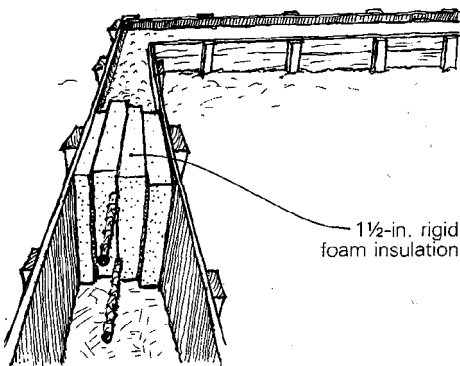


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Form stops

You can't always avoid cold joints in concrete, particularly in renovation work where things have to proceed incrementally. Here's an easy way to make a quick dam in your forms, even in places with lousy access.

Wedge pieces of 1½-in. rigid insulation into the forms like a row of books, as shown in the drawing below. It's easy to cut channels in the

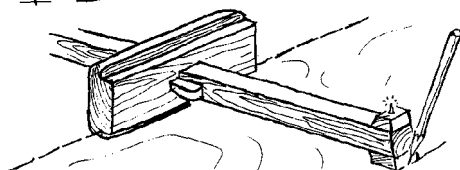
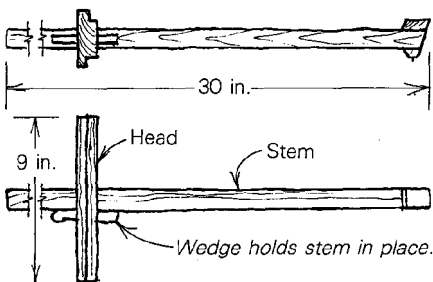


foam for the protruding rebar, and the pieces will come out fairly easily once the pour has set up. Make sure to stagger the edges of the foam pieces to form a keyway for the next pour. — *Jim Ramsay, Kelownia, B.C.*

Dual panel gauge

To mark lines parallel to the edge of a piece of plywood or other sheet material, I find a panel gauge is more accurate than measuring two positions and using a straightedge to draw a line through the marks. Many gauges are intended to scratch a line, but in some cases a pencil line is better. This gauge allows for both. The scale of this tool gives it a steady action and a reach of more than 24 in.—half a 4-ft. sheet.

The head of the gauge is a block of hardwood, rabbeted on each edge, with a hole cut squarely to take the stem. The stem can be held by a wedge driven into a slot in the head, as shown in the drawing below. The stem should be made of a straight-grained hard-



wood, built up at the working end to match the rabbets in the head. Bevel this end for ease in scribing with a pencil. On the other side, the scratch point can be made by driving in a nail, cutting it off within ¼ in. or less of the wood and then sharpening it to a point.

—*Percy W. Blandford, Stratford-upon-Avon, England*

Folding drywall

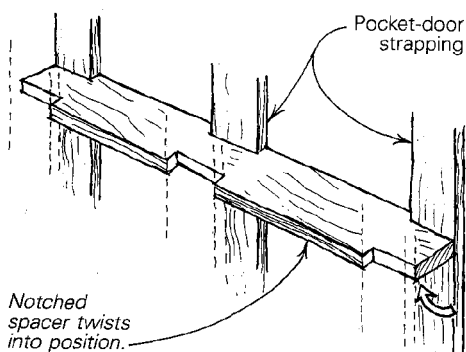
Many of today's space-conscious designers have all but eliminated single-flight stairs. Instead they favor stairs that are U-shaped in plan, with two flights and a landing, because they take up less area. This does indeed save space, but it makes it impossible to carry an 8-ft. sheet of drywall upstairs.

An old builder I know suggested that I score the backside of the sheet at the 4-ft. mark, fold the two front faces together gently and then take the doubled sheet up the stairs, unfold it and screw it in place. This works like a charm, and the extra taping involved is negligible. Most 12-ft. sheets will negotiate stairs this way as well. —*Art McAfee, Edmonton, Alta.*

Pocket-door precautions

Have you ever had problems with the flimsy 1x flat studs (strapping) that come in a pocket-door kit? Sometimes a careless sheetrocker will knock one out of alignment, and the door will forever rub against it. Here's a temporary preventive measure that will hold the strapping in position.

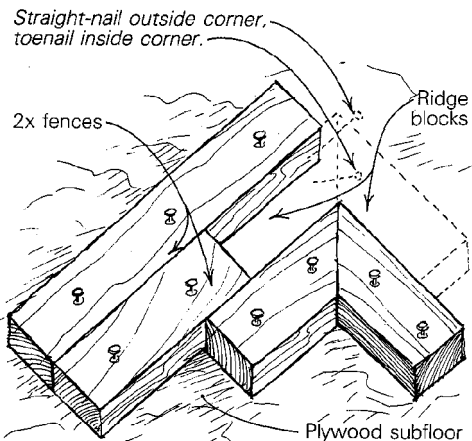
Trim two 1x4s to the appropriate length and cut notches in their sides to accommodate the wall-support straps, as shown in the drawing. These will be used as spacers, so they should be snug but not too tight. Slip these spacers into the pocket on edge, and twist them into position. One in the middle and one at the



bottom are usually enough to stiffen the frame while drywall work takes place. When the walls are done, twist the spacers out and put in your door. —*Marvin Havens, Greenville, S. C.*

Ridge-vent jig

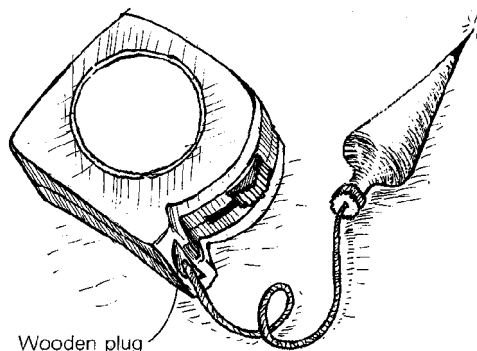
When I fabricate site-built ridge vents like those described by Doug Amsbary (*FHB* #21, pp. 51-52), I use a jig to make quick and accurate 2x ridge-block assemblies. Once I know the pitch of the roof, I set my miter saw accordingly and cut the blocks for either side of the ridge. Then I face-nail a pair of these blocks all mated up to a firm flat surface, such as a plywood subfloor. This forms the bottom of the jig. Just above one leg of the pair,



but well back, I nail two pieces of 2x scrap as shown in the drawing. These act as fences to help align the blocks and to hold them steady as I nail them together in the jig. A 16d nail driven straight through one block into the other on the outside corner and a toenail near the inside corner are all it takes to join the two blocks, and they're ready for installation on the roof. —*Jim Halls, Johnson, Vt.*

Wind-up plumb bob

If you're tired of winding the string on your plumb bob, and you've got an empty spring-wound tape case lying around, try this. First, whittle a wooden plug to fill the tape slot, and drill a hole in it a little larger than the diameter of the string you use. Now remove the old tape and tie your line to the end of the spring. Let the spring and some of the line retract



into the tape case, thread the string through the hole in the plug and press-fit the plug in place. Now tie a knot in the line or attach your plumb bob, and you're in business. You can get at least 25 ft. of line in a 25-ft. tape case, and with a larger-diameter line, the push lock will still work.

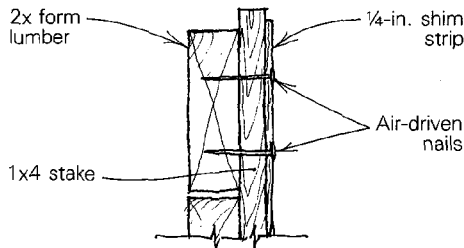
—*Brent Lanier, Pleasant Gardens, N. C.*

Pneumatic duplex nails

I don't know why somebody hasn't invented a nail gun that shoots duplex (scaffolding) nails. In foundation forming, pneumatic nailing increases not only efficiency, but accuracy as well. But trying to strip form boards where the nails have been driven home guarantees stakes broken off in the ground, concrete scarred by fighting the forms, and a lot of unnecessary work and frustration. Here's how I

TIPS & TECHNIQUES

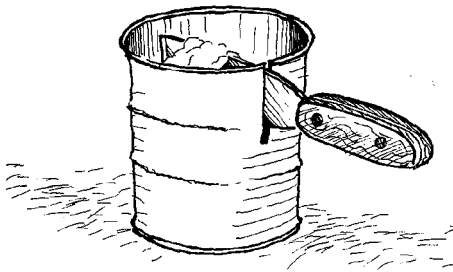
use a standard nail gun to get the advantages of both air-driven fasteners and duplex nails. Before I begin my foundation forms, I tack or staple ¼-in. shim strips to all my vertical stakes. Then I use my air gun to attach the



stakes to the form boards. When it's time to remove the forms, I simply hack off the strips with the claw of my hammer and yank out the nails. —Michael Gornik, Nevada City, Calif.

Scraper cleanup

Paint stripper combined with old paint or varnish makes a sticky goo that can be tough to remove from a scraper or a putty knife. To make an easy job of it, I cut a straight slit about 2 in. long in a large tin can. Then I slide the blade of the knife into the slit close to



where it joins the handle. When I pull the blade out, the old finish falls into the can, ready for disposal. —Roy Viken, Boise, Idaho

Push-broom upgrade

I don't even wait for my push broom to break before I strengthen it. When it's brand new, I screw the base of a triangle of ¼-in. or ⅜-in. plywood to the top of the broom head, and the top of the triangle to the handle. This gusset keeps the broom together longer, and the added weight helps it sweep better.

—Michael Sweem, Downey, Calif.

