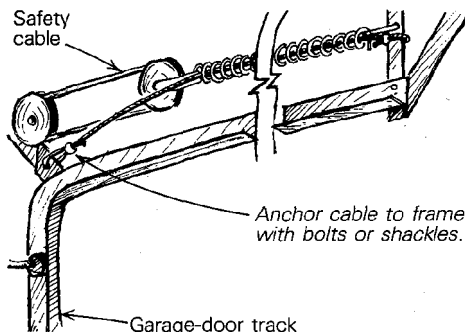


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Garage-door safety cable

When an overhead garage-door spring breaks, it can do considerable property damage. But the potential for personal injury is even greater. Because of this possibility, whenever I service or install a garage door with overhead springs that stretch, I install safety cables. With the door down, I run a heavy braided-steel cable through



each spring. Then I anchor the cable at both ends so that the spring travels along the cable, as shown in the drawing above.

One of my clients had a garage-door spring snap with such force that it broke the safety cable. But that was the only damage because the cable kept the spring segments from flying off in dangerous directions.

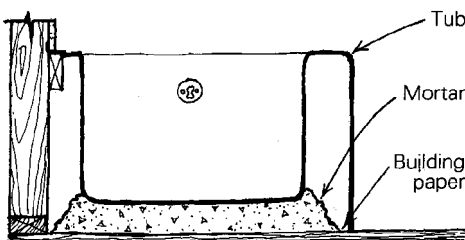
If one of your springs needs replacing, be sure to replace both of them. This will ensure equal lift.

—Rod Goettelmann, Southampton Twp., N. J.

Tub support

If you are about to install a lightweight steel or fiberglass tub, here's a way to make it feel more substantial. Set it on a bed—or rather a blob—of mortar.

First staple building felt to the subfloor in the area to be occupied by the tub. Spread a thick, stiff blanket of mortar onto the felt so that it will



cradle the bathtub, as shown in the drawing above. What was once a flimsy tub bottom with no thermal mass is now solid as a rock and able to retain warmth. It's a very nice touch if you can't use cast iron.

—Kurt Lavenson, Berkeley, Calif.

Cutting sheet steel

I live in a small town in southern Colorado. Less than 20 miles from my house the average snowfall is a whopping 500 in., so metal roofs are very popular around here. The snow will slide

off them before it gets a chance to pile up. Most of the roofs I install are made of sheet steel, with a baked-enamel finish. I have tried numerous ways of cutting this material, but the best way I have found is to use an old circular saw-blade mounted backwards on the saw's arbor. This arrangement makes a fast, accurate cut. Be sure to wear safety goggles and ear plugs. This is a very noisy operation.

—Grover Hathorn, South Fork, Colo.

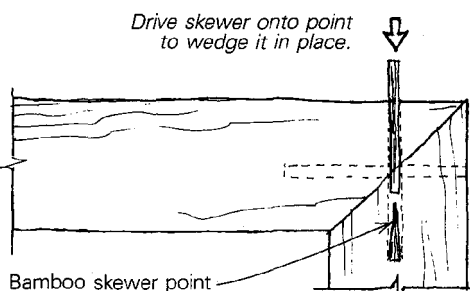
Offset handle

I used to carry a standard carpenter's wooden toolbox, with room for hand tools in the bottom, a nail tray on top and a wood clothes-pole handle. But I found that when I carried it, it would bump into my leg if I didn't hold it away from my body. This was hard on my arms and legs, so I offset the handle, bringing it an inch closer to my side. Now the contents don't shift to the outside, and the box is a lot easier for me to carry.

—Steve Hunter, Berkeley, Calif.

Bamboo nails

If you have to make a frame or molding that will need planing, carving or routing after it is assembled, consider using bamboo skewers to hold it together as the glue dries. I first started using the skewers to pin picture frames together, as shown in the drawing. First I brush the miters with yellow glue and clamp them together. Then I drill two holes at each corner (one from each side) about 1 in. deep and at slightly different



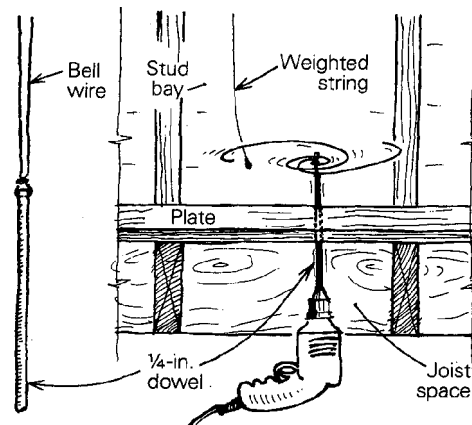
levels so they don't intersect. The holes should be slightly larger in diameter than the skewers. With a pair of wire cutters, I snip off the sharpened point of a skewer. I put a dab of glue on this skewer point, and press it into one of the holes, cut end first. Next I drive another glue-coated skewer into the hole, square end first. The skewer point at the bottom of the hole acts as a wedge to spread the second bamboo pin, locking it in place.

Pins from bamboo skewers are strong and cheap, and you can work the assembled piece without fear of damaging your edge tools or sending dangerous bits of metal flying around the shop as you do with screws or nails. Check your supermarket for these useful fasteners.

—Michael Sweem, Downey, Calif.

Rotary fishing rod

When fishing a wire for a doorbell recently, I ran into a seemingly impossible situation. I'd drilled the hole for the bell-push, and an angled hole through the wall plate into the proper stud bay from the cellar. But try as I might, I couldn't get a wire from one to the other. I tried fish tape, a weighted string, bell wire, bead chain, profanity, hooks, probes and a dozen other



plays. I couldn't find any obstruction, but I couldn't find the wire either.

As my last attempt before starting to rip clapboards off the side of the house I made the "fishing rod" shown in the drawing. Starting with a piece of 1/4-in. dowel about a foot long, I drilled a 1/8-in. hole across the diameter about 1/8 in. from one end. Through this hole I inserted a 15-in. piece of bell wire that I secured with a square knot, leaving the two ends equal.

I then chucked the other end of the dowel in an electric drill. Folding the ends of the wire so they stuck out ahead of the dowel like antennae, I shoved the contraption into the hole in the plate as far as it would go and turned on the drill. At 1,200 rpm, the ends of the wire whipped out centrifugally, lashing around inside the wall and almost immediately entangling the weighted string left dangling from the bell-push hole. When I pulled the drill back through the hole in the plate, I found the string securely wrapped around the dowel.

—Robert L. Edsall, New Haven, Conn.

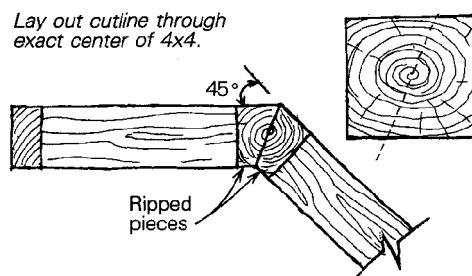
Chalkbox conversion

Here's the setup that I use for my foundation lines. I take a new chalkline box and discard the line that comes with it. Then I fill its spool with braided nylon mason's line, and I put a loop on the loose end. Braided line costs more than twisted line, but it's stronger and snarl-free—an excellent line for straightening walls or checking foundations.

—Robert Francis, Napa, Calif.

More corner blocking

Tim Pelton's tip on blocking 45° corners is fine (FHB #22, p. 14), but I think I've got a better method. I rip a 4x4 on the bandsaw as shown in



the drawing, with the table set at 22 1/2°. Then I use the ripped pieces at the ends of each wall section. This trick wastes no wood, and also allows the sections to be securely nailed together.

—Ron Milner, Grass Valley, Calif.