TOP TIP

Double-slot ZCI hold-down

For my tablesaw, I like to use a two-slot zero-clearance insert (ZCI) that will accommodate both a standard blade and a thin-kerf blade. As with any ZCI, it’s best to secure the rear end of the insert to prevent it from lifting. With a single-slot insert, a flat washer screwed to the underside at the rear will do the job. However, that won’t work when you rotate a ZCI like this to use the opposite slot.

To solve the problem, I screwed a figure-8 tabletop fastener to each end of the insert. Now, depending on which blade I’m using, I rotate the rear fastener outward to catch the underside of the saw table and rotate the front fastener inward, out of the way of the slots.

—Father Chrysanthos Agiogregorites, Etna, California

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Miter-biscuiting bench hook

Cutting biscuit slots in the ends of mitered pieces can be a hassle because of the setup time required to clamp every piece for safe, accurate cutting. As a solution, I came up with this production hold-down jig to quickly secure mitered pieces for slotting. It works with stock up to 1\(\frac{3}{8}\)" thick.

Because the base is constructed like a bench hook, it doesn’t need to be clamped to the bench. The business end consists of a V-block to which I screwed two half-discs that serve as cams to hold the mitered end of the workpiece. (I used a bandsaw to bisect a 3\(\frac{3}{8}\)"-diameter disc cut with a holesaw.) These are each wrapped with wide rubber bands or PSA sandpaper to grip the work when it’s forced backward underneath a cam. Locate the pivot holes where shown in the drawing. To allow the cams to spin freely, attach them using screws with unthreaded upper sections of the shanks. When using the jig, position the workpiece miter close to the V-block for stability.

—Serge Duclos, Delson, Québec
**Handscrew saw guide**

I was trying to cut tenon shoulders on the end of an odd shaped workpiece, and I was having a hard time keeping my handsaw on target. Then it occurred to me that I could use a wooden handscrew as a saw guide, clamping the jaws of the tool adjacent to my cutline opposite the waste side. To prevent scarring the jaws with the saw teeth, I used a flush-cutting saw, which worked great. As a bonus, the jaws also served as a chisel guide for cleaning up any sections afterward where necessary.

—Dean Laughren, Winnipeg, Manitoba

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**Ironing in the shop**

Although I’m not one for ironing my clothes, I do own an electric iron. It lives in my shop, where it helps me perform chores like removing old veneer or plastic laminate for repair jobs. Just set it to “medium,” and slowly push it across the surface as you peel up the material. It will release contact cement, white glue, hide glue, and other adhesives. (Cover finished surfaces with paper to prevent contaminating the iron with softened finish.) Similarly, you can use it to remove PSA sandpaper from its metal backing disc, to flatten rolled patterns, to apply edge banding, or partner it with a wet rag to raise minor dents.

—Marvin Gatlin, Birmingham, Alabama

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**Tighter turns from a bandsaw blade**

Demanding the tightest turn from a bandsaw blade can cause it to bind and burn. One way to provide more maneuverability is to make relief cuts in the waste, so that those outer parts can fall away to give the rear of the blade wiggle room.

However, sometimes you want to keep the entire workpiece intact, such as when cutting the pieces for the tugboat on page 36. In those cases, tapering the trailing edge of the blade will give it more clearance in the curved kerf, allowing a tighter turn, as shown in the drawing. To create the taper, slowly slide an 80-grit carborundum honing stone back and forth against each side of the running blade. Hold the edge of the stone at a low angle to the blade, avoiding the teeth and keeping your fingers a safe distance from the blade. Be patient, and make sure to leave a flat on the rear edge of the blade because a knife edge would be hard on the thrust bearing. For fire safety, vacuum the saw interior before honing to prevent sparks from igniting sawdust.

—Ric Hanisch, Quakertown, Pennsylvania
For cleanup around the shop, I use paper rags like those sold in boxes at home supply stores. They’re convenient to use, but tearing off a perforated section can be a two-handed hassle, with one hand (often already fouled with finish) to hold the box, and the other to rip away the necessary rags. The easy fix is to store the box upside down in a cabinet whose bottom has been drilled to create a dispensary hole for the rags. A quick, one-handed sideways pull is all it takes to free up whatever length you want. If you don’t have a suitable cabinet, you can create a simple shelf for the job, mounting it to a wall or perhaps between overhead joists.

—Carl Rettiger, Billings, Montana
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