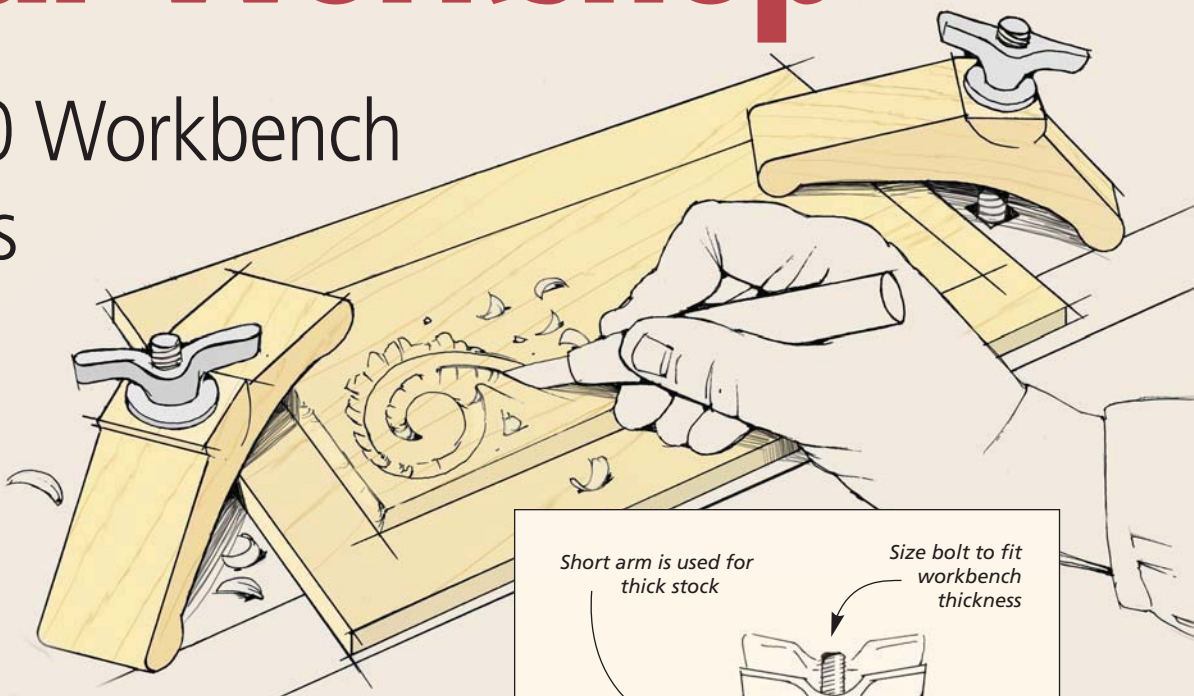


1-Hour Workshop

Our Top 10 Workbench Accessories

These simple, shop-built devices help you get the most out of your workbench.

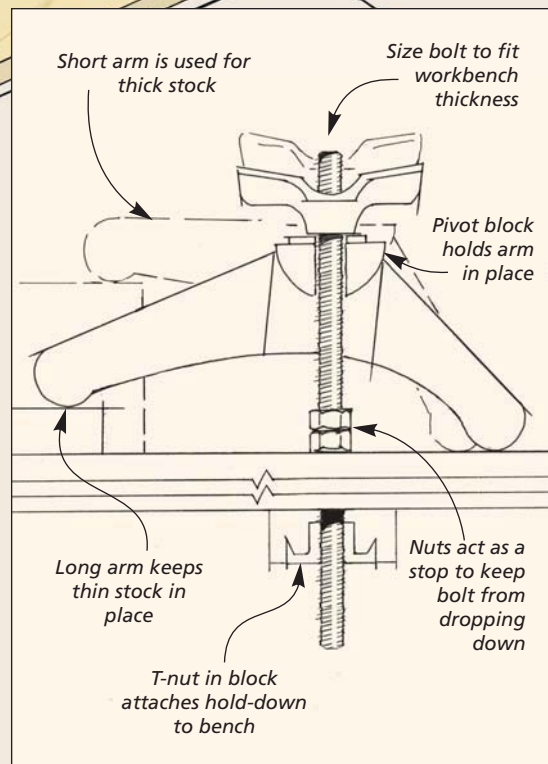
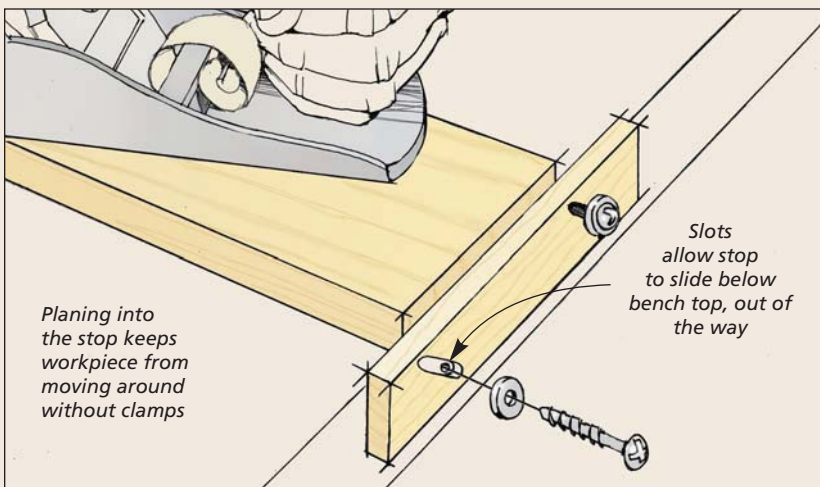


The workbench is the largest “tool” in my shop. And I use it for a lot of tasks. But even the best of tools can benefit from some practical accessories. The ten you see on these pages are the ones I use most often in my shop. Besides making tasks quicker, safer, and more accurate, these simple add-ons can be built with mostly scrap material and in less than one hour. That’s more than enough reason to add a few of these to your bench.

1 Hold-Down Clamp

One of the keys to accurate hand work is making sure that your workpiece is held securely. That’s where the hold-downs you see in the drawings come into play. Since they’re

made from wood, they won’t mar your workpiece. And a large wing knob makes it a snap to tighten the clamp down or loosen it quickly to reposition the workpiece.



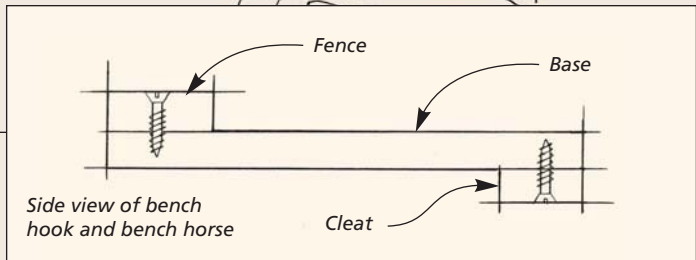
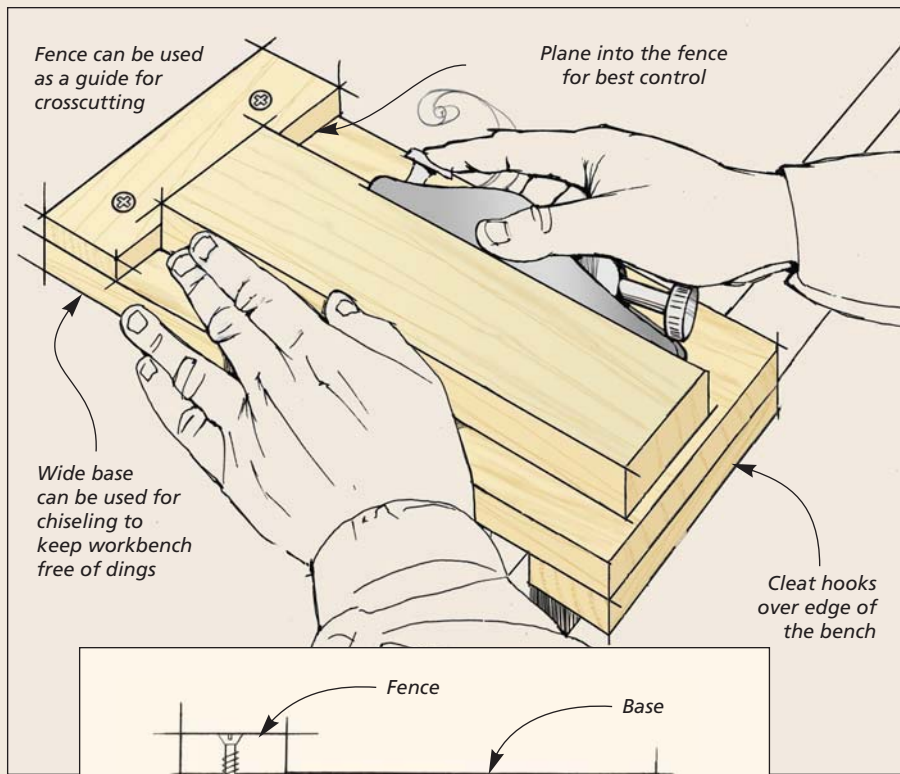
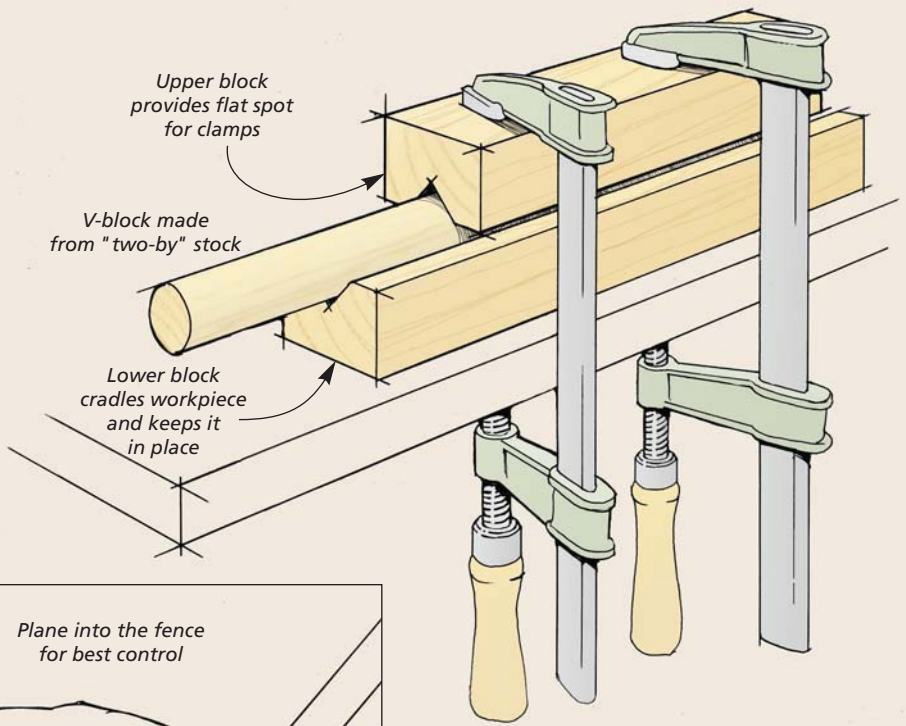
2 Planing Stop

Securing large panels to my workbench for planing or belt sanding was always a bit tricky. Clamps often get in the way of the tool and bench dogs are too narrow to keep the workpiece from shifting. To provide a solid stop for the workpiece, I attached this board to one end of the workbench. A pair of angled slots in the stop allow it to slide below the worksurface when it’s not needed. A couple of screws anchor it in place.

3 V-Block

The large, flat surface of my workbench is perfect for most of the work I do. But clamping a round or odd-shaped workpiece to the benchtop can seem more like trying to hold onto a wet bar of soap.

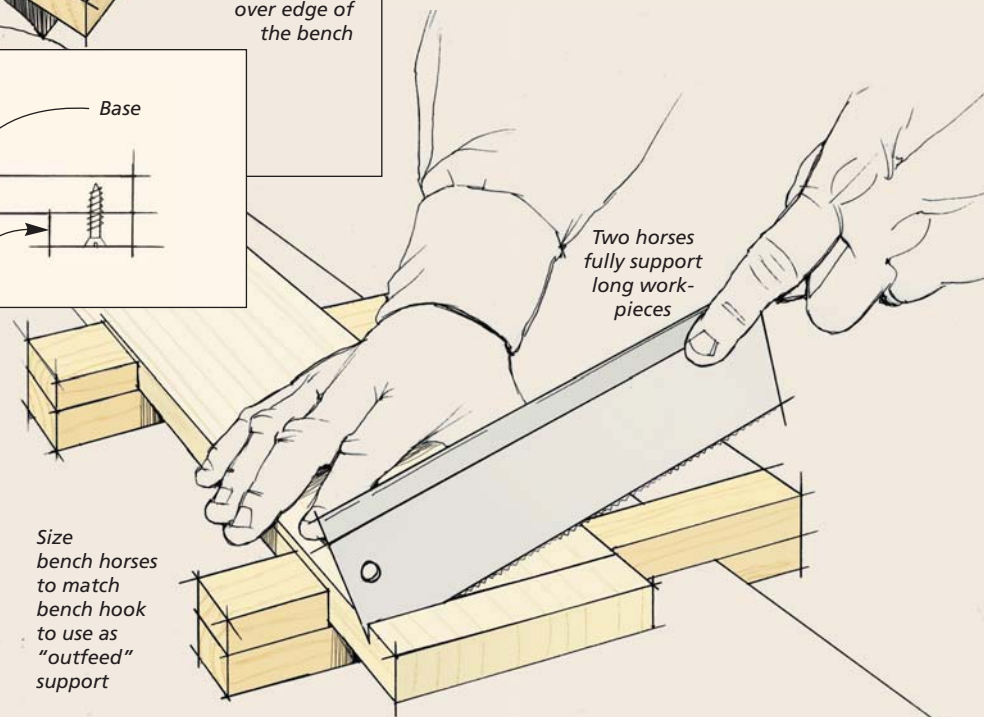
To make it easier to grab and hold these pieces, I turn to the simple, two-part V-block you see here. I made mine from a section of "two-by" stock. The base can be any length, but I found 12" to be about right. It provides a stable, wiggle-free platform for drilling, shaping, or smoothing. A shorter top piece gives the clamps a flat spot to lock the part in place without marring it.



5 Bench Horse

I like to think of these narrow bench hooks as benchtop saw horses. They raise a workpiece high enough off the benchtop to crosscut the end without damaging my bench. I also use them for trimming tenons.

It's a good idea to make at least two so you can support long stock. I made mine the same depth as the full-size bench hook shown above. This way, they can serve as "outfeed" support so long workpieces won't sag.



4 Bench Hook

This is one bench accessory that I always keep close at hand. I can use it as a guide for quickly cutting parts to length or as a planing stop for small parts, as you can see in the drawing at left. The base also protects the bench from sharp chisels and carving tools.

The bench hook is made up of a wide plywood base with a thick hardwood fence at the back and a cleat along the front edge to catch on the edge of the workbench.

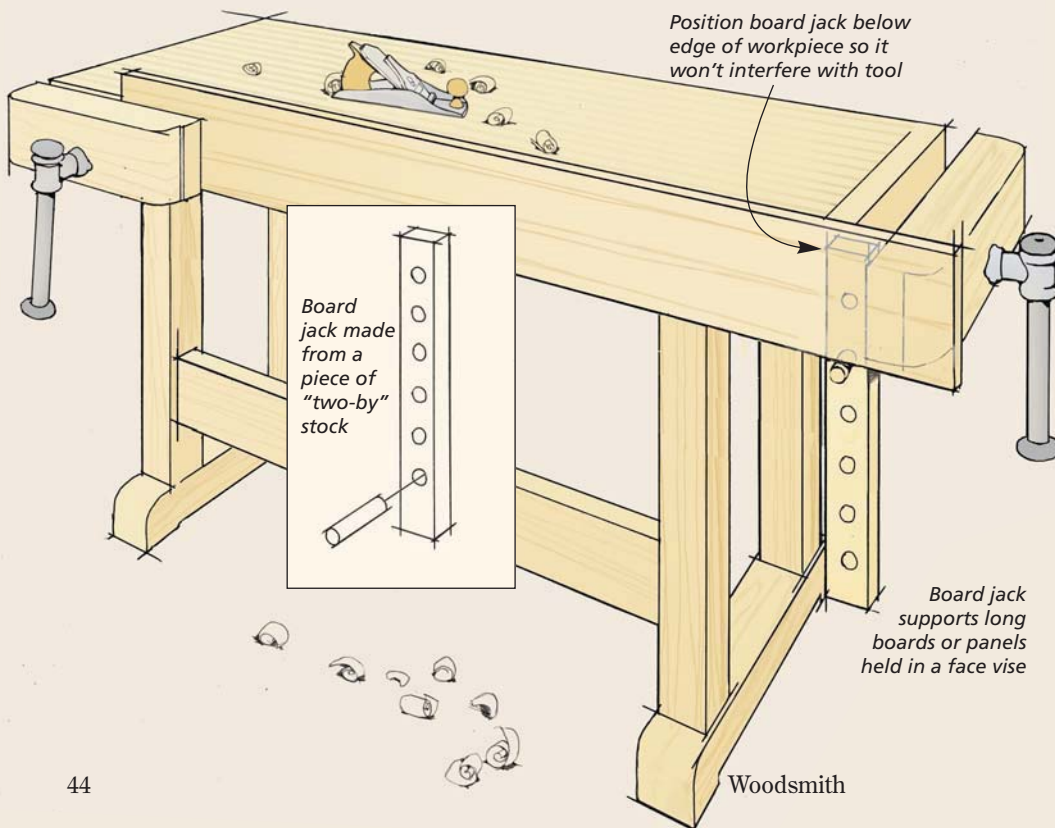
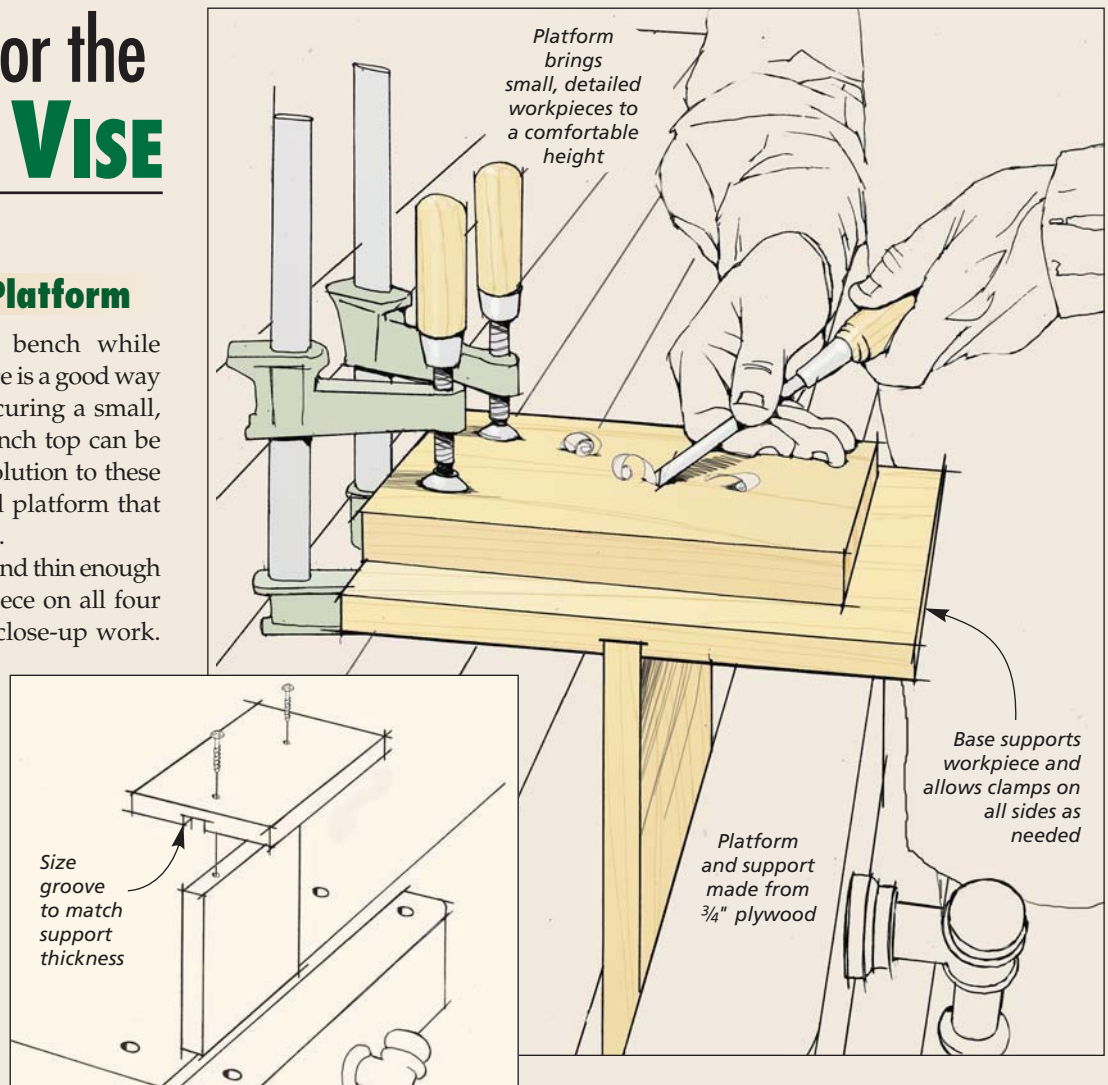
accessories for the **BENCH VISE**

6 Small Parts Platform

Hunching over a bench while working on a small workpiece is a good way to get a back ache. And securing a small, thin part to a large workbench top can be another problem. But the solution to these two problems is a plywood platform that couldn't be simpler to make.

The plywood top is small and thin enough to securely clamp a workpiece on all four sides for carving, or other close-up work. I've also found this platform comes in handy as a small parts assembly table.

The raised platform at right is just two small pieces of plywood joined into a "T" shape with a dado and some glue and screws. Just be sure the bottom leg of the "T" is long enough to bring the platform up to a comfortable working height when it's clamped in a bench vise.



7 Board Jack

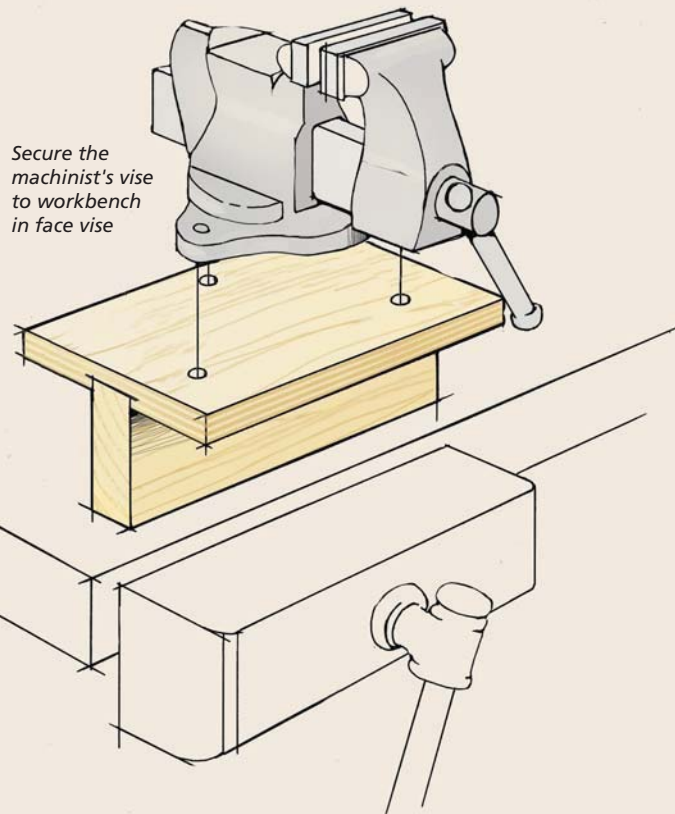
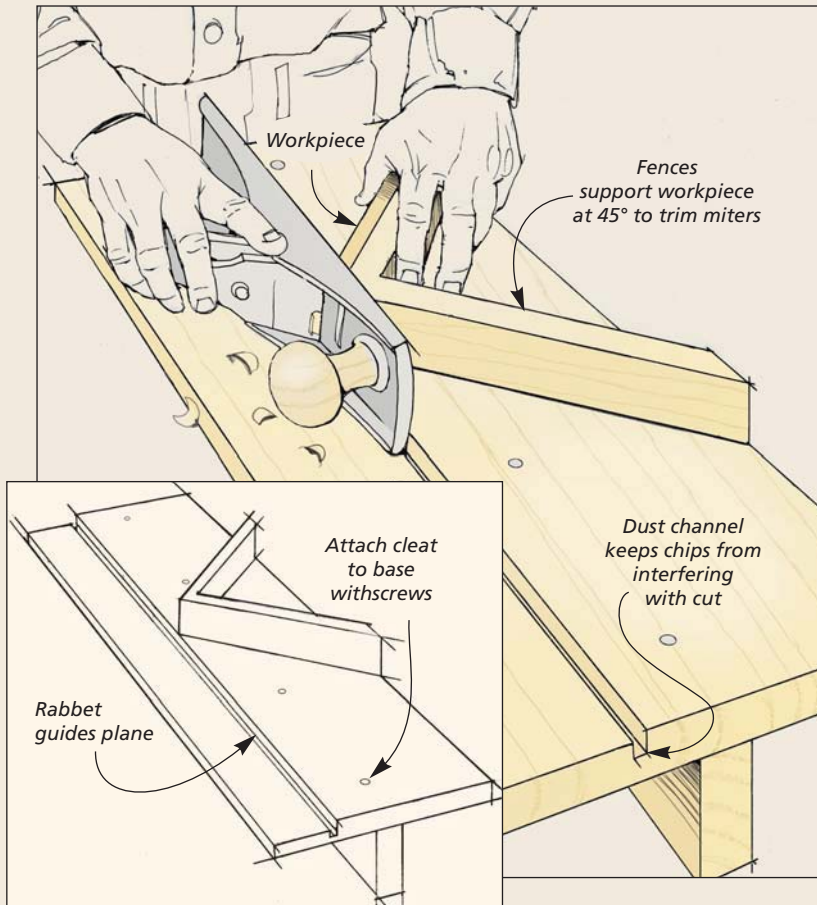
Like small parts, clamping and supporting long boards or wide panels to a workbench can pose some challenges. Especially if you need to work on the edges of these pieces.

The solution I use isn't really new. In fact, it's been used by woodworkers for hundreds of years. It's called a board jack. (Although some people call it a "sliding deadman.")

As you can see in the drawing at left, the board jack supports the opposite end of a long workpiece while it's clamped in the face vise. Although some board jacks are permanently attached to the workbench, mine is just a board that gets clamped in the end vise. A row of holes drilled along the length and a short wood peg make it easy to adjust for the width of the board or panel.

8 Miter Shooting Board

A poor-fitting miter joint on a project sticks out like a sore thumb. However, trimming it to fit tight on the table saw or miter saw can be a challenge. That's when I like to turn to a sharp hand plane and this miter shooting board. With the shooting board, I can hold the workpiece firmly against the angled fence. Then I can trim a bit at a time to sneak up on the fit. The plane is guided by a wide rabbet cut in the edge of the base. A pair of fences attached to the base allow you to trim right or left miters.



9 Add a Machinist's Vise

While I work with wood most of the time I'm at my bench, there are times when I need to cut, file, or shape metal. For that, a machinist's vise comes in pretty handy. But I don't want or need it on my bench all the time. To make for easy use, I bolted the vise to a plywood base that has a cleat on the bottom. The cleat gets clamped in the face vise of the workbench and holds the metal vise steady as a rock.

10 Mini Miter Box

Zing! If you've ever tried to cut small pieces of molding on a power miter saw, you know the sound a piece makes as it catches on the blade and goes whistling across the shop. Besides being difficult to control, cutting small parts on the miter saw can sometimes lead to tearout and rough cut edges.

A cleaner and safer way to make those cuts is to use a hand saw and the small miter box you see in the drawing at right. It clamps securely in a bench vise. A kerf for 90° and left and right 45° cuts in the fence guides the saw for smooth cuts every time.

