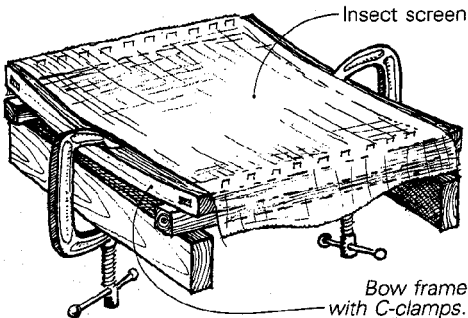


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Snug screens

I've found a good way to stretch insect screening tightly and evenly across wooden framing members for screened doors, windows and porches. First I place the empty frame on top of a pair of 2x2 supports. The supports in turn rest on a rigid platform. I use two C-clamps to bow the frame downward, and I staple the screen to the unbowed framing members on



the ends. Once the clamps are removed, the frame provides its own tension, tightening the screen. Then I staple the screening to the side rails, and trim its edges with wooden moldings. —M. Felix Marti, Monroe, Ore.

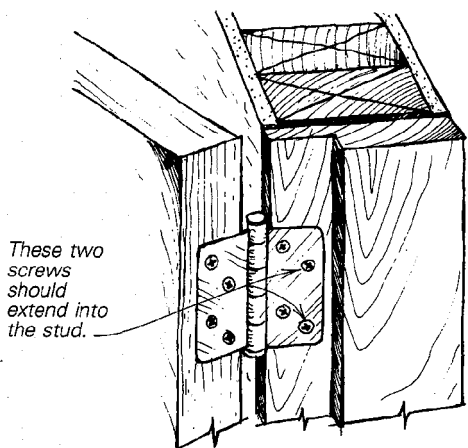
Plywood protection

If your job-site plywood stack seems to be shrinking when you're not around, try screwing it down. I use 3-in. drywall screws to connect the top layers at the corners. The resulting 3-in. thick plywood slab is heavy enough to discourage all but the most determined pilferers, and your plywood and whatever lies under it will stay put until needed.

—Michael R. Sweem, Downey, Calif.

Help for hinges

A perennial problem with solid-core doors is that they are so heavy that they pull away from the jamb at the top hinge. To prevent this, I replace the two screws closest to the door stop with two 2½-in. or 3-in. wood screws, as shown below. (Drywall screws

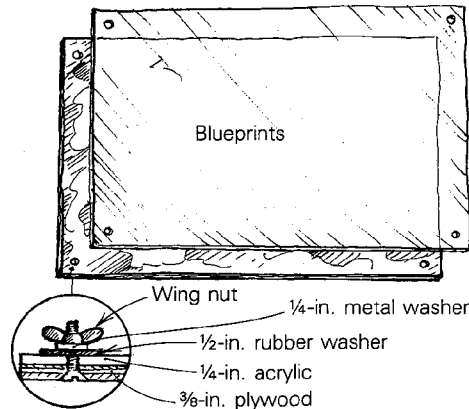


aren't a good choice, since they aren't plated to match and will eventually work loose because they aren't tapered.) It is important to get the screws as close as possible to the center of the jamb, or you run the risk of missing the trimmer stud. I hang new doors with the extra-long wood screws as a matter of course, and I find that it saves me a lot of planing on old doors that "don't fit any more."

—Sam Yoder, Cambridge, Mass.

Blueprint frame

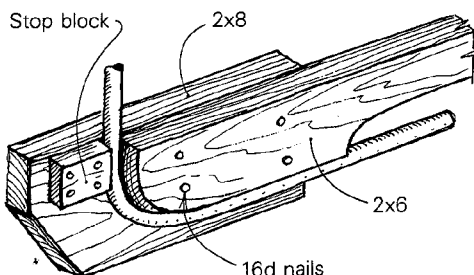
If you do construction layout, you know how frustrating it can be to decipher a set of working drawings that's been soaked by rain or blown by the wind into a mud puddle. To avoid this problem, I protect the prints with the acrylic and plywood frame shown in the drawing. I make the frame a little larger than



the job drawings, and I secure the pieces at the corners with machine screws and wing nuts. I figure the effort this frame takes is worth it, for someday it will probably save me a costly error caused by some faded-out dimension. —David Pearson, Crane, Mo.

On-site bender

Nothing is worse than showing up at a job to discover that an important tool didn't make it into the truck. One day, I left my conduit bender at home, so I used scrap wood to make

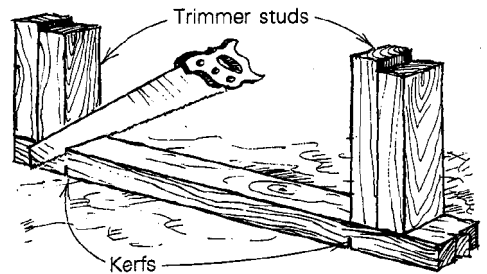


a bender that gave me beautiful, kink-free bends in my ½-in. conduit.

I started with a piece of 2x8 about 15 in. long for the body, and I attached a short piece of 1x4 to it with screws to act as a stop. Next I cut a 90° arc into the end of a 5-ft. 2x6, and nailed it to the body as shown above. Since most of the 2x6 needed to act as a handle, I tapered its width to about 3 in. to make the tool less cumbersome, and I was back in business. —Richard Tufts, Santa Rosa, Calif.

Precut plates

When I build stick-framed walls, I precut a portion of the sole plate where it has to be removed for doorways. I use my skillsaw to make kerfs about ¾ in. deep on the underside



of the plate in line with the trimmer studs, as shown in the drawing. On long or heavy wall sections, I limit the kerf depth to about ½ in.

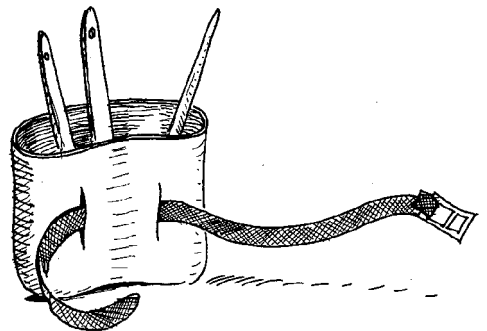
After the wall is assembled and erected, it's a simple matter to handsaw out the plate. This method saves time and the teeth on my favorite handsaw when I'm building on concrete floors, and still keeps the framing properly spaced and rigid as it's being raised.

—Brian P. Mitchell, Somerset, Colo.

Paintbrush carrier

When I paint trimwork, I hate to waste time climbing up and down the ladder to get the right brush. I could leave my various brushes in my paint bucket, but they would soon become a dripping mess.

My solution is to cut the top off a one-gallon plastic antifreeze jug with flat sides. I then cut two slits in one of the sides and thread a nylon belt through them, as shown in the drawing. I slide the loose belt ends through the loops of my painter's pants, creating a paint-



brush carrier that rides easily on my hip. I now have several brushes close at hand. The carrier cleans up easily with water or paint thinner. —Mike Ellis, Seattle, Wash.

Trim advice

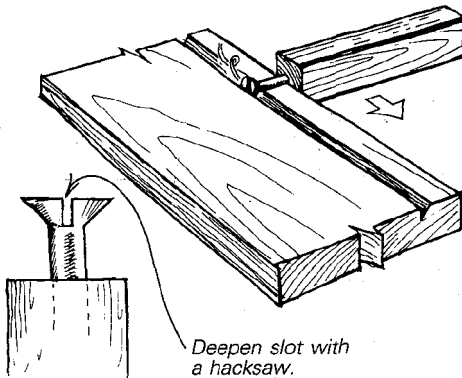
Whenever I trim out a door or a window, I first attach the head casing, cut to the finished length. Then I make the miter cut on each leg (side casing) and check the miters for fit. At this point each leg is still about ½ in. too long. Instead of trying to measure the exact length, I turn the trim upside-down, with the point of the miter resting on the floor (or window stool). Making sure the trim is lined up with my reveal marks, I strike a line on the trim even with the top of the head casing. Then I

cut the leg square, leaving the line, and the trim fits tightly every time. This method is helpful to apprentices because they can get clean and accurate results fast, while learning how to use their tools.

—Patrick D. Rabbitt, Greenwich, Conn.

Beading tool

Here is an easy way to cut a beaded edge in softwood. For the handle of the tool, use a hardwood scrap about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. by $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. by 5 in. Drill a pilot hole in the end of the block, and run in a #10 or #12 flathead wood screw, 2 in. long. Now clamp the handle in a vise, and use a hacksaw to deepen the screw slot, as shown below. This forms a sharp edge on each side of the slot. By running the screw in or out, you



can adjust the location of the bead, but make sure to align the slot perpendicular to the surface of the board you're beading.

With the end of the handle acting as a guide, drag the tool down the work several times until you get a nice groove of the proper depth. The screw head cuts a square shoulder on one side, and a bevel on the other. Finish the bead by easing the beveled edge with a block plane, and touch up with sandpaper.

—James Laws, Salisbury, Md.

Sheet-metal special

Want an inexpensive alternative to store-bought aluminum flashing, or a cheap roof for an outbuilding? Try your local newspaper. The aluminum litho plates used in photo-offset printing can't be reused by the printer and are usually offered to the public for a nominal sum. My local daily sells 2-ft. by 3-ft. plates for 35¢—substantially less than the 32¢-per-sq.-ft. rolls of flashing sold at the hardware store. —John Rasmuson, Ashburnham, Mass.

No-nail zone

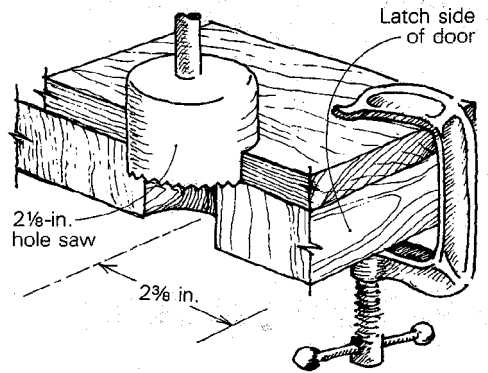
An old carpenter once advised me not to use nails in the area 12 in. to 24 in. above the sole (bottom) plate at places such as built-up corners, trimmers or doubled studs. This way, holes for electrical wiring can be drilled at typical outlet heights without running into nails. It sure saves a lot of auger bits.

—Dick Haward, Nehalem, Ore.

Lockset retrofit

I recently hung some old doors that had been drilled to accept $1\frac{3}{4}$ -in. locksets. These locksets needed replacing. To enlarge the old holes to house the new $2\frac{1}{8}$ -in. cylinder sets, I had to make a jig that would center my hole saw over the existing hole.

I took a scrap piece of $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. stock, measured $2\frac{3}{8}$ in. from the edge to allow for the standard setback, and drilled a hole with my



$2\frac{1}{8}$ -in. hole saw. Then I clamped this guide-board over the existing hole, flush with the edge of the door, as shown above. It acts as a guide for the outside of the hole saw itself, not for the arbor bit, and the holes come out clean and accurate. —Mark Messier, Eugene, Ore.