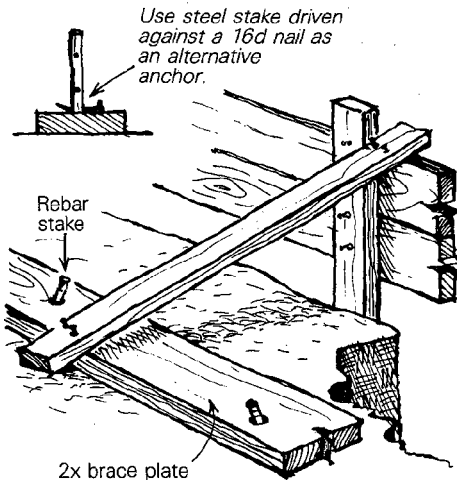


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Form bracing in loose soil

It can be frustrating to brace concrete forms in loose, sandy soil—especially when the stakes begin to creep outward as the forms are filled. Faced with these soil conditions, I recently used a 2x brace plate to anchor my form braces.

As shown in the drawing below, I positioned the plate far enough from my forms to give my



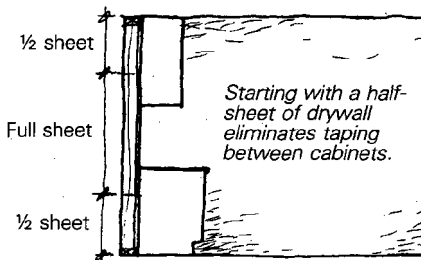
braces about a 1:2 slope. The plate has 1-in. holes drilled 2 ft. on center. Through these holes I drove 2-ft. lengths of #4 rebar, oriented at opposing angles. Secured this way, the plate served as a sturdy anchor for my 2x4 braces.

If you've got some steel stakes, use them to anchor the plate. As the end of the stake draws near to the plate, insert a 16d nail halfway through one of the holes and drive the stake a little farther until the nail begins to bend as it engages the wood. When it comes time to remove the plates, lift them out of the ground with a backhoe. Lacking the backhoe, a pair of locking pliers makes a good handle on each stake.

—Michael Hermann, Nevada City, Calif.

Drywall splits

In kitchen areas, where people like smooth painted walls or wallpaper, I cut the first sheet of drywall in half lengthwise, as shown in the drawing, to keep a seam from showing up be-



tween the upper and lower cabinets. This does result in an extra drywall seam, but since the cabinets will cover the joints, they only have to be fire-taped.

—Jim Blodgett, Roy, Wash.

Drip-catching cuffs

In a kinder world, we would always be able to apply wood finishes to horizontal surfaces at bench height. But in real life we invariably find ourselves reaching over our heads with a brushful of stain or oil. So you know as well as I the misery of cold, sticky fluid dribbling down over your wrist. Next time try this trick.

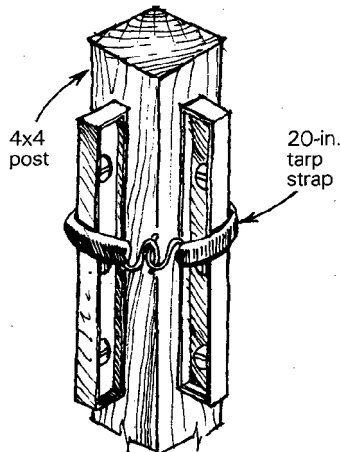
Get a rubber glove, of the type sold for washing dishes, for your painting hand. Turn up a 2-in. to 3-in. cuff on the glove, and stuff it with toilet paper—you want a puffy doughnut of tissue filling the cuff and circling your wrist. The tissue holds the cuff out to catch the dribbles and absorbs the fluid so it won't leak out when you lower your arm.

Finally, wrap the end of the brush handle with tissue and secure it with a rubber band. You are now ready to apply the finish. When the tissue rings become saturated, squeeze them out over the finish container to put the liquid back where it can be used again.

—Jerry Azevedo, Friday Harbor, Wash.

Plumbing posts

When I set posts, I used to find it awkward first to plumb one face, then the one next to it. One side was always getting a little out of adjustment. Now I use two levels strapped to adjacent



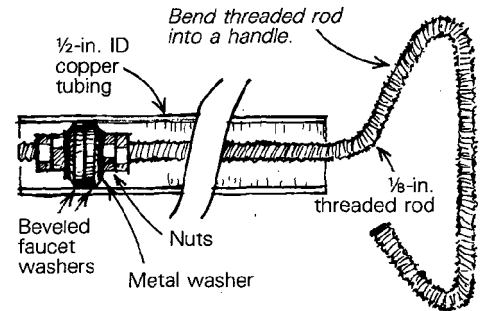
faces of the same post, as shown. For a 4x4 post, a 20-in. tarp strap is the right length to secure my two levels. Now I have enough hands to set the post, and my level isn't on the ground when I need it.

—Patrick Lawson, Sooke, B. C.

Epoxy syringe

My crew and I have been adding a second story to an older home, but before we could get to the framing we had to deal with the foundation. The original footing was too narrow to carry the weight of the addition, so we had to widen it by adding new footings alongside the old ones. To connect the old and new concrete, the engineer called for ¾-in. rebar dowels. And the dowels had to be epoxied into the old footings. I checked out the epoxy in glass capsules that are made for this purpose, but at around \$4 apiece they were more than we wanted to spend—we had hundreds of empty holes to fill.

My research led me to an outfit called Adhesive Engineering (1411 Industrial Rd., San Carlos, Calif. 94070), which makes an epoxy called Concrese 1411 that is intended for just this



purpose. It is thick enough to stay in a horizontal hole without drooping out before it sets up. A batch of it cures slowly—about a two-hour pot life at 65°F. But once in the pot, how to get it into the holes?

Our solution is shown in the drawing above. It is a syringe made of a length of ½-in. ID copper tubing, with a plunger of ⅛-in. dia. threaded rod. At one end of the rod, I made a piston out of a pair of beveled faucet washers. They are held fast by washers and nuts. Tightening the nuts increases the diameter of the piston a bit, ensuring a good fit. To fill the syringe with a dose of epoxy, put the tube in the pot and pull up on the plunger. Now you're ready to expel the adhesive into the target hole. Using this method, we bonded all the required dowels at a cost of about 75 cents apiece. [Editor's note: For more on commercial masonry fasteners, see pp. 52-57.]

—Joe Wilkinson, Berkeley, Calif.

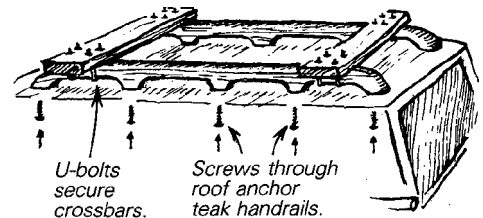
Acoustic-tile touchup

Acoustic ceiling tiles are fragile, and they are often dinged during handling and installation. To patch these little scars, I use typewriter correction fluid. It dries fast, and its refrigerator white color is a good match for the tile.

—T. Marshall Gillum, Orange, Va.

Custom roof rack

I have a sturdy fiberglass shell on the bed of my pickup truck. While it's handy for storing tools and many supplies, I needed a rack on top to carry oversize cargo. I come from a nautical background, so I wanted my new rack to reflect my long-standing interest in finely crafted boats. This led me to the local boat-supply shop, where I found a good selection of teak hand-



rails. They come in various lengths, depending on the number of loops in the handrail. Each loop is about 14 in. long. The rails I selected are the four-loop variety.

I attached the handrails to the roof by running screws with ⅝-in. washers through the fiberglass roof from inside the shell. The crossbars are pressure-treated 2x6s, secured to the handrails with a pair of U-bolts at each connection. Now I've got a sturdy, versatile roof rack that looks sharp, with lots of places to anchor a line.

—Chuck Keller, Marblehead, Mass.