

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.

Two-way shims

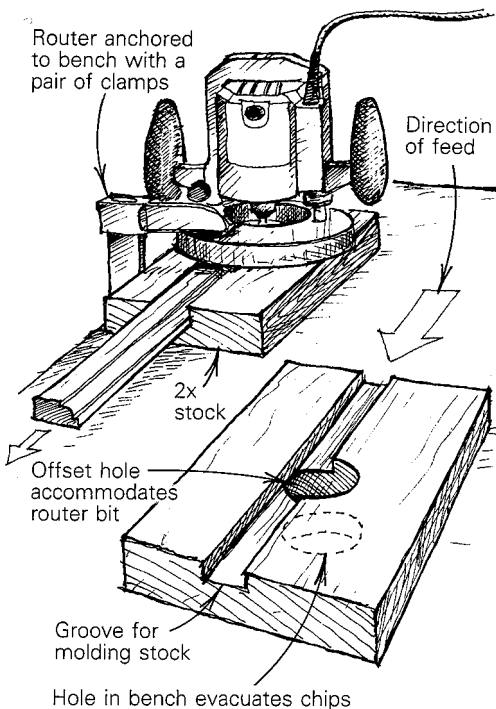
I sometimes use shims in my rough carpentry work, and I make them out of scrap pieces of plywood in assorted thicknesses. I cut them on the table saw so that they measure 3½ in. by 5½ in. At that size, they are ready to shim a 2x4 or a 2x6, without any extra trimming.

—Robert Dziewiontkoski, Greenfield, Wis.

Router-made moldings

I needed a special molding to complete a baseboard detail, but my router table was several hundred miles away on another job. Fortunately, the situation forced me to come up with an alternative method for site-milling trim stock. I think my new method is faster, more accurate and safer than using a router table—especially if the moldings are narrow and thin.

As shown in the drawing below, I used a scrap of 2x stock about 1 ft. long and about the width of my router's base. I cut a lengthwise groove near the middle of the 2x, just a pinch larger than the depth and width of my molding stock. Then I used a hole saw to bore a 1½-in. dia. hole that is offset from the center of the groove. This hole accommodates the router bit, and it should be to the left of the groove as you face the jig. This is to ensure that the router bit, which turns clockwise, will be turning into the work as you feed the stock



into it. Next, I bored a similar hole in the top of my job-site workbench to allow the wood chips an escape route.

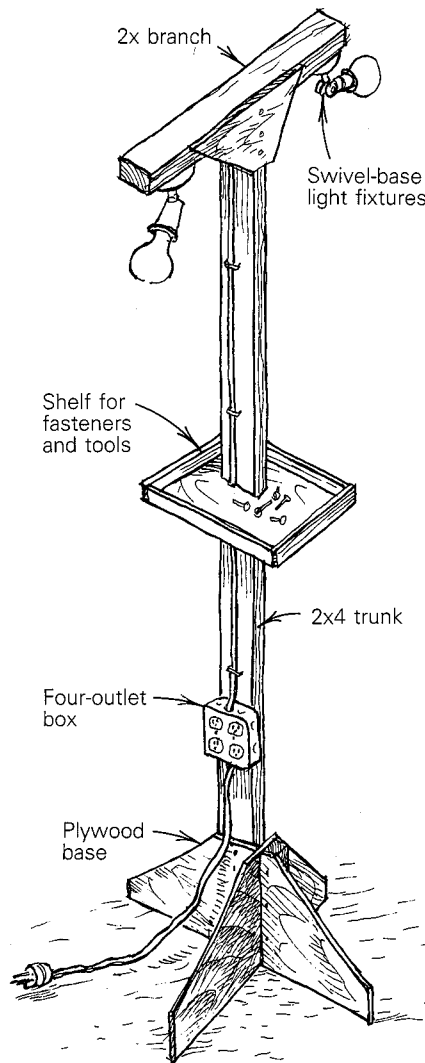
I positioned my router over the hole in the jig and anchored the router to the table with a pair of clamps. The clamps were arranged on opposite sides of the router's base, in line with the groove in the 2x stock. By sighting

down the groove I could easily adjust the router, both vertically and horizontally, until I had the bit in the exact position that I needed for the molding profile. Cutting the moldings is a simple matter of turning on the router and feeding the stock into the groove. In a few minutes I had hundreds of feet of molding. And because the stock was captured in the groove of the jig under the base of the router, my fingers never got near the cutters.

—Bill Young, Berkeley, Calif.

Work Tree

I call the assembly shown in the drawing below a work tree, and it makes my on-the-job work stations less cluttered and better lit. The

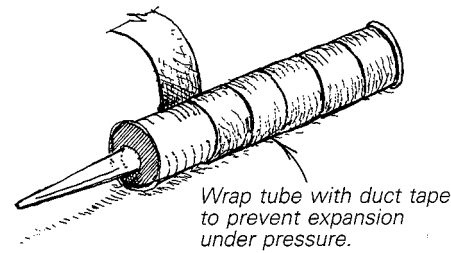


structure consists of a base made of crisscrossing plywood legs, a 2x4 trunk and a 2x branch at the top for light fixtures (I prefer the exterior grade fixtures that allow the lamps to swivel). Near the base of the trunk I mount a four-outlet box with an extension chord. Midway up the trunk I have a shelf for tools and fasteners. You can add lots more shelf area to one of these, depending on your taste for luxury versus mobility. This thing is great when you're working in cramped, dark bathrooms. You can also put it next to the sawhorses just to relieve cord and tool clutter.

—Sam Yoder, Cambridge, Mass.

Drip-free caulking

After years of frustration trying to apply a neat line of caulk, I figured out how to make the caulk stop discharging the instant I stopped



squeezing the trigger. The secret is to wrap the tube with duct tape, as shown in the drawing above. This prevents the tube from expanding under pressure and then collapsing (and discharging caulk) when the trigger is released.

Besides permitting precise control of the caulking job, I save on caulk. If I'm careful, it's possible to work without a cleanup rag.

—Keith Ojala, Birmingham, Mich.

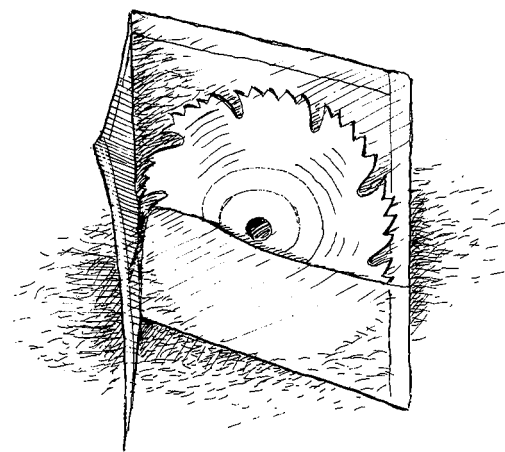
Removing glued-down wood

If you need to remove a piece of wood that has been put down with mastic, take a single-strand guitar string and attach each end to wooden handles. Insert the string between the wood and the mastic and pull the handles back and forth. The guitar string works like a cheese cutter.

—Michael Murphy, Guemes Island, Wash.

Sawblade jacket

I get a lot of literature about building products. Much of it comes in heavy paper folders with pockets on the inside. After I've filed the literature in the proper drawer, I use the fold-



ers to protect my circular-saw blades. As shown in the drawing above, blades tuck neatly into one of the interior pouches, protecting their teeth. The pouches are usually 9 in. wide—big enough for almost all the blades I typically use. With the blades tucked in the folders, I can store them like books on a shelf.

—Mark Feirer, Woodbury, Conn.

Stake pull

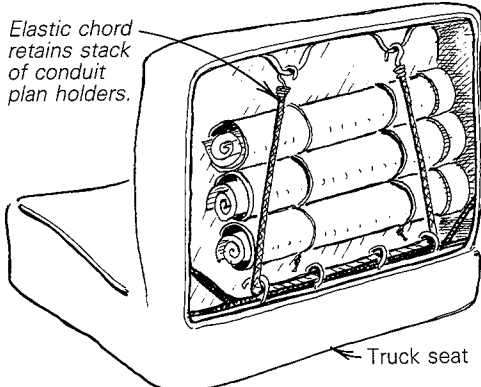
On a recent foundation job, I was stunned to discover that we didn't have any grease to coat our steel stakes with. There wasn't time to send out for some, so we looked around

the site for some other material that would keep the stakes from becoming part of the foundation. Our roll of filter fabric came to the rescue. We protected each stake with a couple of wraps of the fabric, and held the stuff in place with tie wire. Pour complete, the stakes came out with little effort.

—Matthew Bronson, Oakland, Calif.

Behind-the-shoulder plan holder

Storage space of any kind is a rare commodity in my little pickup truck, so I considered it a windfall to discover a hollow niche behind the seat that's just right for stashing a few sets of plans out of the way. As illustrated in the



drawing below left, I stacked three pieces of 3-in. plastic conduit atop one another, and tied

them together with tie-wire. On the passenger side, the conduits are capped. I strapped the conduits in place with an elastic chord wrapped around the seat framework, and voilà—no plans rolling around inside the cab.

—Neal Bahrman, Ventura, Calif.

Wrist gaiters

When I have to install fiberglass insulation I make a pair of glove-like shields out of a pair of old gym socks. I cut off the toe and make a little hole for my thumb in each sock. Then I pull each sock all the way up to my elbow, covering all the skin around my shirt cuffs. This keeps the fiberglass from getting into the tender skin on my wrists and arms, while leaving my fingers unhindered to work with utility knives and staple guns.

—William F. Roslansky, Woods Hole, Mass.

Plumb-bob tip

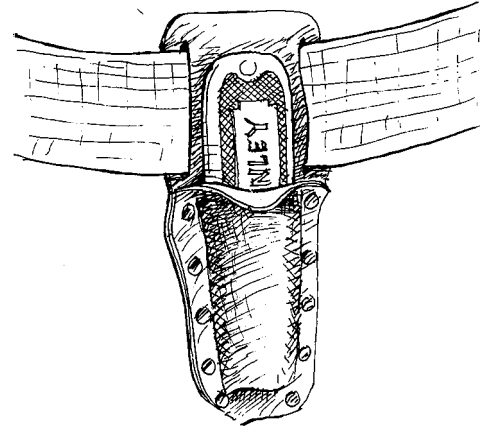
When the tip to my plumb bob was missing, I stopped by the local lumberyard to pick up a new one. No such luck. I'd either have to wait two weeks for a special order, or buy a whole new bob. Faced with these alternatives, I went through the machine-screw bins until I found a screw that matched the threads of my missing tip. Then I cut off its head and ground a suitable point on it. The real bonus here is that I discovered I could use the long machine screw tip as a plumb-bob extension. By back-

ing the tip out a bit, I can set its elevation at precisely the point I want.

—Bruce Bieschke, Eureka Springs, Ark.

Form-fit leather pouches

Years ago, I learned from a leather crafter that you can form leather with common rubbing alcohol. I recalled this when I was fixing up my last tool belt. I like to use the old-style



fixed-blade utility knife because of its positive, wiggle-free action. But for safety's sake, it needs its own sheath.

My local supplier had a tool sheath that was a little tight for the utility knife, so I soaked the

sheath in rubbing alcohol and jammed in the knife. By working the leather with my fingers, I was able to shape the sheath to fit the knife and to roll down the top edge a little to make it easier to return the knife to its slot. Then I set it aside to dry with the knife inside, as shown in the drawing on the previous page. Once the alcohol dried, the leather maintained its shape.

Now I've got a sheath that fits my knife perfectly, allowing me to withdraw it easily, while at the same time holding it securely enough to keep it from falling out accidentally.

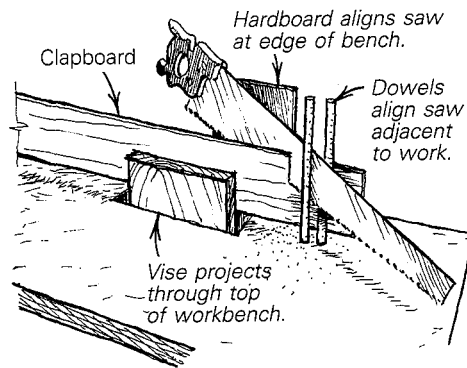
—Bruce Crooks, Ottsville, Pa.

Scarf-joint jig

On my old house, some of the clapboard is still secured to the framing with square nails. Where clapboards abut one another, they are scarf-jointed. This house was built before the use of building paper, and clearly the overlapping scarf joints allowed less water infiltration. When it came time to repair some of the clapboards, I wanted to duplicate the scarf joints, which are cut at 20°. I couldn't find any information on how to make these cuts, so I devised the jig shown in the drawing above right.

One of my shop benches has a vise that projects through the top. I use it to secure the siding, which is shimmed with an inverted scrap of clapboard to keep it vertical. I use a crosscut saw with a pointed end to make my

cuts because I find that it's pretty easy to steer. A piece of hardboard screwed to the



front of the bench aligns the saw on the near side of the work. On the far side, a pair of dowels let into the bench top keeps the saw in line.

—Guy Campbell, Norway, Me.

Step-drilling in masonry

When I build decks or additions, I often have to fasten a ledger with lag bolts and lead shields to an existing masonry wall. This process can be maddening because a few of the holes always end up a little off layout. The problem is that a big masonry drill bit has a tendency to wander off its mark.

To avoid this problem, I first drill my holes in the ledger, then mark their center points on the masonry. Then I start drilling the holes in the masonry with a 1/8-in. bit, followed by a 5/16-in. bit and finally a 1/2-in. or 5/8-in. bit, depending on the diameter of the lead shield that I'm inserting. This extra effort takes only a few minutes, and it consistently yields accurate results.

—John A. Neer, Alexandria, Va.

Quick knee patches

Like Paul Arena (*FHB* #47, p. 28), I use knee patches to extend the life of my pants, but with one important difference: no sewing is involved. I use a product called Speed Sew, which is available at fabric supply stores. If you can't find that brand, any fabric glue will likely do.

I cut patches from the back of the legs of an old pair of pants, fold the edges over, and glue them down. When the glue is dry, I glue the completed patches to my pants with liberal applications of the glue. I have been using this glue for 15 years (around here they call it "the loggers friend"), and I know it will resist any number of washings or rough wear. Best of all, I don't have to go through the time-consuming sequence of ripping out seams and trying to get a needle through the thick folds of heavy material.

—Patrick Lawson, Sooke, British Columbia