Heat sink for sharpening

Grinding a chisel or plane iron generates a lot of heat, and quenching the blade in water can create minute fractures that can affect the quality of the cutting edge. Oil will cool the metal more slowly and safely, but it’s messy. Instead, try a passive heat sink scavenged from a computer motherboard. This small square of metal (typically aluminum alloy) is deeply grooved on one face, creating “fins” that help disperse heat quickly. Before your tool gets uncomfortably hot to hold, cool it down by pressing the flat face against the heat sink, which will dissipate the heat in short order without damaging the steel.

—Hunter Clyde, Lancaster, Kentucky
Inner tube clamps

Woodworking often requires glue-ups that traditional clamps can’t handle, so sometimes you need to think outside your wheelhouse. Inner tubes can apply pressure where ordinary clamps can’t, making them invaluable for nonlinear assemblies, such as curved or twisted work. To turn a trashed tube into a valuable clamp, cut off the valve stem and slice the tube into ¾” to 1¼”-wide strips to suit your needs. Wrap a strip around the assembly as necessary, tucking each end under a previous wrap to secure it. If you don’t have any old tubes hanging in your garage, check out your local bike or motorcycle shops. Regular tubes are thin and stretchy, while heavy-duty tubes are made from thicker material, which stretches less but is more durable.

—Andy Rae, Asheville, North Carolina
Shoe-style push sticks

A shoe-style push stick offers the best control over your workpiece. The long sole allows good downward pressure while the heel hooks over the end, offering positive forward feed force. The straight sole also provides enough bearing to help keep the workpiece against the fence to prevent kickback. Commercial models are available, but you can make your own from $\frac{1}{4}$- and $\frac{1}{2}$-thick plywood. Because they’re cheap and easy to make, you can consider them sacrificial, meaning that they’re perfect for ripping thin strips that require cutting into the push stick as part of the process. You can make a pusher any size you like, but it should be tall enough for your hand to pass over a tall splitter during narrow rips. The heel should be deep enough to positively grab the workpiece without slipping, but not so deep as to prevent solid sole contact on thin workpieces.

—Paul Anthony, senior editor

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String-and-sticks clamping

While serving in the US Navy during the Vietnam War, I picked up this tip working in the carpenter shop on an aircraft carrier. It allows you to clamp up a frame with nothing more than string and sticks. Begin by placing the unglued finished frame parts together. Next, wrap stout string at least four times around the perimeter of the frame. Add a foot or so to that, and cut the string to length. Now crosscut eight ¼ × 1” sticks of wood to about ¾” longer than the thickness of the frame stock.

Glue the frame joints, and place the parts together on a flat surface. Wrap the string as tightly as you can around the frame, and then tie it off with a square knot at one of the corners. Using a putty knife, pry the string away from the frame, and insert two sticks near the center of each frame side. Then spread the sticks apart as far as they will go while keeping the frame flat. This will effectively tighten the string to apply clamping pressure at the corners.

—Earle Darrow, Thousand Oaks, California

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