

The larger the screwdriver the greater its turning power. To draw a recalcitrant screw try first screwing clockwise. A hot iron on a screw will usually free it. To remove a headless screw, or nail, buried in the wood use a shell bit. This will bore a neat hole around the offending metal, which can then easily be removed and the hole plugged.

Always keep the wood as long as you can, as long as you can.

An apprentice in a 1900s joinery shop recalled how every evening the men would saw out a number of lengths of 1" square timber. It was his job first thing every morning to run a rounding plane (or witchet) down each piece to make a supply of dowelling for the day's work.

Of the apprentice who couldn't saw straight they used to say: 'Hang a plumb-bob from's nose!'

Yew wood and most fruit woods can only be planed satisfactorily with a plane iron at about 30 degrees.

Yew wood resists most stains but will take a water-bound stain brushed on boiling hot.

Caustic soda thickened with lime and applied to yew wood for one or two days will darken the timber.

Beech and birch are the best timbers for upholstery. Upholstery frames should always have their inner edges rounded. This prolongs the life of the webbing. Professional upholsterers never stop to pick up a fallen tack. They sweep the floor regularly.

When ironing felt or baize on to a card table never let the iron stand in one place. The heat will draw the glue up through the material and spoil the whole job.

The old boat builder always said he hated carpentry – didn't like using a square.

Of wooden ships they used to say 'While she creaks she swims'. When painting a ship never step back to admire your work!

Timber construction exposed to the weather should never have the pegs sawn off flush; the rain will soak into the end grain and the pegs will quickly rot. If the pegs are left proud an inch or so sun and wind will soon dry them out and they will last several lifetimes.

The handles of a bow-front chest of drawers should be 1/8" wider between centres than on a straight front chest of the same dimensions.

When using a moulding plane start at the furthest end and work a short length down to the stops continuing afterwards working in short sections towards the nearer end. This overcomes any difficulties with uneven grain.



Fig. 17

Cheap pine furniture used to be primed with quick drying distemper before being sent for finishing by the painters.

When a journeyman cabinetmaker was leaving to go to a new job it was standard practice for the foreman to give him two hours of free time on his last Saturday morning to sharpen all his tools ready to start afresh on Monday morning.

The traditional remedy for a cut finger was a drop of (french) polish on the wound, (painful but effective). The spirit cleansed and the shellac helped staunch the bleeding.

In one old cabinet shop during slack periods in the autumn the men would be set to make fancy boxes in which cigars could be presented at Christmas time.

The commonest workshop complaint 'This bit of wood's too short one end'.

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