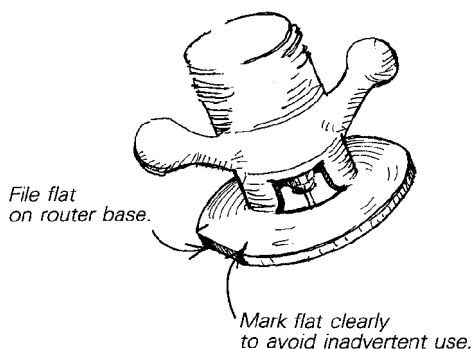


Tips and Techniques is a forum for readers to exchange the methods, tools and jigs they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details and sketches to Tips, Fine Homebuilding, Box 355, Newtown, Conn. 06470.

Adjustable router base

Sometimes when I'm using my router I find it necessary to make a cut a whisker wider than the jig or fence will allow. For instance, a dado might have to be a little wide to accommodate a piece of stock that is slightly oversize. Rather than go through the hassle of moving the jig or fence, which rarely yields satisfactory results, I rotate my router so that a flat portion of its circular base bears against the guide.

I used a file to create a flat spot on the edge of the router base, reducing its radius by about $\frac{1}{32}$ in. at this point. By making a sec-



ond pass on a cut with the flat spot against the guide, I remove another $\frac{1}{32}$ in. of material from the workpiece. As shown in the drawing above, I clearly marked the flat spot on the base to avoid its inadvertent use.

—Wm. D. Holmes, Moscow, Me.

Remove paint from screws

When a screw slot is clogged with paint, it's very difficult to get a bite on it with your screwdriver. When I'm up against this problem, I chuck a 4d finish nail in my electric drill and excavate the caked-on paint with the point of the nail. When the nail dulls, which doesn't take long, I touch up the point with a few licks from a file. This method works equally well on Phillips-head or straight-slot screws.

—T. D. Culver, Cleveland Heights, Ohio

Painting trays

The lids of 5-gal. joint-compound buckets make great trays for 1-gal. cans of paint. In addition to serving as a platform for the paint can, the lid is large enough to hold a paintbrush, and the lid's lip is high enough to prevent drippings from overrunning the tray.

—Steven Silkunas, Philadelphia, Pa.

Rebar sheaths

Concrete footings frequently require vertical rebar stubs projecting upward to anchor walls that will be built at a later date. Because they've been cut, these stubs usually have very sharp ends. As soon as vertical bars are in place, I cover their tips with a small piece of

duct tape, rendering them relatively harmless during the pour. The tape also protects the mason's hands when it comes time to set the wall blocks.

—Bob Jewell, Kalaheo, Kauai, Hawaii

Recycling window shades

Every time I buy an old house or work on one, it seems that a big pile of old window shades gets canned. *Don't throw those shades away!*

I just built a great outfeed table for my standing power tools out of a bunch of 30-in. long by 1-in. dia. shade rollers. One end already has a centered pin—a 16d nail works on the other. I put several other shades to use as disappearing dust covers over my drawing table and my hobby workbench, and the vinyl shades have also found new uses as dropcloths.

—Frederick E. Bishop, Farrell, Pa.

Pole-top trim

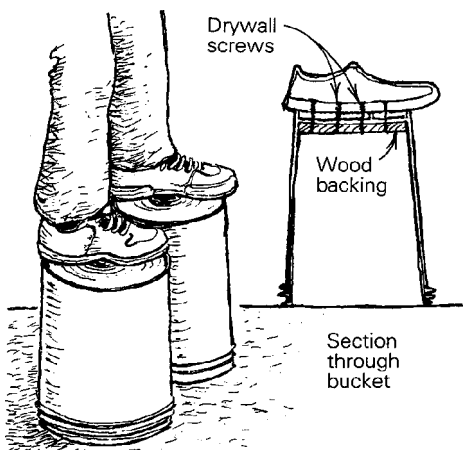
I once built a house with exposed poles, and their squared-off ends looked unfinished compared to the rest of the house. A large terracotta tile patio behind the house gave me an idea. Why not use the saucers that go with large clay flower pots as pole caps? I checked the nursery, and sure enough they had a big supply of very large saucers—up to 20 in. or so.

One of our crew members had been a lumberjack, so he put on his climbing gear and clambered up each pole. He attached each clay-pot lid to its pole top with asphalt mastic. The detail adds a nice finishing touch, and I think the saucers might slow down the end-grain checking process and resulting rot as well.

—Charles Miller, Kensington, Calif.

Mudbucket boots

A carpenter friend of mine doesn't have any trouble reaching a typical ceiling when he needs to install insulation, tape drywall or nail on the crown moldings. As shown in the drawing below, he uses drywall screws to af-



fix a pair of old work shoes to the bottoms of a couple of empty joint-compound buckets. The shoes are screwed around the perimeters of the soles, through the bottom of the bucket and into a piece of wood backing.

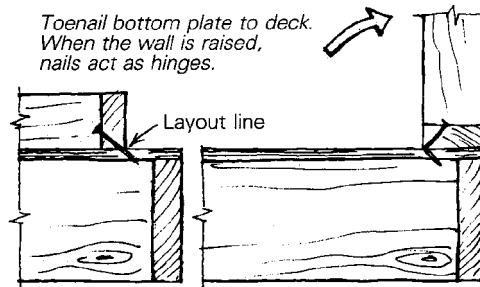
The bucket boots add about 15 in. to your height, and they are surprisingly stable. One

drawback is that you must step through narrow doorways one foot at a time when wearing the big feet.

—Stephen M. Kennedy, Orrtanna, Pa.

Positioning stud walls

Before I raise a stud wall, I find it helpful to toenail it with 16d nails onto the layout line as shown in the drawing below. As the wall



is hoisted into position, the nails act as a hinge as they bend. The wall ends up on the layout line with little need for adjustments, and no protruding nails.

—Zack Mills, Olympia, Wash.

Stair storage

A lot of people use the space under basement stairs for storage. So do I. To eke out a little more storage space, I fastened cleats to the sides of the stringers beneath the stair treads. They carry shelves that give me a place for small items that would otherwise get lost in the big pile of stuff on the floor.

—Robert M. Vaughan, Roanoke, Va.

Stain removal

Unfinished wood often gets stained from rusting nails, cement splashes or water leaks. Perhaps you've noticed this kind of staining around the corners of wood-lined skylight wells. To remove such stains, try a solution of oxalic acid and water. Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of oxalic-acid crystals with a gallon of warm water and stir until dissolved. Paint the solution onto the stained areas and let it stand for 15 minutes. Rinse the work with cold water and repeat the process if necessary.

Oxalic acid is sold at chemical-supply outlets, and it is poisonous. Be sure to wear rubber gloves and eye protection if you use it.

—Ernie Alé, Santa Ana Heights, Calif.

Door-hanging help

Whenever I have to hang a door—especially a heavy one—I get an assist from a 1-ft. long piece of $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. EMT (electrical metallic tubing). A piece of this smooth, sturdy metal conduit makes a good roller when it's placed under the door, allowing me to roll the door up to the hinged door jamb. Then I can use the EMT as a fulcrum to pivot the door up to hinge height. This trick has saved me a toe or two, plus my back.

—Alan Zebker, Santa Monica, Calif.

Good-neighbor policy

Our company does a lot of remodeling work in established neighborhoods, and to make sure that we get off on the right foot with the

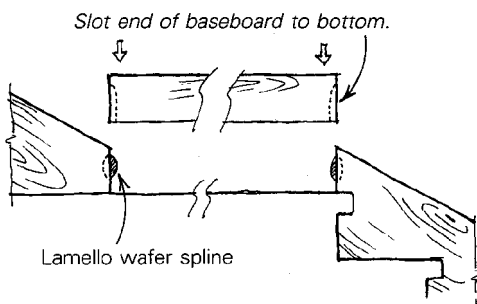
people living in close proximity to a project, we introduce ourselves with a preprinted card left in their mailboxes. At the top of the card is my name and contractor's license number, followed by our company's name, address and telephone number. Then the card goes on to say, "We are working on a remodeling project for your neighbor at: (space for the address). Please call us or stop by if we inadvertently create any problem or inconvenience for you. You are also welcome to drop by and visit the project during regular working hours."

The goodwill generated by this gesture helps to relieve tensions that a construction project can bring to a neighborhood. It has also led to a lot of other work for our company.

—Robert Malone, Berkeley, Calif.

Slotting baseboards

I recently had to install a piece of a 1x4 baseboard on a landing between two flights of



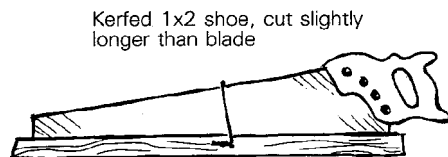
stairs. Although both skirtboards were already installed, I wanted to use my Lamello joining tool to ensure a flush fit at the butt joints.

As shown in the drawing above, my solution was to install the Lamello wafers in the skirtboards in the normal fashion. Then I cut corresponding slots in the ends of the baseboard, extending them to the bottom edge. This allowed me to slip the wafers into the skirtboards, and then slide the baseboard downward for a tight, smooth fit.

—Will Milne, San Francisco, Calif.

Handsaw shoe

Rather than let my freshly sharpened handsaw fall victim to encounters with teeth-dulling objects in the back of the truck, I made a protective shoe for it out of a piece of 1x2. I cut a 1/2-in. deep kerf down the center of the 1x2 to house the saw's cutting edge. Then I drilled an 1/8-in. dia. hole about midway along the shoe for a wire hoop, as shown in the drawing below. The hoop wraps around the sawblade, holding the shoe in place. To



snug the hoop to the blade, I twist the wire. Then I recess the cut ends of the wire into the wood with a nail set.

—Bob Jewell, Kalaheo, Kauai, Hawaii

Drill-bit debris removal

While reinstalling some oak moldings on a restoration job, I experienced an annoying problem. The drill bit I was using repeatedly clogged with a mixture of oak shavings and the old finish that coated the moldings. Its flutes were so tightly packed with the hardened mixture that it was impossible to clean the bit by hand.

My solution was to dunk the bit in a cup of water. Upon contact with the water, the stuff clogging the bit soon expanded and popped free as the water simultaneously cooled the bit. To eliminate electrical hazard, I filled the cup with just enough water to cover the bit flutes.

—Paul L. Crovella, Amherst, N. Y.

Light-fixture template for drywall

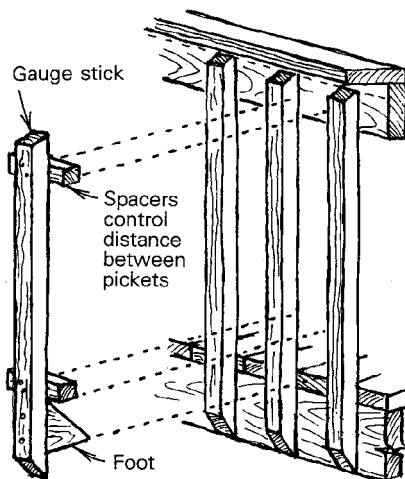
I see more and more recessed light fixtures in ceilings these days, and they present a layout challenge when it comes time to cut the corresponding holes in the drywall. Faced with this job, I put the plastic lid from a 3-lb. coffee can to work. This size lid fits snugly over the rim of most standard recessed housings.

To use the lid, I first push a nail through the center point of the lid. Then I snap the lid over the rim of the housing, and measure from the appropriate framing members to find my center-point coordinates. Then I put the lid on the drywall to be cut, nail at the center point, and trace around it. The layout is complete.

—Daniel J. Ewing, Gibsonsia, Pa.

Picket gauge stick

The next time you're assembling railing pickets on a deck, try using a gauge stick to speed assembly. As shown in the drawing below, the gauge stick fits between pickets.



Spacers at its top and bottom make it easy to align the next picket, while the gauge stick's foot rests on the decking.

—Louis J. Fritz, Medford Lakes, N. J.

Sander safety warning

I often use a belt sander to grind chisels and other pieces of metal. After grinding the bevel on one of my chisels recently, I resumed my work and noticed the smell of wood smoke in the air. Searching for its source, I spotted small

burn holes appearing in the Sander's cloth dust-collection bag. I immediately emptied the bag to find a mass of smoldering wood dust ready to burst into flames.

This is just the kind of thing that can lead to a tragedy. If you use your belt sander to grind metal, *always* remove the dust collection bag before doing the work.

—Robin Ferguson, Snowmass, Colo.

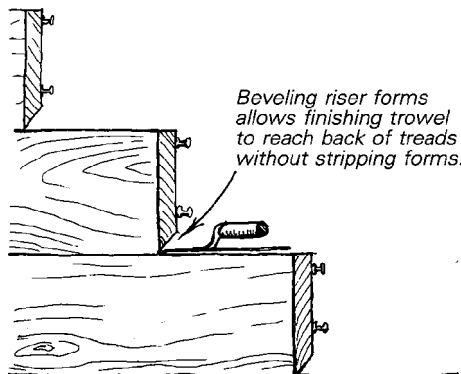
Sheathing cutouts

Carpenters often cut out the plywood sheathing from door and window openings with a reciprocating saw, circular saw or even a chainsaw. I prefer to use a carbide-tipped pilot bit mounted in my router. This type of bit has a point on its tip, so it can be plunged into the center of the work. Above the tip is a pilot bearing, which will follow the framing as the cutters make a quick, clean cut in the sheathing.

—Michael Gornik, Nevada City, Calif.

Beveled riser forms

When building forms for concrete steps, use 2x material to form the risers as shown in the drawing below, and cut a bevel along the bottom edge. This allows room for the finish-



ing tools, such as the float and trowel, to reach to the back of the tread without having to wait for the forms to be stripped. The result is a tread with a uniform finish from the nosing to the riser.

—Walter H. Chandler, Richmond, Va.

Paint-grade gap fillers

A good way to fill butt joints in molding that will be painted is to cut some long, thin wedges on the tablesaw. The wedges can then be angled into the gaps, cut off flush with a sharp knife and then glued in place—no need for sloppy caulking or wood filler. Of course it's better to make the joint thin as a razor line in the first place, but things don't always work out that way.

—David Campbell-Page, Toronto, Ontario

Carpenter's caddy

Through-bolting coffee cans to a plywood backing creates ganged compartments for nails, screws and other job-site odds and ends. Use 3/4-in. plywood for the frame, and saw out a handle you can get a good grip on—the kit can get heavy when all the cans are full.

—Allen Holder, Athens, Ga.