

When the job site becomes a mess, people no longer care

1

KEEP THE SITE CLEAN

I knew a guy everyone called Yard Sale because he left tools all over the job site. He could never put his hands on the tools he needed. To set up an efficient site, keep tools organized, plan tasks for simple repetition, and lay out job-site materials so that they are easy to access and find.



It's better to have some material in each room rather than to have one big pile. Start each project by unpacking the doors and setting them at the openings where they will be installed. This is the time to double-check that the doors swing correctly, that the doors don't swing over a light switch, and that they open cleanly against walls. Stock enough window casing, door trim, and baseboard in each room to complete that room. This way, it's much easier to account for missing material.



Corral stair parts at the stairs. These smaller pieces are easy to misplace, so put everything within easy reach of the stairs. The risers go in one pile, with treads nearby and newel posts next to the hand-rail fittings.

Don't expect the painter to make your work look good

2

BE NEAT ABOUT NAILING

One good work habit to develop is establishing a pattern to your nailing. On standing and running trim, place nails regularly in pairs every 16 in., or until the material is tight. This keeps the work neat and orderly. Avoid nails inside molding profiles; it's hard for a painter to fill and sand these holes. Use 2-in. nails for baseboard because 2½-in. nails will eventually hit a wire in a 2x4 wall. Use 18-ga. nails for wood-to-wood connections and 15-ga. nails for applying molding over drywall and for setting doors.



Approx.
16 in.

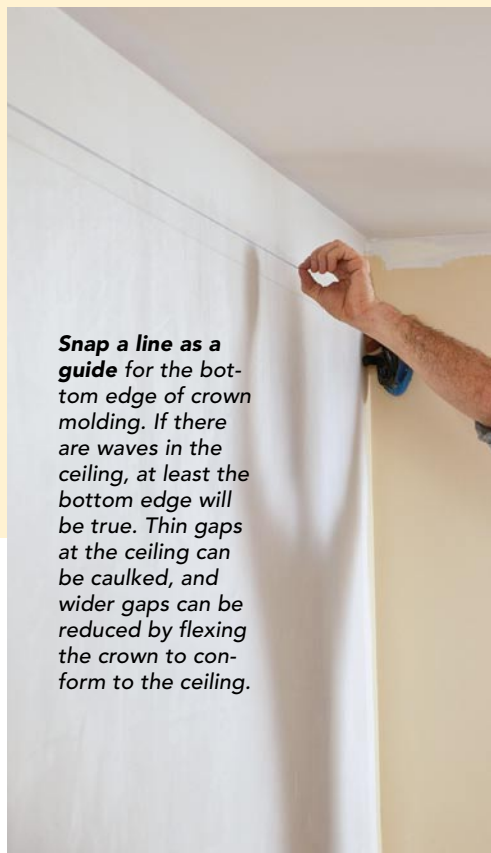


Always use a nail set. In an average 2800-sq.-ft. house, there might be 5000 nails in the trimwork. The painters shouldn't find one unset nail after the finish carpentry is complete.

3

THINK AND SEE STRAIGHT AND PARALLEL

Installing most trim is the discipline of connecting two points with a straight line. At this stage in the building process, the work sometimes becomes more a game of appearances than of perfection. The trick is to make bows, bends, and out-of-plumb conditions appear straight and true.



Snap a line as a guide for the bottom edge of crown molding. If there are waves in the ceiling, at least the bottom edge will be true. Thin gaps at the ceiling can be caulked, and wider gaps can be reduced by flexing the crown to conform to the ceiling.



After the carpenters are gone, no one inspects the house with a level. Converging lines, however, will stand out to anyone with a good eye. This is especially true where a door is set close to a wall, as in a hallway. If the wall is out of plumb and the door is hung plumb, the casing will show a taper against the wall. However, the aesthetics must be balanced with the door's function, especially if a door is likely to be kept open. Hung out of plumb, a door may swing shut by itself. In that case, the door must be installed so that it operates properly.

Parallel trumps plumb installations, usually



4

IMPROVE THE SURFACES BEFORE THE FINISH GOES ON

It may not be noticeable now, but after semigloss paint hits the trim, any sawblade marks, tearout, or imperfections will stand out like a sore thumb. Carry a piece of 150-grit sandpaper in your tool belt. On wood that gets a clear finish, erase or lightly sand out pencil marks. Sand field joints so that they become flush. When you walk away from the work, the stock should be ready for paint or stain.



TIP

A rag dipped in denatured alcohol can erase many pencil marks and doesn't affect the surface of the wood.



5

MAKE MITERS FLUSH

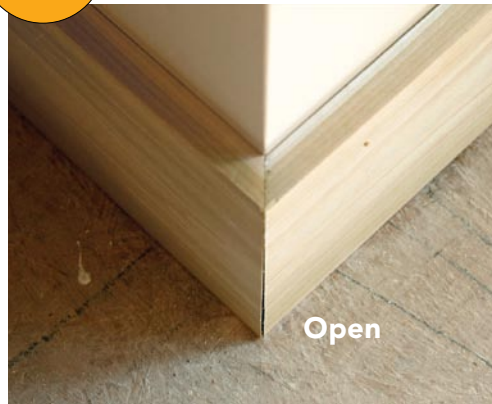
After door and window casings are painted, mating surfaces that aren't flush will stand out. A miter should be tight and flush, but a thin gap in the miter can be filled with caulk and will disappear. Uneven surfaces will stand out and should be leveled. A shim placed under one side of the miter (above) can help to line up the joint. Tack it in place, and trim the excess. A little sanding can blend discrepancies between the two sides.



6

KNOW WHEN TO MAKE PRECISE CUTS

Not every joint shows, so don't waste valuable time on cuts that don't matter.



Use your time wisely. There are plenty of times when a miter or cope will be covered with a successive layer of trim, so only the visible part of the joint needs to be tight. Corners are almost never square, so miters cut at 45° (photo above left) will often show a gap. Instead, use a back-beveled miter that creates a tight outside joint;

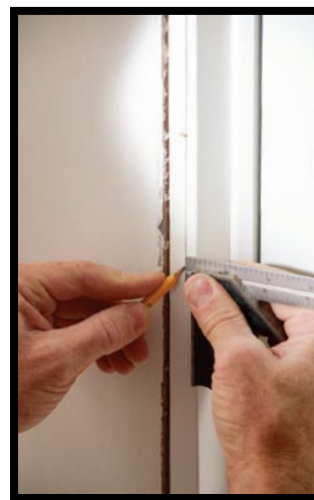
the gap (photo above right) will be hidden by the band molding. Likewise, shoe molding will cover gaps under a run of baseboard. When installing base or crown at an inside corner, the first piece can be cut a little short because the small gap will be covered by the cope of the next piece.



ALWAYS USE A REVEAL ON STANDING TRIM

7

Avoid a flush joint on layers of standing trim, such as applied window stool or door casings. Typically, any additional layer of trim on a door or window jamb should have a reveal, or it will leave a distracting seam. The size of the reveal depends on the proportions of the trim, but a $\frac{3}{16}$ -in. reveal is a good rule of thumb.



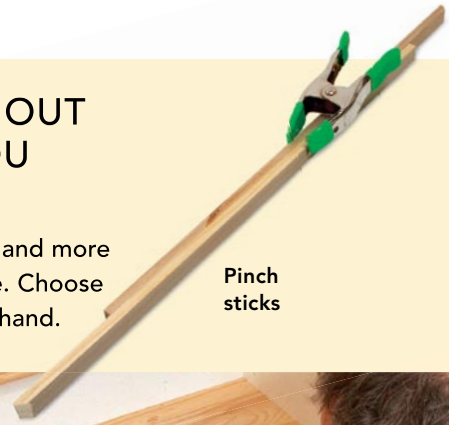
TIP

Use a small combination square to mark a consistent reveal on standing trim.

8

YOU DON'T HAVE TO PULL OUT YOUR TAPE EVERY TIME YOU MARK AND MEASURE

Most trim measurements can be made faster and more accurately with a more appropriate technique. Choose the most appropriate method for the task at hand.



Pinch sticks



For repeated measurements or a series of measurements taken from the same reference, use a story pole. They are typically made from scrap at hand and have the room to display measurements legibly.



Mark a piece of stock in place. After cutting one end to fit, locate the stock, and use a knife or sharp pencil to scribe the cutline.



Pinch sticks let you take an exact measurement between surfaces and transfer it to the stock. The simplest version consists of identical rips of 3/4-in. stock that are extended and locked in position with a spring clamp. Bevel the outer stick ends for a more accurate read.



TIP

1. To measure any angle, cut a scrap piece of the stock, hold it in place, and mark the outside and inside lines.



2. Next, place the stock on the opposite side, and mark the lines.



3. Transfer the crossed marks onto the scrap, and use it to determine the angle of the cut.

If you can't see the joint, don't waste time on it