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10^{best} Handscrew Tips

Simply put, handscrew clamps can handle a lot of jobs other clamps can't. No matter how many different clamping devices you run across, few can match the versatility of a traditional handscrew.

For starters, the wood jaws of a handscrew won't mar the surface of a workpiece. More importantly, the jaws provide even clamping pressure to prevent glued-up parts from twisting out of alignment.

Of course, there are many other clamping operations that make

a handscrew invaluable around the shop. For example, its deep reach makes it ideal for clamping a workpiece to a bench. It provides an extra hand for safely machining small parts. And the jaws of a handscrew have the unique ability to be angled, which is essential for clamping workpieces that don't have parallel faces.

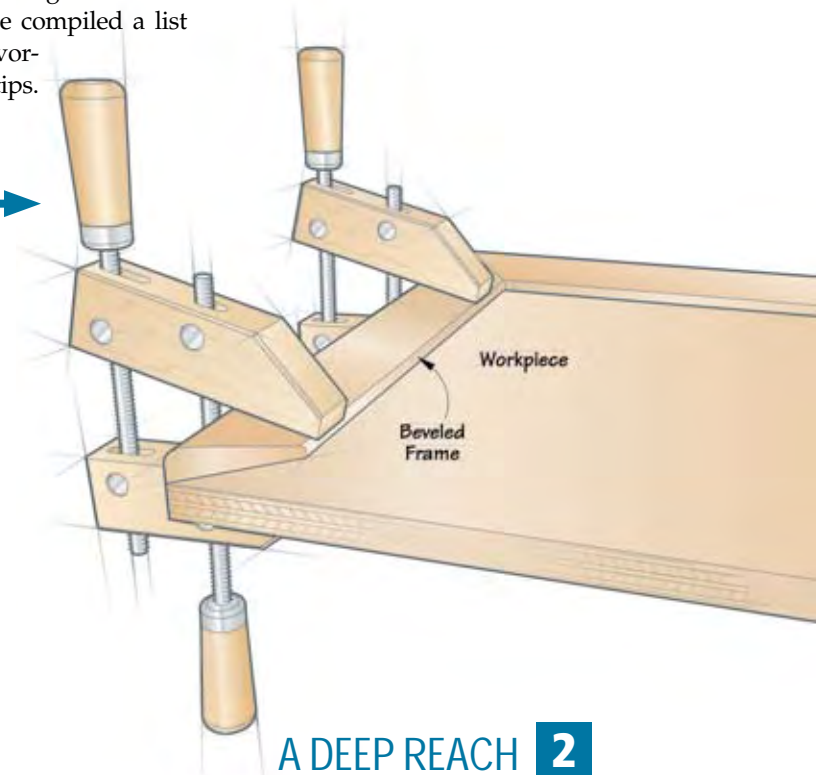
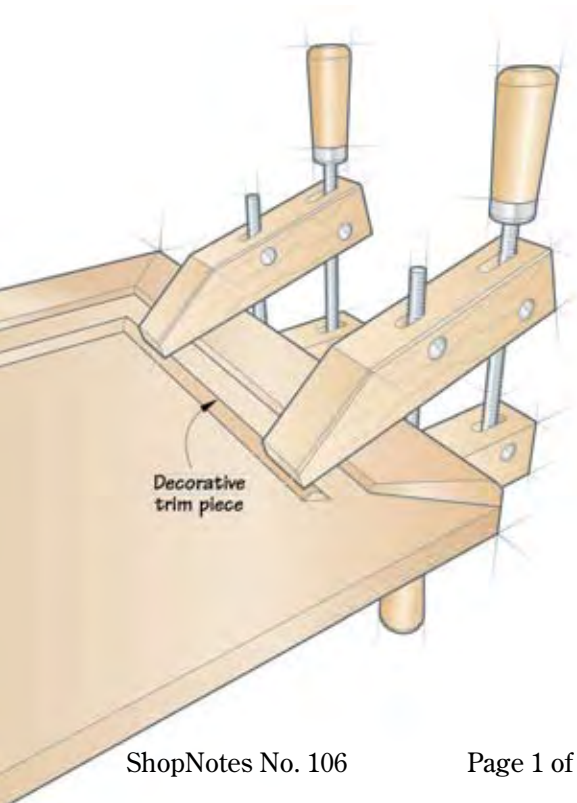
Well, the list could go on — and it *does* go on. I've compiled a list of my ten favorite handscrew tips.

Hopefully, these tips will give you an idea of just how indispensable handscrews can be.

You'll also find a chart of handscrew sizes to help you out when you're ready to buy handscrews. Finally, you'll learn some tips and techniques for maintaining handscrews to help ensure they'll last for many years.

1 NON-PARALLEL SURFACES

The two pivoting jaws of a handscrew can apply even pressure to non-parallel surfaces, as on this beveled frame. To do this, simply adjust the end spindle to open the jaws wide. Then, adjust the middle spindle to close the front of the jaws to match the taper or bevel of the workpiece.



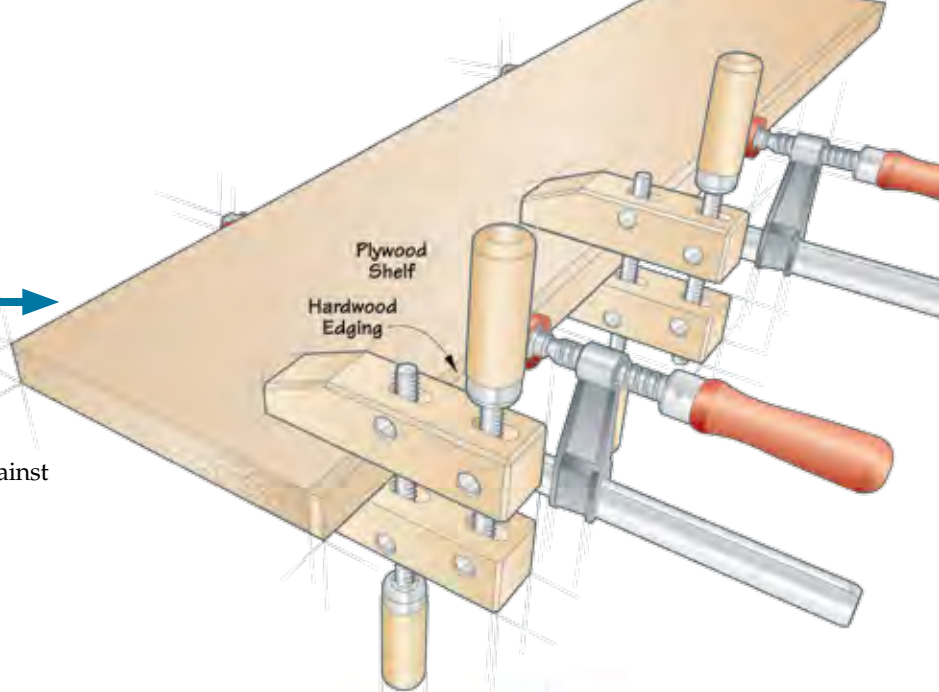
A DEEP REACH 2

The long jaws on this handscrew provide a tremendous amount of reach, extending farther in from the edge of a workpiece than many other types of clamps. That's just the solution for applying decorative trim to a project, as shown here. Also, by adjusting the jaws so they're not parallel, the clamp can reach over other project parts, if necessary.

ShopNotes

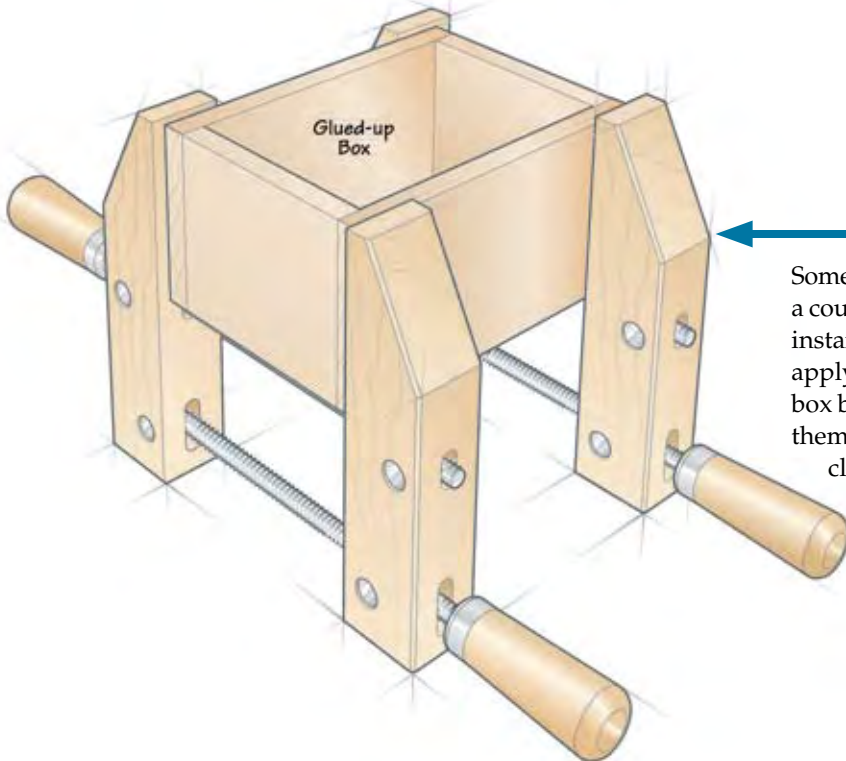
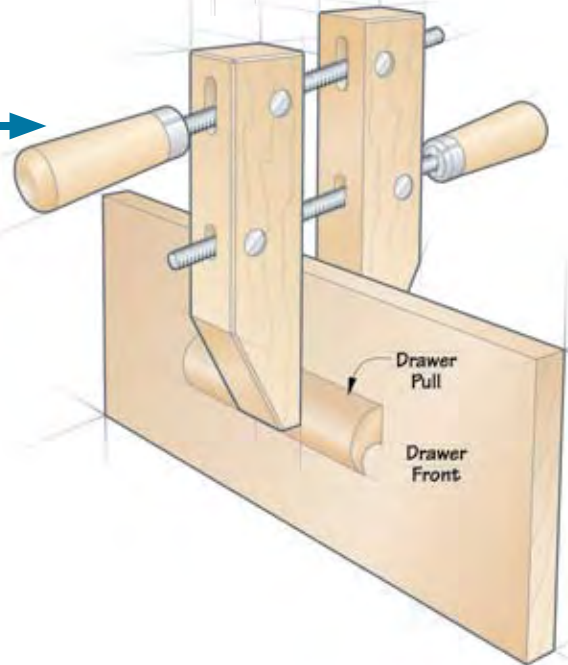
3 ALIGN WOOD EDGING

When gluing solid-wood edging to a plywood shelf or cabinet, the thin strip has a tendency to slip out of alignment. The solution is to use small handscrews to hold the edging in place (while you clamp it against the plywood).



4 OFFSET THE JAWS

By “racking” the spindles in the slotted jaws of a handscrew, you can offset the ends of the jaws. This comes in handy when you need to apply clamping pressure to two parts that don’t align with one another, as when gluing a drawer pull to the front of a drawer.

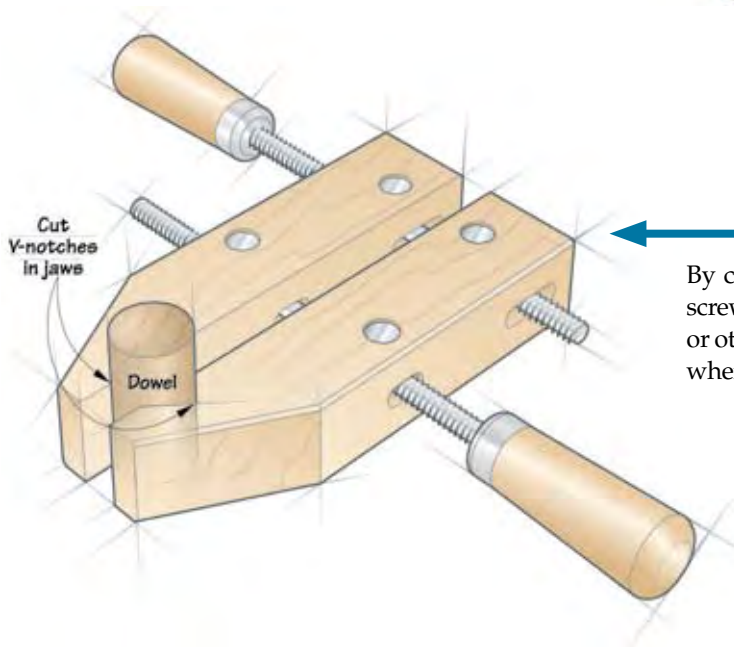
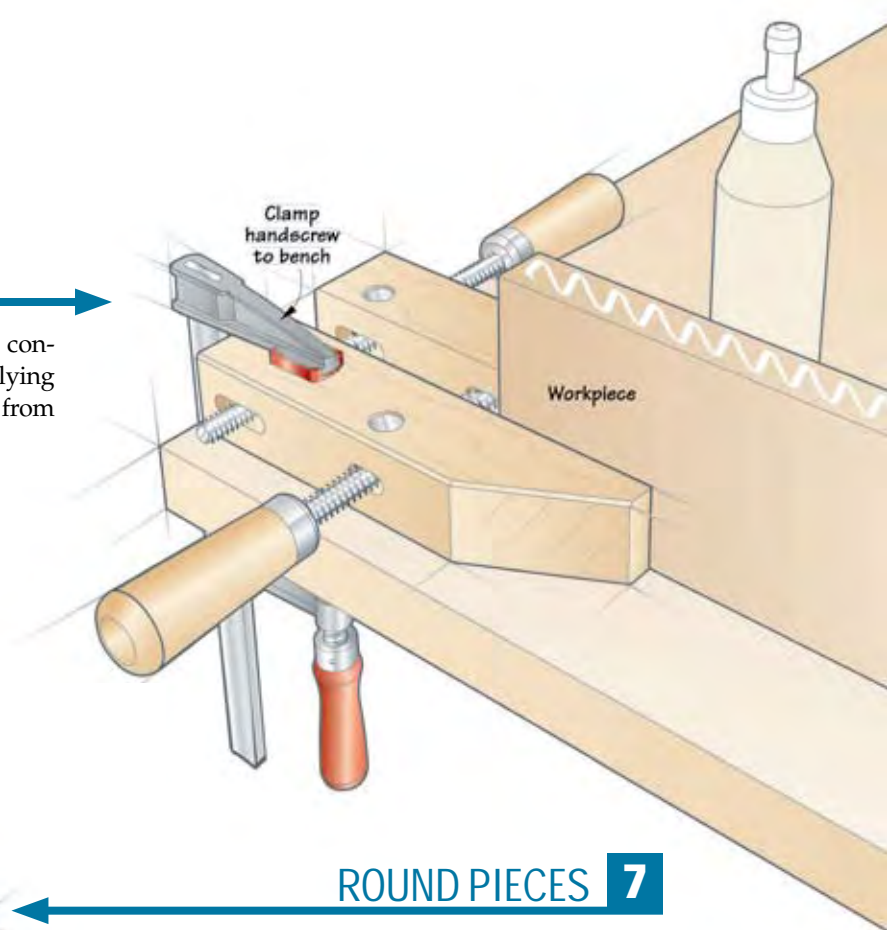


GLUING SMALL PROJECTS 5

Sometimes you can glue up an entire project with just a couple of handscrews. Take the small box at left, for instance. Rather than using a number of clamps to apply pressure all around the box, simply nestle the box between the jaws of the handscrews and tighten them. Just make sure the jaws are parallel for even clamping pressure across the joint.

6 BENCHTOP VISE

The flat sides of the jaws make a handscrew a convenient benchtop vise. For example, when applying glue to the edge of a workpiece, you can keep it from tipping over by clamping it in a handscrew.

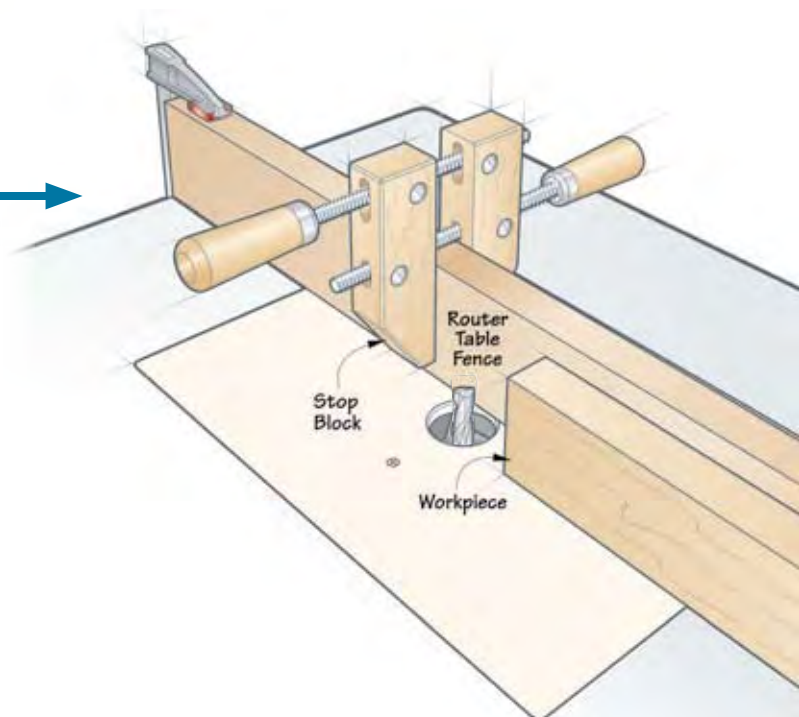


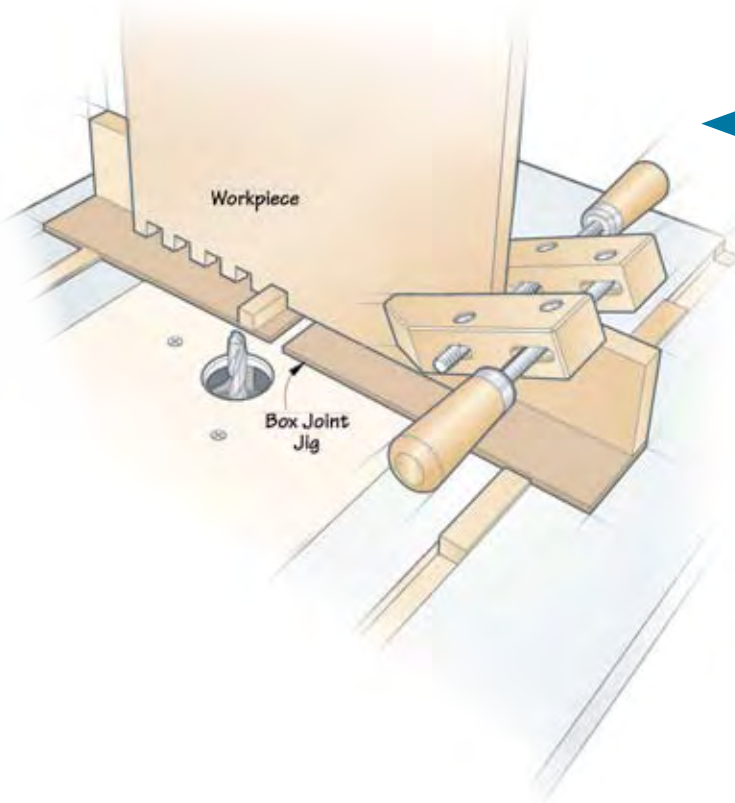
7 ROUND PIECES

By cutting a V-shaped notch in each jaw of a handscrew, you can make a great clamp for holding dowels or other round objects. This comes in especially handy when you need to hold a dowel steady for drilling.

8 STOP BLOCK

It's difficult to imagine an easier-to-use stop block than a handscrew. After all, it serves as the stop block and the clamp that holds it in place — all in one. Once you establish the location of the stop block, simply tighten the handscrew on the fence.



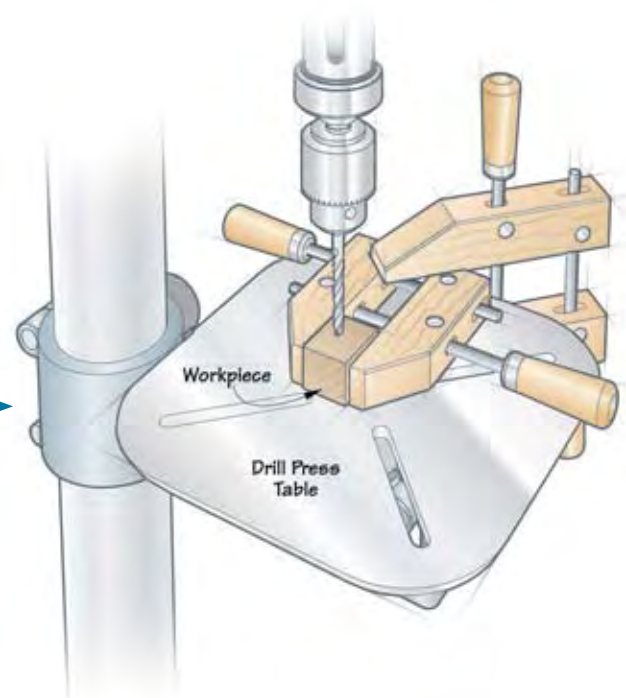


SAFER CLAMPING 9

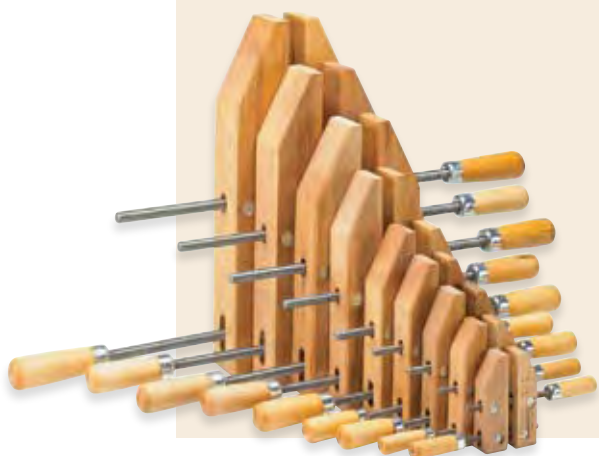
When it comes to some machining operations, a hand-screw can be used closer to the action. Plus, it can go where a metal clamp can't or, more to the point, where it shouldn't. Unlike a metal clamp, it's not a big deal if a bit or blade comes in contact with the wood jaw of a handscrew.

10 HOLD-DOWN

A handscrew is ideal for securing a small piece on the drill press. After clamping the workpiece, secure the handscrew to the drill press table, as shown. Now you can drill the hole without having to worry about the workpiece spinning around.



SIZE CHART



HANDSCREW SIZE	OVERALL JAW LENGTH	CAPACITY BETWEEN JAWS*	REACH TO MIDDLE SPINDLE
5/0	4"	2" - 2 ¹ / ₄ "	2"
4/0	5"	2 ¹ / ₂ " - 2 ³ / ₄ "	2 ¹ / ₂ "
3/0	6"	3"	3"
2/0	7"	3 ¹ / ₂ "	3 ¹ / ₂ "
0	8"	4 ¹ / ₂ " - 5"	4"
1	10"	6" - 7"	5"
2	12"	8 ¹ / ₂ " - 9 ¹ / ₄ "	6"
3	14"	10" - 10 ¹ / ₄ "	7"
4	16"	12"	8"
5	18"	14"	9"
6	20"	14"	10"
7	24"	17"	12"

*CAPACITY VARIES WITH MANUFACTURER

MITER KIT

Here's a great accessory that converts a handscrew into a handy miter clamp. It consists of two metal brackets that mount to the jaws of the handscrew and two pins that thread into holes in the brackets.

To clamp a miter joint, fit the pins into holes drilled in the back of the pieces. Then apply even clamping pressure, carefully drawing the mitered pieces together. For more information, go online to AdjustableClamp.com or call 312-666-0640.



▲ **Add-On.** Turn an ordinary handscrew into a miter clamp with a miter kit.



◀ **Tight Miters.** After drilling a stopped hole in the back of each frame piece, place the pins in the holes and draw the pieces tight for a seamless joint.

MAINTENANCE



▲ **Remove Excess Oil.** The wood jaws of new handscrews are oiled to prevent glue from sticking to them. But this oil can transfer to the surface of a workpiece, interfering with any finish you might apply. To soak up the excess oil, clamp the jaws against a paper towel overnight.



▲ **Sand The Face.** To avoid marring a workpiece, sand off any dried glue. Then apply a coat or two of an oil-based finish.



▲ **Lube The Spindles.** Spraying the spindles with a silicone-free lubricant will keep them operating smoothly and prevent rust.