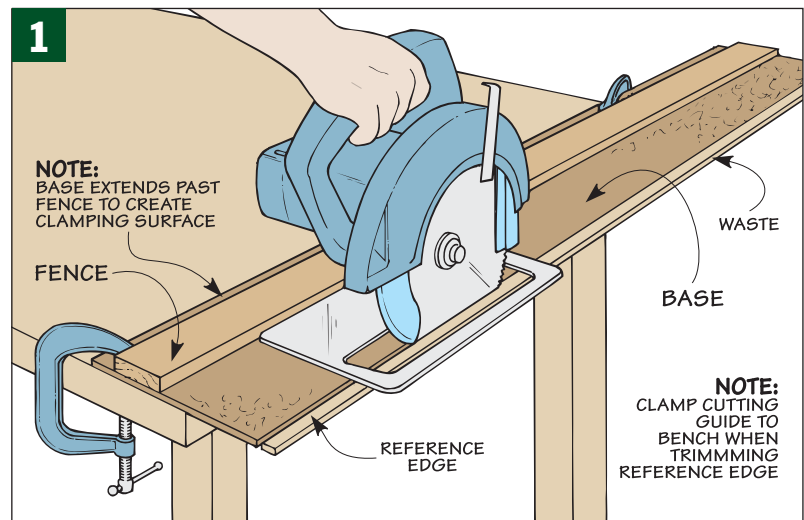


Cutting Plywood — Rough Cuts

Cutting a full sheet of plywood (or MDF) down to size on a table saw can be a challenge. The sheets are heavy and awkward to move around. And even after you wrestle it into position, the surface veneer has a frustrating tendency to chip out as you make the cut. Fortunately, there are several things you can do to simplify the job — starting with the initial rough cuts.

Make Rough Cuts with a Circular Saw – First cut your plywood sheets down to approximate size using a circular saw. This makes it much easier to maneuver the pieces later on when you go to your table saw to make the final cuts (see *Cutting Plywood - Final Cuts*). I like to start by laying a large sheet of foam insulation board on the floor (see page 2) to provide a cutting surface. I also like to use a shop-made cutting guide to help me get as square and clean of a cut as possible. This will alleviate problems later on when you make your final cuts.

Cutting Guide –The guide consists of two parts: a base that serves as a platform for the saw and a wood fence that guides the saw. I used pieces from my scrap bin to make the guide. For complete instructions on building this accessory, see our *Seven Must-have Shop Jigs* article, also on this CD.



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"Good" Side Down – One thing to be aware of is that the blade on a circular saw cuts on the upstroke. This means the surface of the plywood that the saw rides on is likely to splinter. To reduce chipout on the "good" side of the plywood, you'll want to place it face down on the foam board for the cut. If you don't want either side to splinter, you might consider a blade that's specially designed for cutting plywood, as shown in the photo at right.

Double Pass – Another way to produce a clean cut is to make two passes. A shallow, first pass severs the fibers of the surface veneer, as illustrated in detail a. This means the fibers won't splinter when making the second, full-depth pass.



To help reduce chipout, these inexpensive, steel saw blades have tiny, razor sharp teeth that remove small amounts of material.

