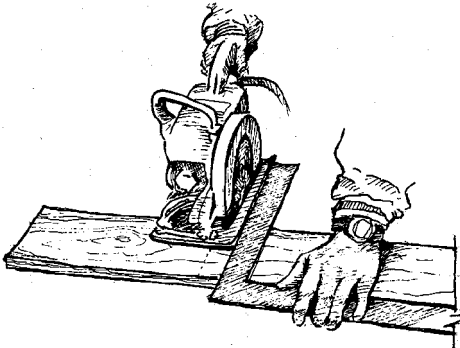


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Quick square cuts

A technique I find useful for making an accurate crosscut with a circular saw is to place a framing square on the work and scribe a pencil line at the desired dimension. Then, because I'm right-handed, I slide the square to the left, away from the scribed line. Next I



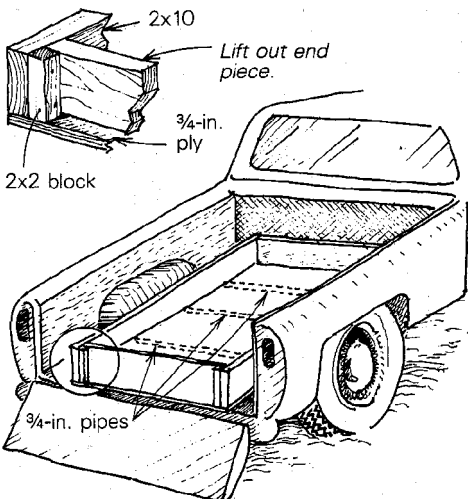
place the saw shoe against the tongue edge of the square and move the two as a unit until the blade lines up with the cutline. With a firm grip on the square, I start up the saw and use the framing-square tongue as a fence, as shown above. I get accurate, table-saw quality cuts this way every time.

—Randy Cofer, Boyds, Wash.

A sliding dump-bed

The mother of this invention is my hatred of shoveling aggregate out of my pickup truck. I built a shallow wooden box that keeps the stone in one place when I drive, and dumps it exactly where I want it when I get to the site.

The dump-bed box fits between the truck's wheel wells, where it rests on two or three lengths of 3/4-in. pipe. When the dump-bed is empty, I block it up with a couple of 2x4s to keep it from rolling around while I'm driving. Before loading I pull out the blocks and make sure that the pipes are oriented as shown in the drawing. This dump-bed holds about a



half-yard, and the loader operators I've worked with so far have been able to fill it without spilling a granule.

To unload, I drop the tailgate all the way down, back the truck up to the dump point and hit the brakes. The dump-bed rolls back, coming to rest with one end on the ground and the other on the back of the truck. I just pull out the end piece, and the rest of the aggregate can be pushed out of the dumper.

—Al Dorsa, Christiansted, St. Croix, V.I.

Cutting insulation

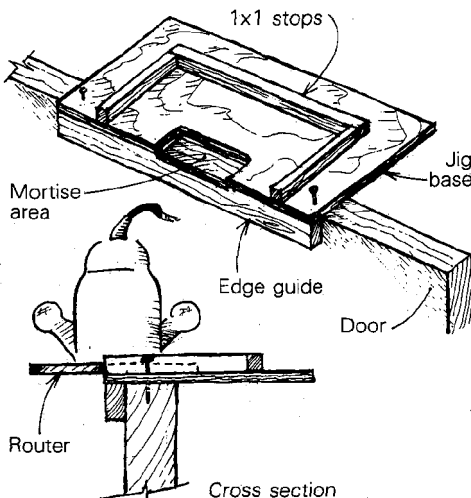
I recently insulated my entire house with foil-faced fiberglass batts, and I found a good tool for cutting the stuff down to size—hedge shears. That's right, but they have to be sharp. They easily cut through R-19 foil or kraft-paper faced batts even when they're fully lofted. You don't have to compress the insulation to cut it, as you would if you used a utility knife.

—Ron Smith, Sunol, Calif.

Hinge-mortising jig

I use a router and a jig to mortise hinges in doors and casement windows. By using a 1/2-in. diameter hinge-mortising bit and a standard round-cornered hinge, I achieve a consistently clean fit that would be difficult and slow to get by hand.

A piece of 3/8-in. plywood forms the base of the jig. After carefully measuring the size of the hinge and the router baseplate, I nail 1x1 fences to the base to guide the router. As the router is passed inside the bounds of the



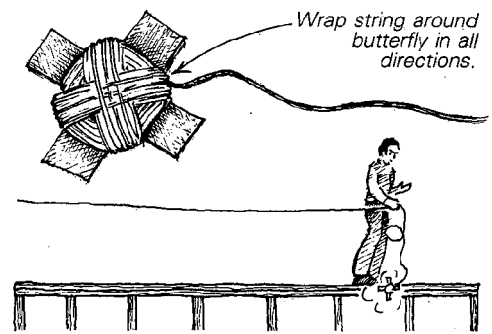
fences, the bit will cut the hinge shape into the plywood base. Once the mortise is cut out of the base, I lower the bit to adjust the depth of cut in the door.

A 1x2 edge guide nailed and glued to the base aligns the jig on the edge of the work. To keep the jig steady while using the router, I tack 6d nails through the plywood base into the edge of the door or window jamb.

—Steve Larson, Santa Cruz, Calif.

Butterfly spool

To avoid losing a ball of string when you're walking a plate, laying out a hillside or stringing a ridge, wrap your line around a butterfly spool. You can cut one out of plywood, or nail

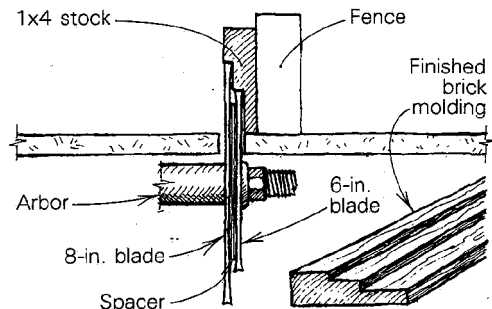


a couple of short pieces of lath together. To play out the line, hold the string instead of the spool. The butterfly will unwrap in jerks and jiggles, never getting too far away from you. If it does happen to wander, just give it a jerk and it will fly right back to you.

—Robert Rix, Arlington, Va.

Table-saw moldings

Here's a slick way to make a three-face brick molding in one pass over the table saw. Mount two different blades (I use an 8-in. blade and a 6-in. blade) on the table-saw ar-

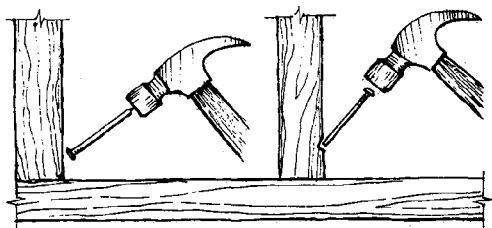


bor, with a spacer about 3/4 in. thick between the blades to allow for the set in the sawblade teeth. A few pieces of heavy cardstock or building paper ganged together make a decent spacer. Place the fence as shown, and you're ready to roll. You can adjust the face dimensions by raising and lowering the arbor, or by using a thicker spacer or different-diameter blades.

—Howard Furst, Sedro Woolley, Wash.

Perpendicular toenailing

About 15 years ago, I started using a toenailing trick that makes it easy to start the nail without its slipping. I put the nailhead where I



want to toenail, as shown in the drawing, and rap the point a couple of times with my hammer. This makes an angled flat where I can drive the nail at right angles to the wood surface. It also blunts the nail, which makes it less liable to split the wood.

—Andrew Hamilton, Antioch, Calif.