

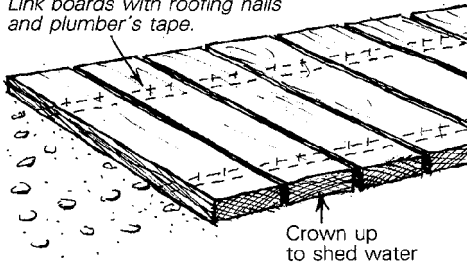
TIPS & TECHNIQUES

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.

Garden boardwalk

I wanted some paths between some of my bushes, but I didn't want the look of concrete stepping stones or gravel. A redwood boardwalk seemed like a good choice, and a nearby lumberyard sells 2x6 redwood culls for almost nothing. I cut the 2x6s into 14-in. treads, and then I linked the treads together with plumber's tape and roofing nails. Each segment of my path has between five to nine treads in it, which makes

Link boards with roofing nails and plumber's tape.



them very manageable, and the treads are arranged with their crowns pointing up to ensure good drainage.

—Victor A. Maletic, Antioch, Calif.

Screw-bit encore

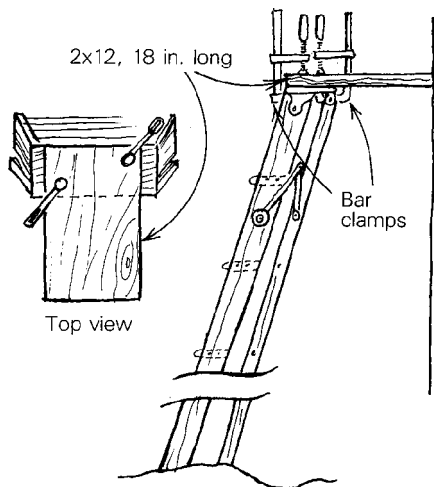
To get more life out of drywall screw bits, file the tip when the sides become rounded over. This allows the bit to enter the screw head a little deeper, thus engaging a part of the bit that still has crisp edges.

—Mick Cappelletti, Newcastle, Maine

Stepladder standoff

Sometimes when I work on windows or exterior trim I find myself lacking the appropriate ladder. In accordance with Murphy's law, an extension ladder is too long, and a stepladder propped against the wall ends up too close to the job to work comfortably. Under these conditions, I use a sturdy 2x12 standoff, 18 in. long.

I use a pair of short bar clamps to secure the 2x12 to the top shelf of the ladder, as shown in the drawing below. The standoff transfers the force of the ladder to the wall, and gives me



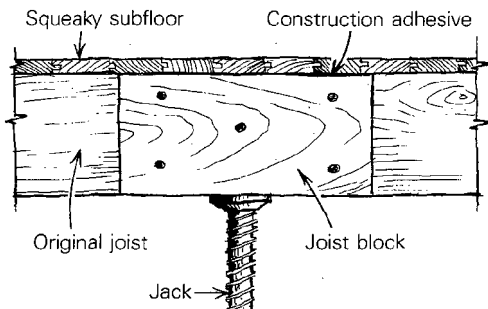
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room to maneuver around the task. As a bonus, the standoff makes a handy shelf for tools and materials.

—David Nauman, Marlboro, Vt.

Squeaky subfloor fix

To quiet squeaks in floors, I use a small joist block sistered to the original joist, as shown in the drawing below. Once I've located the squeak, I put a good bead of construction adhesive along the top edge of a block that is the

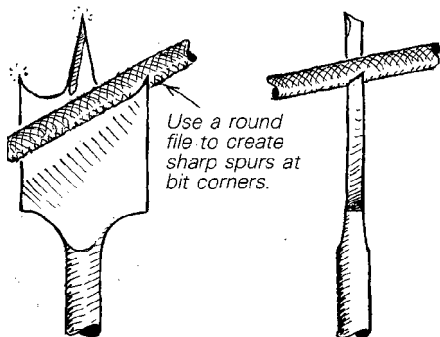


same depth as the existing joist. With the block in place, I use a small jack in the crawl space to press it tightly against the subfloor. Nailed off and jack removed, the job is done.

—Ross Fulmer, Atascadero, Calif.

Modified spade bit

I commonly use spade bits to bore $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. to 1-in. holes in wood because they are cheap, readily available and easily sharpened. But in order to make a clean hole in wood, a spade bit has to



be sharp. I keep mine tuned up by sharpening them with a round file—the kind used for sharpening chainsaw teeth. As shown in the drawing above, I file the inboard cutting edges of the bits to make them curved. This filing leaves a pair of sharp spurs that cleanly slice the wood fibers during a cut.

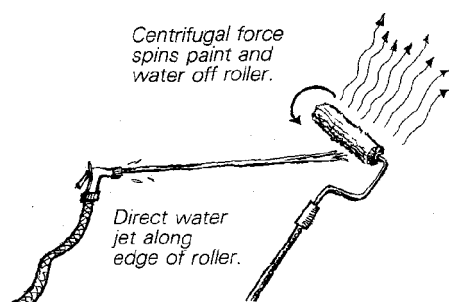
I have also used a spade bit modified in this manner to bore slightly oversize holes for dowels. I spread the spurs outward a little by using a ball-peen hammer and a vise for an anvil. After the holes have been drilled, I file the bit back to its original diameter.

—Roger Niesen, Ellsworth, Maine

Centrifugal roller cleaner

Cleaning water-soluble paint from a paint roller used to be a tedious chore until I came up with this idea. Now after the painting is finished, I simply attach an extension handle to the roller, step outside and use a garden hose to do the work. By directing a water stream along the edge of the roller, the roller revs up to a good

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speed and spins the paint and water off the roller, as shown in the drawing above. Be sure that you perform this operation well away from anything that might be damaged by the paint and watery overspray.

—Mel Wolpert, *Weatogue, Conn.*

Plywood carrier

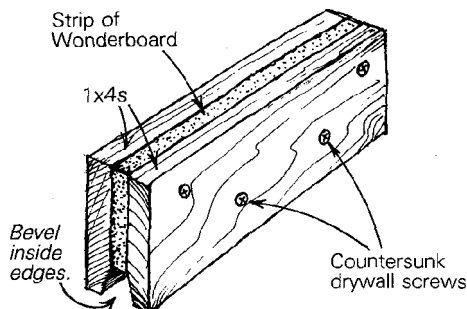
I recently had to move a stack of $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. plywood without a helper. After a bit of head-scratching, I worked out a system using a short wrecking bar with a 90° claw on one end. To use the bar, I lift one end of the plywood slightly and swing the claw end of the wrecking bar under the panel. Then I shorten my grip on the wrecking bar, pick up the sheet and use my other arm to steady the load. It's not much different from the usual design for a panel carrier, but my wrecking bar is always on site with me.

—Brad R. Johnson, *Chicago, Ill.*

Wonderboard rasp

I built a complicated bathroom last year that included a lot of tile. As a setting bed, I used a tile backing panel called Wonderboard. This $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. thick cement and aggregate panel is faced with a fiberglass mesh. To cut it, one scores the mesh (on both sides is best). Then the panel will break in a manner similar to drywall, and like drywall the resulting edge will be ragged.

Because of the bathroom's complexity, the Wonderboard edges had to be as close to perfect as possible. I've used a Surform plane to smooth a ragged drywall edge, but Wonderboard is so tough that a metal-edge tool would be dulled instantly by it. The tool in the drawing below is my solution to this problem. It uses a strip of Wonderboard as a cutting edge. I sandwiched the strip between a pair of 1x4s, and



held the pieces together with drywall screws. To ensure friction-free travel along the edge of the Wonderboard, I beveled the inside edges of the 1x4s.

—Mark S. Goldman, *Boston, Mass.*

Sealing around windows

When I was remodeling a house built in the 1920s, I made the decision to replace all of the

leaky, double-hung sash with new windows. My new aluminum windows came with 1½-in. wide flanges that, in new construction, are covered by the siding. In remodeling, however, the flange is nailed on top of, or next to, the old siding, and it has to be covered by trim. However, the trim isn't enough to solve the problem of leakage around the flange. To make matters worse, the building that we were working on

had deeply relieved triple-lap siding. A piece of trim nailed to the old siding simply sat atop the high points, leaving enormous gaps that invited water damage.

One possible solution would have been to stuff caulking into all the gaps, but my carpenter had a better idea. He attached 2-in. wide strips of Peel'n-Seal (Hardcast Inc., 8242 Moberly Lane, Dallas, Tex. 75227) all around the win-

dows, covering both the flange and the old siding. Peel'n-Seal, which comes in rolls that range in width from 2 in. to 12 in., is a strip of aluminum covered by a ¼-in. thick layer of asphalt adhesive. It can be easily tooled to conform to any surface, and it will seal wide gaps. We finished our installation with wood trim, entirely disguising our solution.

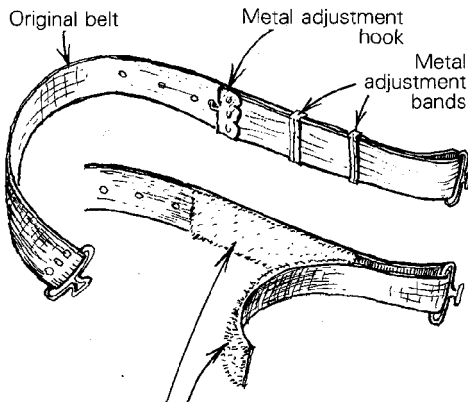
—J. A. DeCecco, Santa Cruz, Calif.

Tool belts, bags and pouches

Many readers have written to tell us how they modify their tool belts, and a sampling of their ideas appears below. For more on tool bags and pouches, see pp. 64-67.

Modified adjustable tool belt—If you are tired of your tool belt coming unhooked every time you pick it up, and are fed up with the metal adjustment bands digging into your gut, try the following alteration. Cut off the metal adjustment hook (preferably with a hot-melt cutter to seal the end of the belt). Now remove the metal adjustment bands and throw them away.

To modify the belt, glue a strip of 2-in. wide touch fastener about 1 ft. long to the inside of the belt where the overlap occurs. I used several coats of contact cement for a flexible and tenacious bond. Make sure to put the hook side of



Touch-fastener strips allow fine adjustments in belt diameter.

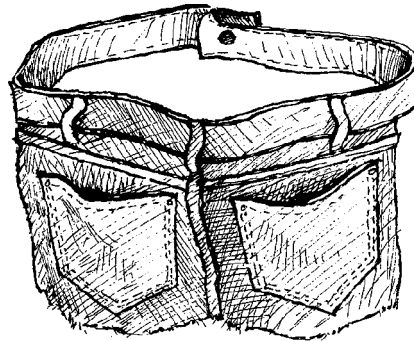
the material so that it faces away from your skin. This will make the belt more comfortable if you work in shorts during the summer.

Refined in this manner, your belt can be quickly and accurately adjusted. In my experience, the fastener has never come undone.

—Alan Carrier, Carbondale, Ill.

Nailbag support—I've solved the problem of heavy framing aprons by using army-surplus nylon pack suspenders along with the surplus pistol belt. They last forever, and can accommodate most leather nail bags, loops, hoops and tape holders. —John Friedrichs, Lexington, Va.

Blue-jean nail bags—When my blue jeans gave out at the knees, I recycled them into a carpenter's apron. To do this, take an old pair of jeans, with good back pockets, and go after them with a pair of heavy-duty fabric-cutting scissors. Cut away the legs about an inch below the pockets, and then up the side seams to the belt line. Now continue the cut under the belt



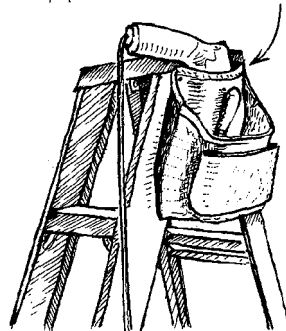
line, leaving the rear half of the jeans and a strap to put around your waist, as shown in the drawing above.

In addition to being free, this apron is guaranteed to fit (assuming you've recycled your own jeans) and the button is already in place.

—Ray Jorgenson, Center Ossipee, N. H.

Ladder sack—When I climb up a ladder to work, I never have enough room for all my tools and accessories. To solve this problem, I screwed a leather tool pouch on the side of my ladder. I used one with a high inside pocket and

Top pocket modified to carry drill



cut out its bottom seam, which turned it into a drill holster. Now my ladder does double duty by carrying me and my tools.

—Will Milne, San Francisco, Calif.

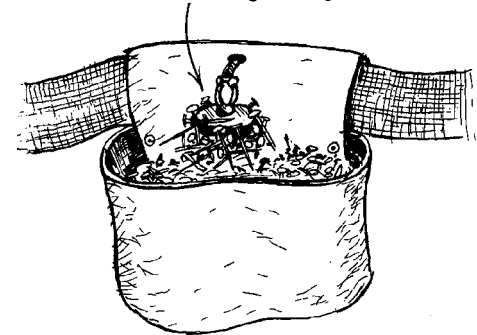
Belt-buckle upgrade—My carpenter friends and I have all agreed for some time that the weak link on a tool belt is the clasp. Some twist-grip buckles are flimsy, and they can all be clumsy to disengage, especially if you have to remove your belt in a precarious spot.

As a remedy, I removed my old clasp and replaced it with a seat-belt buckle. I tried both the push-button type and the spring type, and decided I like the spring type better. Now I can easily remove the belt when I want to, and with one hard at that.

—Evan Disinger, Lemon Grove, Calif.

Magnetic nail pouch—On a large drywall project you can wear out a pair of gloves (or your fingertips) just by picking screws or nails out of your nail pouch. To prevent this problem, I've attached a magnet to my tool belt with a strong rubber band. I placed the magnet over the center of my nail pouch, as shown in the drawing below. Located here, the magnet can be extended down into the pouch, where it

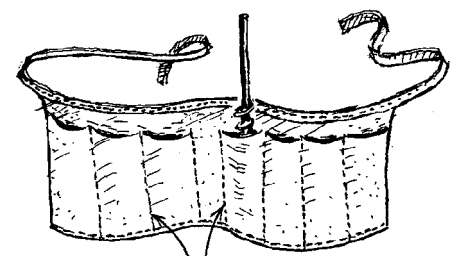
Fasteners cling to magnet.



picks up a supply of fasteners. Then I can quickly pluck them off the magnet without jamming the tip of one under my fingernail.

—Bob VonDrachek, Missoula, Mont.

Nail-pouch chisel roll—Many lumberyards give away canvas nail aprons. While the aprons may be flimsy and of little value as nail holders, they can be easily modified into a rollup tool



Seams in pouches make slots for bits or chisels.

pouch for auger bits or chisels. As shown above, sew some seams into the pouches, and you've got slots for some of your edge tools.

—Samuel D. Jannarone, Upper Nyack, N. Y.

Card-carrying tool belt—If you don't store your 25-ft. tape measure in the holder provided on your tool belt, consider it as a place to carry 3x5 cards. I can fit about 40 cards, folded in half, in the one on my belt. I'm constantly using the cards for lists and detail drawings, and it makes the formerly neglected pocket a useful adjunct to my tool bag.

—Bob Jewell, Kauai, Hawaii