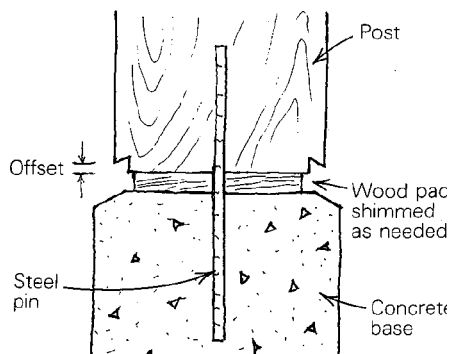


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Router-bit drip edges

You can use a dovetail router bit to shape a drip edge that's just right for all sorts of situations. For example, to protect a square post base against end-grain rot I used one of these bits to cut the drip edge shown in the drawing below. The angle cut by a dovetail bit is steep enough to shed water, but shallow enough to be strong. When I cut a drip edge on a post, I allow some



offset between the bottom of the post and the drip edge. This allows me to insert any shims without dinging the edge.

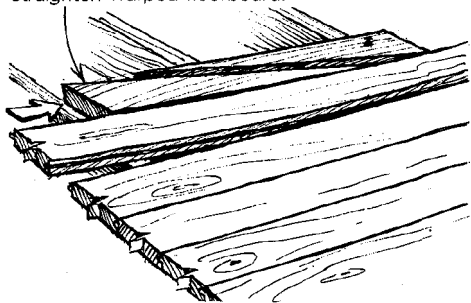
—Emanuel Jannasch, Chester, N. S.

Persuading plank flooring

When carpenters install plank flooring, they often have to cope with warped planks. Some use a prybar to bend reluctant boards, others use pipe clamps. I keep it simple and use a wedge made from the decking itself.

As shown in the drawing below, I make a diagonal cut through a scrap piece of decking that

Drive wedge against block to straighten warped floorboard.



is about 1 ft. longer than the on-center spacing of the joists. The tapered piece with the tongue on it becomes the block, the other the wedge. Next, I nail the block to a joist just in front of the warped board. Then I drive the wedge, grooved side against the tongue of the bowed decking, into the space between the block and the floorboards.

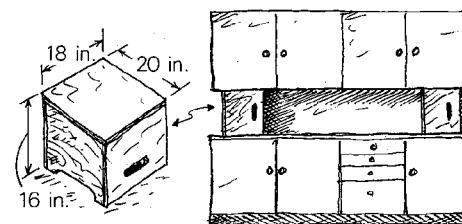
When the warped floorboard is wedged snug against its neighbor, I blind-nail it in place. To allow blind nailing next to the wedge, I sometimes have to remove the top part of the groove from the wedge.

—Stephen Reddy, Monterey, Mass.

Multi-purpose boxes

I recently installed a lot of cabinets with the help of some simple plywood boxes. As shown in the drawing below, I made the boxes out of scrap pieces of ¾-in. plywood. Their dimensions correspond to the typical counter-to-overhead-cabinet heights.

While the boxes make it easy for one person to position overhead cabinets, they also have



some other uses. When spanned with a plank they make a sturdy platform for working on door casings and crown moldings. Their cutout handles turn them into convenient containers for carrying tools and materials. Finally, they make handy stools at lunchtime.

—Dan Jensen, Portland, Ore.

Buzzless bulbs

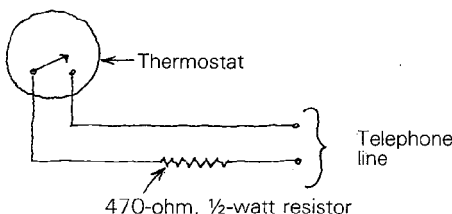
A contractor friend of mine recently replaced some of my light switches with dimmers. I like the adjustable light levels, but I hated the buzzing noise made by the bulbs when they are dimmed. After some research, I discovered the solution—three-way bulbs. Their filament construction is such that they don't buzz when dimmed.

—Mary Jacek, Alameda, Calif.

Freeze alarm

It's often necessary, or at least convenient, to leave the heat running in a house that's being remodeled or in the latter stages of construction. A warm house means you don't have to drain water pipes and radiators during the winter, and footings are protected from frost heaves. Because I'm primarily a weekend remodeler (and a worrier as well), I've often made needless trips to a site during the week just to assure myself that the furnace hasn't quit. No heat for several days at -20°F is the stuff of nightmares and insurance hassles.

I got tired of all the unnecessary driving, so now I call a project to check on the heater. I installed a standard heating thermostat across the telephone line with a 470-ohm resistor (Radio Shack part 271-019) in series, as shown in the diagram below. I set the thermostat at 40°F, or whatever minimum temperature is permissible. If the house temperature falls below it, the thermostat contacts close, placing the resistor across the line. This condition simulates an off-hook telephone and causes a busy signal if the number is dialed from any other phone. To verify house temperature, I dial the number. If it rings,



everything is okay. Also, when the house is warm and the contacts are open, the site telephone sharing the same line functions normally.

I use a thermostat with mercury contacts, which requires a firm, level mounting position to be reliable. Older thermostats with mechanical contacts are not so sensitive to position, and would probably be better for this application. Their minimum temperature, however, is often 50°F or 55°F.

—Karl Juul, Slingerlands, N. Y.

It's a fine line

Many times timber framers need to lay out long, accurate cutting lines. A standard string in a chalk reel yields a fat, sloppy line, so I went looking for a replacement that would give me a finer line. After some research, I settled on 20-lb. test braided nylon fishing line. I find that it holds chalk very well, and it gives a crisp, clean line. If I need an even finer line, I snap it in the air a time or two before I lay it on the work.

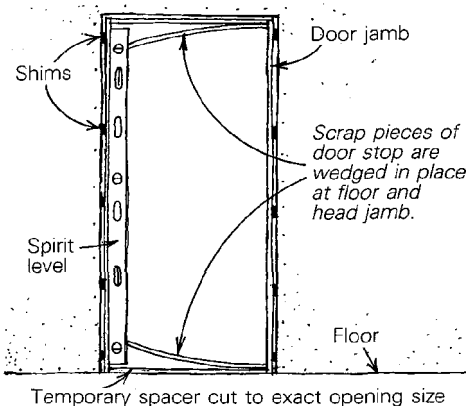
I bought 140 yards of the braided line for about \$7—enough for everyone in the shop. The only tools that I've seen that give a comparable line are Japanese ink lines, which cost about \$50.

—Tom Baker, Blissfield, Mich.

Holding a level plumb

I use a 6½-ft. spirit level to plumb and straighten interior door jambs. In order to leave both hands free to handle the shims and to drive nails, I wedge the level against one of the jambs to hold it in place. This lets me monitor the jamb continually as I make fine adjustments with the shims, rather than having to check and re-check the alignment with a hand-held level.

Once I've assembled all the jambs for the house, I cut a spacer the exact width of the door opening out of 1x6 or jamb offcuts. As shown in the drawing, the spacer rests on the floor be-



tween the jambs, maintaining the correct dimension at the bottom of the door opening.

Spacer in place, I temporarily shim the jamb in its rough opening. Then I wedge the level against one of the jambs with scrap pieces of door stop. The spaces above and below the level should be equal. Now I can plumb and straighten the jamb in the usual manner, tapping shims in and out until the jamb is straight up and down and true as an arrow. Then I nail the jamb to the jack studs with a pair of 10d finish nails through each set of shims. After double checking for alignment and making any necessary adjustments, I repeat the procedure on the opposite jamb.

—D. B. Lovingood, Portsmouth, Va.