

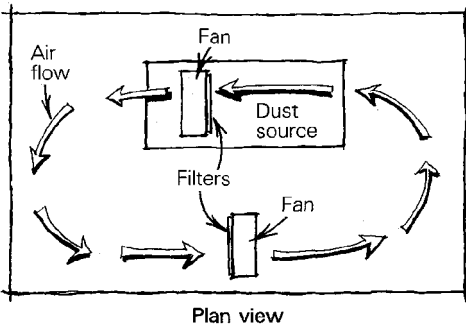
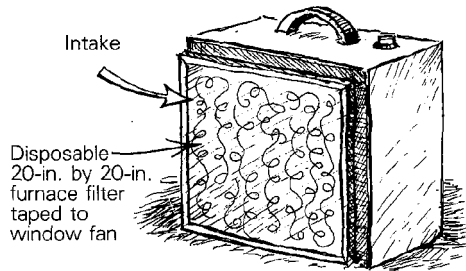
TIPS & TECHNIQUES

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.

Filter fans

My basement workshop is poorly ventilated, and whenever I do a job that requires lots of sanding, sawing or routing, the air turns hazy with airborne particles. A friend suggested combining a disposable furnace air filter with a standard window fan. Since I had a couple of fans I decided to try it and am pleased with the results.

As shown in the drawing below, I position one fan near the machine producing the dust



and the other across the shop, facing the opposite direction. This sets up an air current that continually directs the dust particles through the filters. I used duct tape to attach the filters to the fans, and I've found that occasionally spraying them with Endust dramatically increases their ability to grab dust particles. To clean the filters, I simply vacuum them when the fans are off.

These filter fans are also handy to take along to the job site during cleanup. A pair of them will clear the air in a good-size room in a couple of minutes.

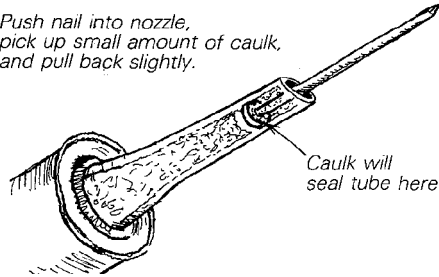
—Tom Eckblad, Minneapolis, Minn.

Caulk saver

It would be nice if all caulking jobs required exactly the amount of caulk that comes in a tube, but they don't. Instead, we are left with partially consumed tubes of caulk that are worth saving. Some people put a nail in the end of the tube, and put it away for future use. The next time they need the caulk, they pull out the nail and try to squeeze the caulk out of an 1/8-in. dia. nail hole. Unless you've got forearms like Popeye, this is difficult.

I also use a nail to plug a caulk tube, but I insert it head first, as shown in the drawing

Push nail into nozzle, pick up small amount of caulk, and pull back slightly.



above. I swirl the nailhead around in the caulk and then I pull the nail back out until it seats against the inside of the nozzle. The caulk on the shank of the nail will make a seal that protects the contents of the tube. When I pull out the nail, the caulk seal comes with it, and the goo inside the tube is still usable.

—Norm Jespersen, Royersford, Pa.

Nail pops

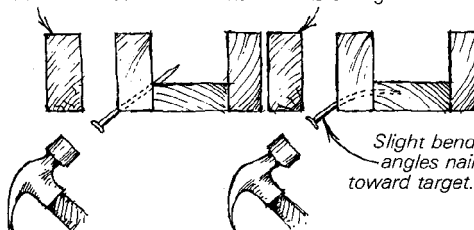
Often an annoying nail pop on newly hung, taped and painted drywall can be flattened without having to refill and paint it. I take a 6-in. tapping knife and flatten it out over the pop. I then give a sharp rap with a hammer to the area of the knife over the pop, and at least half the time, the knife distributes the blow well enough to flatten the spot without marring the paint. A quarter of the time touch-up painting is required, and unfortunately, remaining instances will need recoating and repainting. But the odds are in favor of this technique, and I've never damaged a knife doing this.

—Robert H. Brereton, Minneapolis, Minn.

Intentionally bent

Here's a simple and effective way of nailing in tight places where your hammer is restricted, and the only angle of drive that you can use will result in the nail not catching both pieces of wood to be attached. Using your hammer, put a slight bend in the nail before driving it. Driven normally, the curvature of the nail will bring it right around into the required area as shown in the drawing below.

Stud too close to allow hammer to swing



This method can make the last-minute installation of backing for bathroom fixtures, cabinets or drywall almost bearable.

—Christopher Zane Nestor, Onalaska, Wis.

Flux-brush container

As all good plumbers know, one of the secrets of a successfully sweated joint is cleanliness. And one of the hardest things to keep clean is a flux brush. If you keep it in a toolbox, it just collects dirt.

I keep my brushes clean in storage tubes made of 3/4-in. PVC pipe. For each brush, I

cut a piece about 7 in. long, and close its ends with a couple of PVC caps. Now my brushes stay clean, and the white containers make them easy to find.

—Alan Mendelsohn, Indianapolis, Ind.

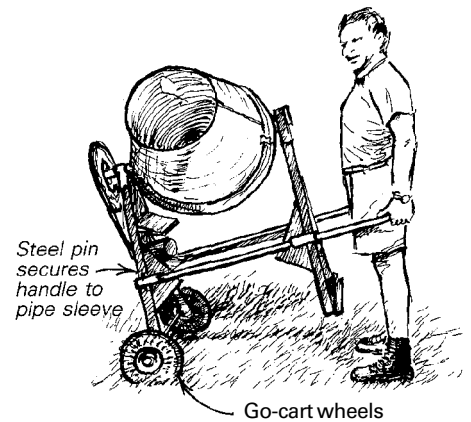
Hole-saw help

Core-type hole saws frequently bind in stock over 3/4 in. thick, but even when they do make it all the way through a piece of 2x stock, the core gets lodged inside the saw's cylinder. To avoid this problem, drill partway into the stock and withdraw the saw. Then take a flat-bladed screwdriver and drive it into the plug, with the grain. The plug will split easily, and it can be removed in two or three pieces. Keep cutting through the stock in this manner, and the job will go much faster.

—Norm Rabek, Burnsville, N. C.

Transit mixer

I got tired of muscling my cement mixer around the job site, so I mounted a pair of go-cart wheels on one end (drawing below). To lift the mixer for transport, I used a pair of handles made from 1/2-in. galvanized pipe.



They fit into four sleeves made of 3/4-in. black pipe that were brazed to the mixer's frame. The handles are removable, but to make sure they stay put, I connected each handle to a sleeve with a steel pin.

—Joseph A. Fletcher, Ocean City, Md.

Removable rail

I am often asked to build removable duckboards for decks over living spaces so that the roof surface underneath can be cleaned and repaired. Recently, I had to build a deck whose railing was also removable. I built it in 8-ft. sections with 2x4 rails and connected them with hardware made to hold truck stake-sides together. These do the trick nicely, and are weather-resistant and inexpensive.

—Terry Turney, Sandpoint, Id.

Taping knife pans

If you're having difficulty finding a large enough pan for your biggest drywall taping knife, try a piece of vinyl rain gutter fitted with two end caps. In addition to coming in any length you want, a vinyl pan is rustproof and easy to clean.

—Joe Graczyk, Cazadero, Calif.