path of the blade as the arc is being cut. If the blade moves outside the pencil mark, the operator needs to advance the blade. If the blade starts to move inside the line, the operator can retard it to pull it back on course. With a little practice, this method works very well.

Incidentally, the helper is actually relief personnel, since each cut on my 6x20 beams took nearly 1½ hours to complete.

—Eric K. Rekdahl, Berkeley, Calif.