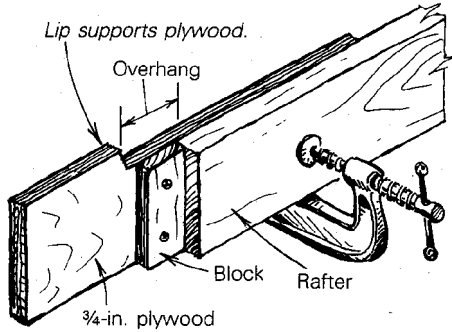


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Roof-sheathing jig

Whenever I'm nailing down the first row of plywood on a roof that will have soffits, I use a pair of jigs shown in the drawing to position the pan-

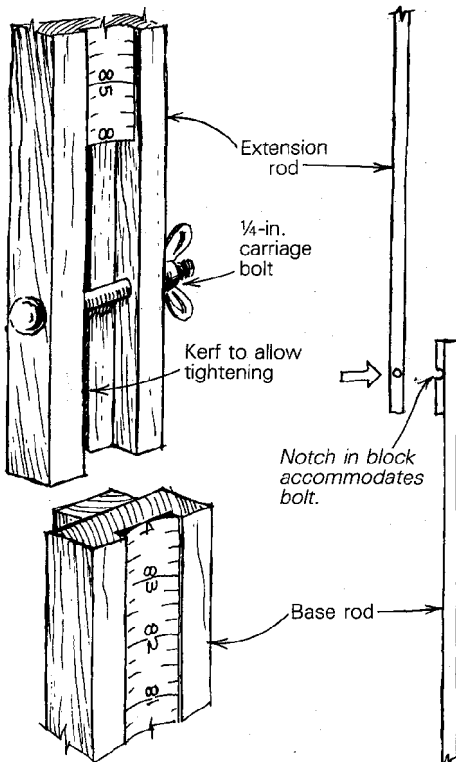


els. Using these jigs, I can adjust the amount of overhang to suit the fascia detail by moving the blocks in relation to the lip that supports the edge of the plywood. I've found them to be especially helpful when I am working alone and in need of a third hand.

—John Shepherd, Charlottesville, Va.

Leveling rod

The drawing below illustrates an inexpensive design for an accurate, two-piece leveling rod made from a defunct 1-in. wide tape measure. To make the base rod, begin with a piece of straight, knot-free 1x stock, ripped to a full 2-in. width. I think 7 ft. is a good length for this section of the rod. Use a router or a dado head to cut a 7/8-in. wide by 1/4-in. deep groove in the



base rod. Use tin snips to cut a 7-ft. section of tape, and press-fit the tape into the groove. It should stay put.

To make an extension rod, cut another groove in a similar piece of wood, an inch or so shy of 7 ft. long. At one end, deepen the groove to 1/2 in. for the first 5 in. of the rod and cut a saw kerf 5 in. long in the center of the groove. Next, drill a hole for a 1/4-in. carriage bolt, as shown in the drawing. Now you can press the continuing portion of the tape into the groove, starting at the end of the kerf.

At the top of the base rod, glue a 7/8-in. wide block, about 5 in. long and 1/2 in. thick. This block has to be notched to accommodate the bolt in the extension rod. To use the extension, press the block at the top of the base rod into the groove in the extension rod. Adjust the extension up or down until its tape is even with the top of the base rod, and tighten the wing nut.

When the extension rod is not in use, I turn it upside-down and reattach it to the base rod, out of the way. This rod is accurate, and I think it's easier to read than commercial ones, which cost \$60 or more.

—Jim Reitz, Towson, Md.

Starting a siphon

Every once in a while somebody has to use a large-diameter siphon to bail water out of a hole, to drain a tank or to empty a boat full of water. In my case I had a 14-ft. deep hole that I needed to drain so that I could install a wooden enclosure around what would eventually be a surface well. The flow into the hole was about 40 gallons a minute—substantially more than a garden hose could handle.

I had on hand a section of 2-in. flexible plastic pipe, about 70 ft. long. I drilled a small hole near one end of the pipe for a piece of wire. Then I tied a chunk of heavy iron to the wire so that one end of the pipe would quickly sink to the bottom of my hole when it came time to start the siphon. I laid out the rest of the pipe down the hill from the hole.

Now the task at hand was to start the water flowing. Anyone who has ever attempted to start a siphon (especially a large-diameter one) knows that it can be an exasperating experience. To get this siphon going, my son and I ran a long wire through the length of the pipe. Then we tied a small-diameter rope to the wire, and pulled it through the pipe. To the rope dangling from the end to be submerged, I knotted a wad of rag from an old shirt. When I pulled on the rope at the opposite end, the rag entered the pipe, making a seal. I then threw the weighted end of the pipe into the water, and I held onto the pipe while my son made a mad dash downhill with the rope, pulling the cloth plug and a column of water behind it through the siphon. The water started flowing immediately, and the hole was drained in about two hours.

—Mark White, Kodiak, Alaska

Beefed-up towel bars

The porcelain towel-bar fixtures that are available around here have attractive ceramic brackets, but the towel bars are hollow, flimsy 1-in. square plastic tubes. To make the bars as sturdy as their brackets, I fill them with plaster of Paris.

First I plug one end of a bar with a lump of plumber's putty. Then, with the bar braced and standing, I fill the tube to within about 1 in. of

the top with a thick slurry of plaster. When the plaster hardens, the bar has a solid, rigid feel that is in keeping with ceramic fixtures.

—Dennis LaMonica, Panama, N. Y.

Earplug storage

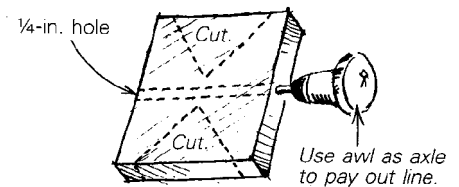
I use a chainsaw to make a living, building scribe-fit log houses in Southern Idaho. Some type of ear protection is a must in this business, and I use the soft foam earplugs that resemble long, miniature marshmallows. The trouble is, when I take them out and drop them into my tool pouch, they quickly become too grungy to re-use.

I solved this problem by putting a plastic 35mm film canister on my tool belt to act as a storage jar. I cut a slit in the pry-off lid, slipped a length of knotted leather thong through the cut, then tied off the thong on my tool belt. Now I've got a handy, clean place to keep my earplugs.

—Tom Balben, Teton Village, Wyo.

Dryline spool

The best type of dryline spool that I have found is homemade, fashioned from a piece of 1/2-in. thick acrylic. I cut V-shaped notches out of the acrylic blank, as shown in the drawing, and then



drilled a 1/4-in. dia. hole edgewise through the center of the spool. To pay out the line, I place an awl in the hole, where it acts as an axle as I walk out the line.

Acrylic is remarkably strong. My Stringline spool has survived a 50-ft. drop onto concrete, and being run over by a dumptruck. Cost of the acrylic blank: \$2 per lifetime.

—Jeffrey D. Taylor, Corvallis, Ore.

Warning zone

After my last run-in with my radial-arm saw (finger remains, but with ugly scar), I decided that I needed a graphic reminder to use special care when my fingers get close to the blade. With the saw unplugged and to the side, I placed my hand down on the saw table, right in the middle of the cutline. Then I outlined my hand with a red marker and drew diagonal lines to represent the danger area. So far this no-finger zone has been very effective at reminding my brain to pay close attention to the placement of my hands while I'm using this tool.

