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Some of my 46 years of Remodeling Tips, Tricks and Hacks

Simple little tricks that I have learned through the years that will help you around the house

Drywall Hacks

1. Do not use pre-mix joint compound on self-adhesive nylon mesh tape, the water in the pre-mix will loosen the glue and it will bubble
2. When you have to put the cut edge of drywall against a dissimilar finished surface, slip a piece of "J" channel over the cut edge and when you are done run a bead of caulk from the "J" channel to the finished wall.

Blue Tape Hacks

1. To make a depth gauge when you are drilling a hole, wrap a piece around a drill bit, and fold the end back on itself to form a flag. When the tape hits the surface, you have drilled to your desired depth.
2. When making a saw cut and you don't want tear out, wrap the area where you are going to cut through with Tape and it will prevent tear out.



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3. When you have to make temporary marks on a wall when you are measuring, stick tape on the wall and mark on the tape, when you are done take the tape off the wall, no marks on the wall.
4. When you are gluing and clamping and getting glue squeeze out, stick tape to the bar of the clamp so you don't get glue on the bar of the clamp or stains on the wood if you are using black pipe clamps.
5. Hanging pictures can be a pain especially the type with those keyhole hangers. Put a piece of blue tape over them and trace the keyholes or put a small hole in the center and then peel it off and transfer it to the wall using a level to make sure it is level on the wall.
6. Stick a couple 6" long pieces, to a hard surface overlapping them slightly and now you have a disposable mixing surface for glue, or whatever.

Chalkline Hacks

Many people don't understand all the things you can do with a chalk line, so here we go

1. The hook on the end has a hole in it so you could slip a nail head or a screw head through there, pull it tight and snap a line... you can even use it to draw an arc or circle



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2. Use the chalk line as a plumb bob. Let's say you want to center the new ceiling fan in the room. Find the center of the room on the floor and put some blue tape on the floor with an X on it in the exact center. Now let out enough string to be just short of the floor and lock the handle. Hold the hook end on the ceiling with the chalkline body near the floor. Move the hook on the ceiling until the center of the chalkline body lines up with the mark on the floor. Mark the ceiling. You now have found the exact center of the ceiling.
3. Trying to snap a really long line? Stretch the line and place a finger holding it down in the middle and then snap each side separately
4. Find the angle? Set your speed square on the floor, (pivot point of square at your bottom point) attach the line at your bottom point. Now raise the line up to the next point and read the degree the line crosses on the square.

Hammer Hacks

1. Trying to pull a nail and the head broke off? Using the claw of the hammer get a bite on the nail like you usually do and instead of pulling towards you bend the hammer to the side, repeat if necessary.
2. Need more leverage when pulling a long nail, place a block of wood under the head of the hammer and then pull back. This trick



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also works well to protect the surface when pulling a nail from a finished surface.

3. To hold a small nail instead of using your fingers you can use a bobby pin, piece of cardboard or a comb.
4. Not exactly a hammer but the back of the top jaw on channel locks is rounded. Grip the nail and roll the channel locks towards you pulling the nail. Some vice grips will work too but you will need to add a block of wood under the head.
5. Measure your hammer bottom of handle to the top of the head, I bet it measure about 13" long +/- 1/2". Electrical outlets are installed 15" Above Finished Floor (AFF) to the center of the outlet. Set you hammer on the floor and make a mark on the stud that is where the bottom of the 4" box goes, 15" to center!
6. The claw of a straight claw hammer striking the end of a piece of wood makes a great wood splitter

Channel lock Hacks

1. Trying to tighten a shower head or other finished or decorative pipe? Usually you would use a strap wrench, but you may not have one. Just cut 2 short pieces of garden hose and slip them on the jaws of the channel locks and tighten away.
2. Holding a flashlight when working is sometimes impossible. Grab the body of the flashlight in the jaws of the pliers at a 90 degree



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angle and wrap a couple sturdy rubber bands around the handles and then prop it up resting on the back edge of the flashlight and the pliers handles.

Screwdriver Hacks

1. Stick a magnet on your screwdriver near the tip to magnetize the tip to hold small screws
2. Tape a penlight flashlight to the screwdriver shaft to shine the light on what you are trying to screw.
3. Have a screw tip that is painted over? Use a long screw driver tip, place it on the screw head and hit the end of the long tip with a hammer, this will move the paint out so you can use a screwdriver, or at least loosen it up enough so you can pop it out with a utility knife

Drill Hacks

1. Need a small drill bit for a pilot hole and not sure what size? Take the finish nail you are using cut the head off and put it in the drill. It will drill the perfect pilot hole, but don't go too deep.
2. Drilling through a piece of wood you usually get tear out. Put a scrap piece of wood under the piece you are drilling through; when the bit hits the scrap you are done with no tear out.

General Hacks



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1. Can't read the little numbers on the wire strippers and other tools? Get some white fingernail polish and wipe it over the number area and then quickly wipe it off with a clean rag, the white color stays in the number grooves making them easier to read.
2. Working on the roof or sloped area? Tools keep sliding down. Wrap a rubber band around the body of the tool, so more sliding down
3. Have a shorter pipe wrench that is too short to loosen the pipe? Slip a longer piece of pipe over the handle, instant leverage.
4. Need a level but don't have one? Go to the app store and download the level app for your phone.
5. Labeling breakers in your electrical panel by yourself. Plug a radio into the outlet and flip the breaker, when the radio goes off you found your breaker.
6. Does your door creep shut or open? Pull out a hinge pin and hit it in the middle, slightly bending it. This will cause enough friction to hold it in place.
7. Keep your door from latching. Put a rubber band over 1 handle and give it 1 twist and pull it across the strike latch and slip it over the other side door handle.
8. Have a stripped wood screw hole? Drill it out to the size of a wood dowel you have and then put some wood glue in the hole and tap



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the dowel in the hole. Cut it off when it dries, drill your pilot hole and insert screw..... Or if you don't have a wood dowel use slivers of wood with glue to fill the hole.

9. Hanging a picture with the wire hanger can be difficult. Put a fork on the nail in the wall so the end of it sticks out from the wall. Hook the wire behind the fork sliding it down to the nail. When it stops pull the fork out!

There you have it some of my favorite hacks
Contractor John