When outfitting my new shop, I needed a way to store and organize my hand tools, so I stole this storage design from my friend Bob Della-Rovere in Mesa, Arizona. The setup consists of simple \( \frac{3}{4} \)"-thick frames covered on both faces with pegboard and mounted vertically in a cabinet on full-extension drawer slides screwed to cleats. You could fix the cleats directly to a cabinet top and bottom, but I decided to mount them to a "case insert," which I then slipped into the cabinet opening after assembling the entire unit. This system works great for storing lots of tools in a compact area.

—Bob Kellenberger, Fairview, Texas

**Pegboard panel pullouts**

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Triangle marking system

I was in my shop trying to organize a jumble of cabinet parts, when a friend dropped by and showed me an old layout trick that has since saved me lots of time and confusion. After parts are cut to size, and before you lay out any joints, select the “show” face of each piece, orient it for best grain composition, and then organize the pieces on your bench in their desired relation to each other. Now it’s a simple matter of pressing the pieces together and striking a few lines across their faces to create a triangle, as shown in the drawings. A glance at the markings immediately identifies the “show” face, the top, the bottom, and the left- and right-hand sides of each piece. To identify multiples, strike additional lines that extend across the mating pieces.

—Gary Goldthwaite, Indianapolis, Indiana

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Wall-mounted lamp arm

At my shop workstations, I like to use swing-arm lamps for adjustable task lighting. For convenience, I mount the lamp on a wooden arm that swings out from a nearby wall. Sometimes, a single arm does the trick, but when I need more reach and flexibility, I create an articulated arm by adding extensions as shown.

Make the primary arm from 1\(\frac{1}{4}\)"-thick hardwood about 5" wide, tapering out to 1\(\frac{1}{2}\)" at the end. Mine is 26" long, but suit yourself. Drill a 3\(\frac{3}{8}\)"-diameter hole through the wide end on the drill press, using a long bit. Bore as deep as your drill press allows, and then raise the table to complete the hole. Rout or sand a bullnose onto the wide end. You can drill a hole on the narrow end to carry a lamp, or add an extension or two. Make an extension 1\(\frac{3}{4}\)" thick by 1\(\frac{1}{2}\)" wide, and attach it to its mating arm with a 3\(\frac{3}{8}\)" carriage bolt, a washer, a lock washer, and a nylon nut or a pair of nuts jammed against each other. Tighten the hardware enough to provide both friction and adjustability. Mount two metal L-brackets to the primary arm, using a length of 3\(\frac{3}{8}\)" threaded rod secured at each end with a pair of jam nuts, and then screw the brackets to a wall stud.

—Mike Kehs, Quakertown, Pennsylvania

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Crosscutting short multiples

Awhile ago, I was making wooden tabletop clips and needed to crosscut multiple short pieces to identical lengths. Marking individual cutlines would have taken too much time, so I decided to set up a stopblock on my power miter saw. Unfortunately, at the end of the cut, the saw would jettison (and often ruin) the freed piece, which had been trapped between the blade and the stopblock.

After a bit of head scratching, I realized that the fix is to set up the cut with a removable spacer between the stopblock and the end of the workpiece. Hold the workpiece firmly against the fence and stopblock while removing the spacer. Now the sawn piece has room to fall freely away from the blade at the end of the cut. To further minimize the chance of kickback, allow the blade to stop fully before raising it out of the cut.

—Ralph Burns, Montgomery, Alabama

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Perfect router-cut dadoes

Hardwood plywood usually doesn’t match its nominal thickness; it’s typically undersized between $\frac{1}{4}$" and $\frac{1}{32}$". Therefore, when routing dadoes, a single pass with a single bit is unlikely to yield a perfect fit. (Even "undersized" panel bits sold for the purpose may not exactly suit the thickness of your particular stock.) To solve the problem, I’ve come up with a two-spacer trick to rout perfectly sized dadoes. All you need is a bit that’s a smaller diameter than the desired dado width, a couple of scraps of wood, and a straightedge fence to guide your router.

First, make a spacer that’s exactly the same thickness as your bit diameter. To set up the cut, sandwich the spacer between the fence and router base, and align the bit with the dado layout line that is nearest the fence. Secure the fence and rout your first pass. Next, replace the spacer with a scrap strip of your plywood stock, standing it on edge. Then make a second pass with the same bit to create a dado of perfect width.

—Ryan Reese, New York, New York
When I’m relief-carving panels, I prefer to work at an easel, which reduces the amount this old back has to bend. While working on an intricate design recently, I found myself constantly reorienting the panel to allow carving with the grain. To make the job easier, I screwed a rotating platform to the easel, attaching the carved panel to the platform by wedging it between cleats, as shown. Now I can simply rotate the platform and workpiece as necessary to gain the best angle of attack.

I find that the single pivot screw creates enough friction between the unfinished easel top and platform to stabilize the platform. However, if I find it shifting under tool pressure, I’ll drive an additional locking screw through its corner.

—Philip Houck, Boston, Massachusetts
Perfect tongue-and-groove fits

Project plans often call for rabbeting the edges of a panel in order to create a tongue that slips into a drawer or rail groove. This is often done with a router bit or tablesaw dado head, with the work fed flat on the table. Unfortunately, done this way, any inaccuracy in the thickness of the stock is transferred to the thickness of the tongue, creating an ill fit in the groove.

One way to ensure a perfect tongue-and-groove fit is to create the rabbet by making two intersecting cuts on the tablesaw, feeding the edge to be rabbeted against the fence. Set up the first cut to rip the tongue to thickness, feeding the panel on edge with the tongue face against the fence. Use a featherboard to ensure consistency of cut. Now set up to make the intersecting cut against a thick auxiliary fence, raising it enough to create a tunnel for the freed offcut to fall away without being pinched between the blade and fence, eliminating violent ejection of the piece.

—Harvey Mickelson, Reno, Nevada
Adjustable drawer-planing perch

To plane a drawer side, you typically need to hang it on a support board that’s cantilevered off the edge of your bench. The problem is that the work can shift around on a board whose width doesn’t exactly match the inside dimension of the drawer box, and clamps can get in the way of planing.

Instead of a single board, I use sticks because they can be wedged to apply pressure against the sides of any sized drawer to secure it without clamps. To create the setup, extend three stout sticks across your bench as shown, with one of them resting against a projecting bench dog. With the drawer hanging on the cantilevered ends of the sticks, clamp their opposite ends to the bench, and then wedge a couple of cross sticks between them to create pressure against the sides of the box. (Note that the center cantilevered stick supplies support for full-length planing of the drawer side. If you’re just cleaning up the joints at the corners, you can omit it.) When planing, work in the direction of the bench dog. —Philip Houck, Boston, Massachusetts
Thin-plate ZCI

My hybrid tablesaw has a $\frac{1}{8}$"-thick metal throat plate that sits in an opening with very shallow ledges. This shallow recess complicates making a zero-clearance insert (ZCI) for the opening in order to minimize exit tear-out and prevent narrow rippings from falling into the saw. My solution is to modify the stock throat plate.

Make a sub-plate by cutting a piece of $\frac{3}{8}$"-thick plywood to fit between the leveling screw tabs in your table opening. Wax the underside of the stock plate and the inside edges of its slot (to resist glue when attaching the filler strip later), and then screw the plate to the plywood with flathead screws driven through six countersunk holes you drilled through the plate. Next, thickness a hardwood blank to match the width of the slot, and then rip from the blank a strip that's just a hair wider than the thickness of the plate. Crosscut this slot-filler strip to the slot length, and then glue and clamp it to the underlying plywood, topping the strip with waxed paper and a caul. After the glue dries, sand the strip flush to the plate. (To avoid scratching your plate, mask off the surrounding area with tape.) Alternatively, unscrew the stock plate, and hand-plane the strip, testing the fit as you work. Finally, clamp down the finished ZCI, and raise the spinning blade through it.

—David Schermock, Humble, Texas

Clamp-free portable saw guide

When it comes to shop-made guides for portable circular saws, there are two important criteria: The first is that the guide tracks the saw accurately. The second is that the edge of the guide aligns perfectly with the blade so that no offset needs to be calculated when setting up a cut. For tracking purposes, my $\frac{3}{4}$"-thick guide includes a $\frac{3}{4}$"-wide, $\frac{3}{8}$"-deep slot, which guides a wooden runner that screws to my saw base. (When affixing the runner, make sure it's perfectly parallel to the blade.) I made the base oversized initially and then trimmed it to final width with the saw running in its slot. That aligned the edge of the guide with the blade for easy positioning against a cutline. I made the track about 54" long so it generously spans a $4 \times 8'$ sheet of plywood crosswise.

The real trick here, though, is that this guide does not require clamps to hold its position. Instead, I attached a sheet of rubber “nonslip padding” to the underside of the base, keeping it back from the edges $\frac{1}{4}$" or so. The padding—designed to hold workpieces in place for routing, sanding, and other maneuvers—is simply stapled in a few places along its perimeter. It holds the guide in place remarkably well with no slippage whatsoever that could compromise cut accuracy.

—Russ Svendsen, Olean, New York
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