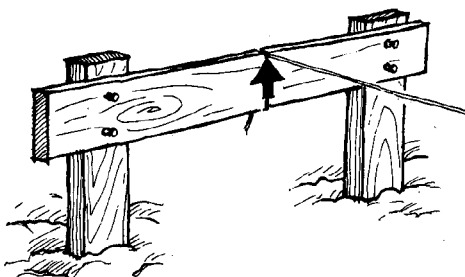


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Batter-board stringlines

I use the method shown in the drawing below to fasten my building lines to the batter boards. First I nail my batter boards roughly 1/4 in. above my string height. Next, I mark the string height on the face of the board, and use a handsaw to cut a kerf down to my mark. The string will hold fast if it's lapped over itself in the kerf.

To make sighting easier after the string is removed, I mark a large arrow on the inside face



of the board. Not only is this method easy and accurate, but it also dispenses with exposed nails, which can be bent out of alignment or even cause accidents.

—Robert J. Meehan, New City, N. Y.

Shingle cleanup

Stripping the old shingles off a house is a messy job by anybody's standards. The accumulated pieces of cedar or asphalt tend to rain down around the house, often damaging fragile landscaping. To prevent this problem, I use a sheet of 6-mil poly to act as a combination protective barrier and tarpaulin, as shown in the drawing below. I staple the poly to the top piece of a 2x4 frame, making sure that the top edge of the poly is doubled and wrapped around the horizontal



2x4. This arrangement saves a lot of cleanup time, and leaves my clients smiling.

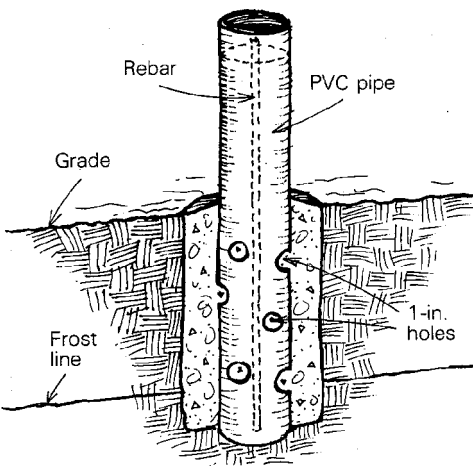
—Charlie Woodhouse, Kensington, Calif.

PVC-clad piers

The drawing below shows my pier design for supporting decks and small buildings. The key to the system is the section of PVC drainpipe, which acts as both form and finish surface. I like the piers produced with this method because they are strong, cheap, easy to install, rustproof, rotproof and good-looking.

I begin a pier by digging a 6-in. to 8-in. dia. hole with a post-hole auger to the required depth below the frost line. Next I use an electric drill with a wood-boring bit to punch several holes in a length of 4-in. dia. PVC pipe. The holes allow the concrete inside and outside the pipe to combine for strength. For heavy or high structures I use 6-in. pipe.

Then I set the PVC pipe in the hole, leaving it a few inches longer than the final cut-off height. I pour concrete into the hole to grade level, and into the pipe to the desired height—a foot or so



above grade. Then I set 1/2-in. rebar into the center of the pipe. The rebar can be left long to act as a pin, or be pushed below the level of the concrete. A J-bolt, angle iron or other anchoring device can be added as well. While the concrete is still wet, I plumb the pipe and let the pier set overnight.

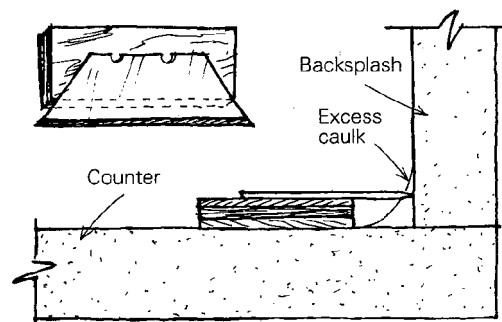
I made a cut-off marking jig from a 4-in. plastic coupling by grinding off the interior ridge so that the complete coupling slides down over the pipe. I mark the pipe for finished height with a scribe held against the jig, and cut it off with a reciprocating saw. Finally, I fill the remaining section of pipe with concrete and trowel it flush with the top of the pipe.

—Robert A. Ritchie, Westerly, R. I.

Caulk trimmer

When I recently installed a new kitchen, my client asked me to caulk the seam between the counter and the backsplash rather than cover it with a piece of metal trim. First I roughed up the corner with sandpaper, and then I applied a small bead of silicone caulk. Uncertain that the caulk was tightly compacted into the corner, I gave into temptation and smoothed it out with my finger.

I allowed it to dry overnight, and the next morning I trimmed it back to a uniform dimen-



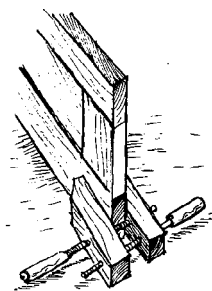
sion using the tool shown in the drawing. The tool consists of a sharp razor blade glued to a small piece of 1/4-in. plywood. I ran the plywood along the counter and backsplash, then gently lifted the excess off with another razor.

—Pulin Sumner, Jamaica, N. Y.

Screw-clamp door buck

Sometimes we forget that a tool can be used to advantage for other than its original purpose—the ubiquitous screw clamp, for instance. I needed to plane the edge of a small door recently and found a pair of these clamps to be handy supports. By clamping one to each end of the door, as shown above, I was able to brace the door while I planed its edge.

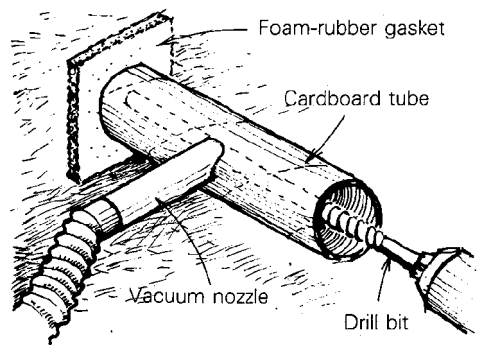
—L. Fredrick, Aspen, Colo.



Dustless drilling

After our company had painted and decorated the interior of an ornate 19th-century church, we had to install a new sound system. This meant drilling through a 20-in. thick plaster and brick wall located directly over a gilded ornamental plaster arch. To prevent a disastrous mess of fine brick powder filtering down upon the arch, I devised the vacuum fitting shown in the drawing to contain and collect the dust.

The fitting consisted of a 3-in. diameter cardboard mailing tube about 8 in. long, and a thin gasket of foam rubber to seal the space between the wall and the end of the tube. I cut a hole into the side of the tube to receive a vacuum hose, which I taped to the fitting for an airtight seal. As we drilled into the wall with a heavy-



duty hammer drill and a 30-in. masonry bit, the dust was contained within the cardboard tube and immediately sucked up by the vacuum. The hole was drilled without a trace of dust reaching the arch.

—Jeff Kerbeykian, Rego Park, N. Y.