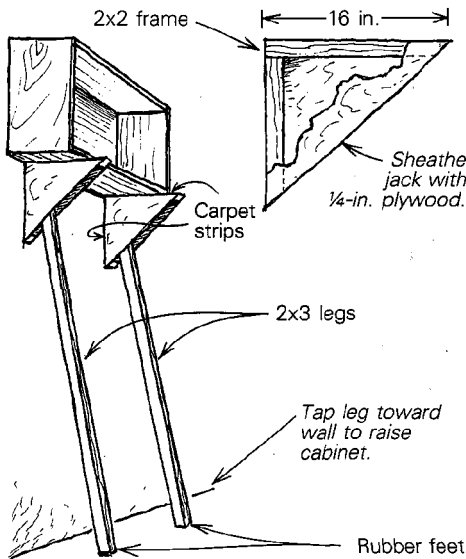


*Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.*

## Cabinet jacks

The drawing below shows the jacks I use to install upper kitchen cabinets by myself. The jacks have a 2x2 frame covered with 1/4-in. plywood, and they're braced with 2x3 legs. I line the backs and tops of the jacks with strips of carpet to keep them from scratching the walls, and I've got rubber feet on the legs to keep them from slipping as I adjust the height of the cabinets.

To use the jacks, I mark a level line on the wall to show the bottom of the cabinet. Then I



place the jacks about 6 in. inside each end of the cabinet, and I set the cabinet on the jacks. Moving the legs in or out adjusts the height of the cabinet. When I've got it right, I fasten the cabinet to the wall through predrilled holes in the cabinet hang-rail.

—Darryl B. Weiser, Dahlonega, Ga.

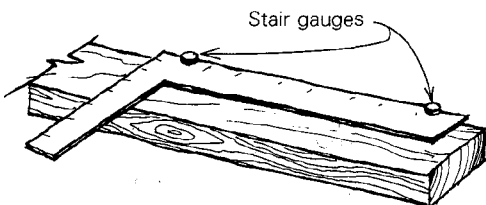
## Sandpaper grip

When sanding a rounded form, such as a hand-rail, finger sanding gives you the best feel for the shape of the work. For a better grip on your sandpaper, use double-sided adhesive tape on the back of the paper. This will keep your hand and the sandpaper moving at the same speed.

—Jeff McDermott, Phoenix, Ariz.

## Stair-gauge straightedge

I've found that a framing square with stair gauges is a good tool for doing layout on wall plates. I clip the gauges on the long blade of the square, as shown in the drawing. The gauges easily align the blade along the edge of the

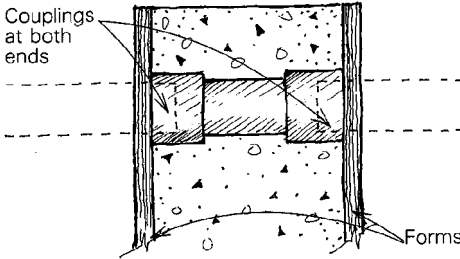


plates, so that I don't have to worry about the blade getting cockeyed while I do my layouts.

—Will Milne, San Francisco, Calif.

## Through-wall pipe forms

Running pipe or conduit through a poured concrete foundation wall with no gaps to patch and without cutting holes in the forms sounds too good to be true until you've tried this trick. Cut a piece of the pipe you need and attach couplings



to both ends so that the total length of pipe plus couplings exactly matches the thickness of your wall, as shown in the drawing.

This unit will then fit snugly between the forms, and can be wired to the rebar and spreaders at the top of the forms to keep it in place during the pour. When the forms are pulled away, you have a coupling embedded on each side, flush with the wall and ready for another length of pipe.

—D. A. Fleury, Curlew, Wash.

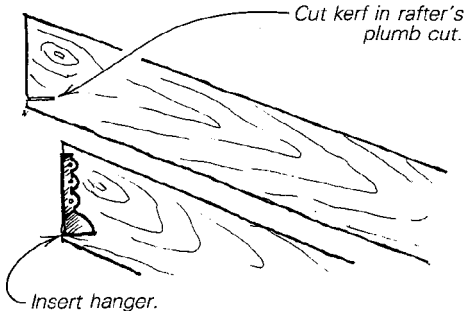
## Goggle defogger

My protective goggles would fog whenever I used them with a dust mask. My breath would sneak through the gap at the bridge of my nose, condense on the goggle lenses and make it impossible to see. Then I remembered a trick that I'd learned about shaving at the bathroom mirror. I rubbed the inside of the lenses with a little soap and water (mostly soap), and the problem cleared right up.

—Karl Riedel, Takoma Park, Md.

## Hanger notch

When I have to attach a rafter to a beam with a joist hanger, I find it helpful to kerf the rafter's plumb cut with a skillsaw. Then I can insert the hanger into the kerf, as shown in the drawing, and nail it in place. The kerf depth coincides with the full cutting depth of my 7 1/4-in. saw, so I don't have to mess with adjustments. I can also stack my rafters and make one cut to kerf them



all at the same time. This method is a lot easier than notching the rafter, and it provides a continuous plane up the rafter to attach gypboard.

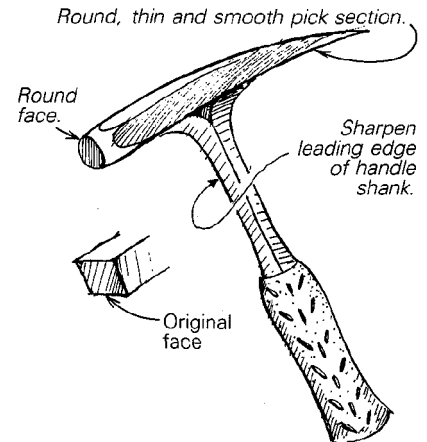
—Greg Halverson, Portland, Ore.

## Slater's hammer

People who have worked with roofing slate know the value of a good slater's hammer for punching, breaking and trimming brittle slates. After using a traditional slater's hammer borrowed from the local tinsmith, I set out to find one of my own. I watched the classified ads, attended flea markets and tag sales, and shopped trade and builder's suppliers. Used hammers didn't appear, but I was pleased to find a high-quality, brand-new hammer with a leather grip. Pleased, that is, until I learned that they cost from \$60 to \$80.

An alternative tool was already in my kit, and it took me just 15 minutes at the grinder to modify it.

Estwing geologist's rock picks, with 14-oz. or 20-oz. heads and a choice of nylon or leather grips, cost less than \$20. I modified mine by rounding the hammer face and pick sections to a more slender, smooth profile, as shown in the drawing below. It's especially important to remove the square corners on the hammerhead—they are liable to break off while hammering nails. I also sharpened the leading edge of the



solid steel shank. The modified rock pick makes it a simple matter to punch a smooth hole in a slate, and the sharpened shank has trimmed hundreds of slates without need for further touch-up. I have never missed the small side claws on the traditional hammerhead, and I believe that the 14-oz. modified Estwing has a better feel than the originals.

—Bob Sager, Bondville, Vt.

## Easy-glide saw table

For one reason or another, we all end up having to trim doors with a circular saw. Despite using precautions such as guides and tape to protect the work, many saws leave an unsightly streaking along their path, spoiling an otherwise unblemished job. Well, my saw was one of the guilty ones.

To avoid this problem, I now place a continuous layer of clear contact paper on the base of my circular saw. I cut out a slot for the blade and leave a 1/8-in. overhang at the rear to act as a pull tab. The contact paper has a clean, smooth surface that glides easily over a workpiece without leaving a trace. When the contact paper gets worn and needs replacing, it comes off easily with a tug on the pull tab.

—MacGill Adams, Anchorage, Alaska