



# Tape

## Unsung Hero of the Shop

These 4 rolls will help you cut cleanly,  
lay out clearly, and clamp securely

BY ADRIAN FERRAZZUTTI

Some of you will sneer at the thought that something as humble as sticky tape can possibly help your woodworking. But don't be stuck up about tape. I'll bet you will find in this article at least one use for tape that will make you a better woodworker.

But before you start peeling and sticking, it helps to become familiar with the different types of tape. Most useful for woodworking: green and blue painter's tape, packing tape, and double-faced tape.

Green painter's tape is a great all-purpose shop tape. Unlike regular white masking tape, it has a low tack, which means it will release from wood with less chance of pulling out the fibers. However, it's not that strong. It snaps if too much pressure is applied, so don't use it as a clamp when gluing.

The blue painter's tape I use is the 14-day-release type (3M, #2090) rather than the 60-day type, which has a lower

tack. I prefer the crepe style over the smooth because it stretches better, pulling seams and joints together. Compared with green tape, blue tape takes a fair bit of force before it snaps, so it can handle light clamping tasks. It has greater tack but releases well. It also costs more.

Packing tape is a great choice for clamping where traditional clamps are cumbersome. It has great stretch before it snaps, which translates into lots of clamping force. Packing tape is also very handy as a glue-release surface. Tape the contact surfaces of bending forms and cauls to prevent them from being glued to your work.

Double-faced tape is a great helping hand for hardware installation. The many types vary in thickness and adhesion. I use a thin, less-aggressive type as well as turner's tape, which is thicker with a very aggressive adhesion.

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## Green tape

### Eliminate tearout



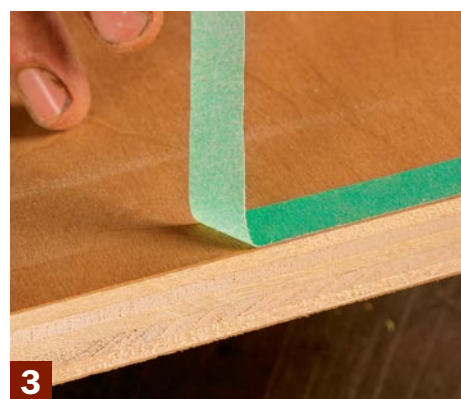
Even when combined with a zero-clearance insert, the best sawblades can cause cross-grain chipping, particularly on plywood. To prevent this, apply a strip of green tape straddling the cut line on the downward-facing side. Green tape is a better choice than blue, because it is less prone to pulling out wood fibers when removed.



1



2



3

**Press down the tape firmly, really rubbing it on the wood surface.** To minimize edge blowout as the blade exits the cut, Ferrazzutti continues the tape around the edge (1). To prevent this end section of tape from acting like a shim and making the cut slightly off square, he wraps a small strip of tape on the other end of the piece that is in contact with the crosscut fence (2). Once the cut has been made, he gently peels away the tape to reveal a chip-free edge (3).

## Packing tape

### Stretch it for extra clamping force

It's hard to attach edging to curves with conventional clamps, but packing tape works wonderfully. To get the thickness of the edge-banding that he wants without making it too stiff to bend, Ferrazzutti creates the banding from two thinner strips. He eases the outside corners of the outer strip with a block plane to prevent the tape from breaking as it is stretched.



**Start clamping from the center outward.** Stretch the tape outward as if you're trying to break it, then wrap it down the faces of the panel (left). Check that the edging overhangs both sides of the panel. Ferrazzutti likes to leave the edging long so he can locate the last tape strip way out off the panel for good pressure at the corner (right).





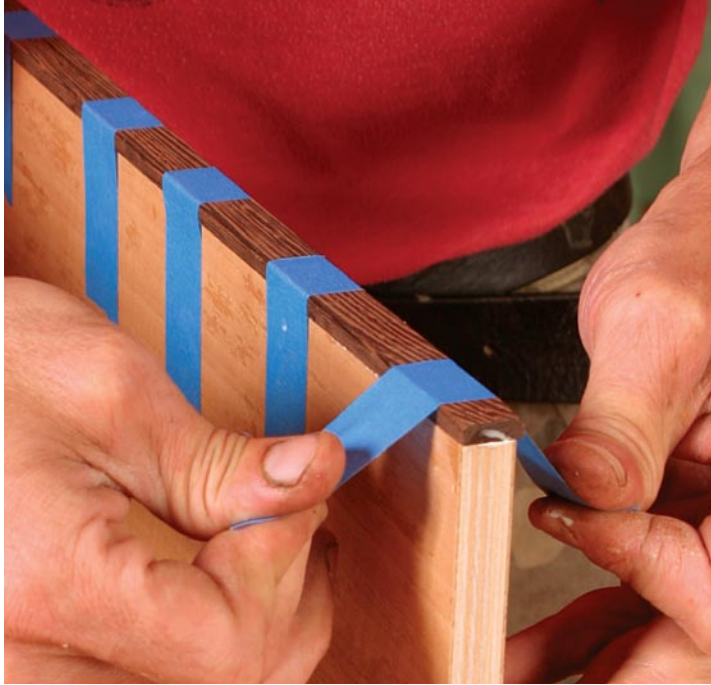
# Blue tape

## Apply straight edge-banding

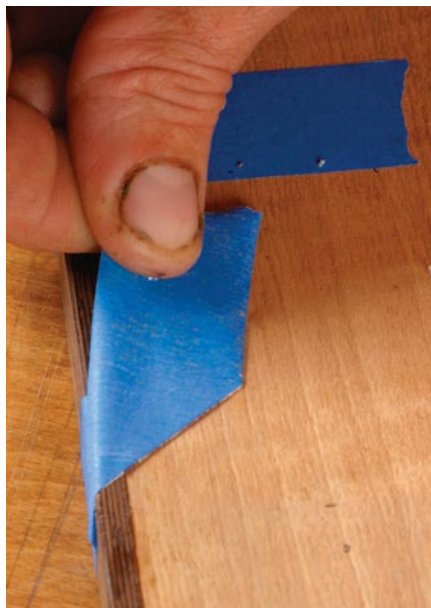
When clamping edge-banding to plywood, tape is much easier to use than masses of regular clamps. Mill the edging about  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. wider than the thickness of the panel, and ease the outside corners of the edging so that the tape doesn't break when it is stretched. To make the glue-up go faster, tear off a number of pieces of tape and line them up on your bench.

Apply glue to the strip, but not the core. This helps prevent the plywood from swelling while you are clamping. Slide the banding back and forth until there is squeeze-out along the entire joint on both sides. Starting from the center, stick each tape strip to the banding, and then with equal pressure pull each end of the strip out and then down firmly onto both sides of the panel. After the glue is dry, remove the tape by pulling it as close as possible in line with the grain; this is less likely to pull out wood fibers than pulling the tape across the grain.

Bring the edging almost flush with the plywood veneer using a block plane or cabinet scraper. Then switch to a "safe" card scraper (below) until you start getting shavings from the veneer.



**Clamp edge-banding with tape.** Stretch the tape outward, then wrap it down the faces of the panel (top). Check that the edging overhangs both sides of the panel. You can also use tape to clamp solid-wood corner banding to plywood boxes (above). Remove the tape in the direction of the grain to reduce the risk of pulling out wood fibers (right).



## SAFE EDGES PROTECT SURFACES



**Control where you cut.** Create a card scraper with a "safe" edge by wrapping some tape around the end that is over the veneered panel (top). To make a "safe" file to flush the ends of edge-banding, wrap tape around the front of the file (bottom).



## Assemble a mitered box

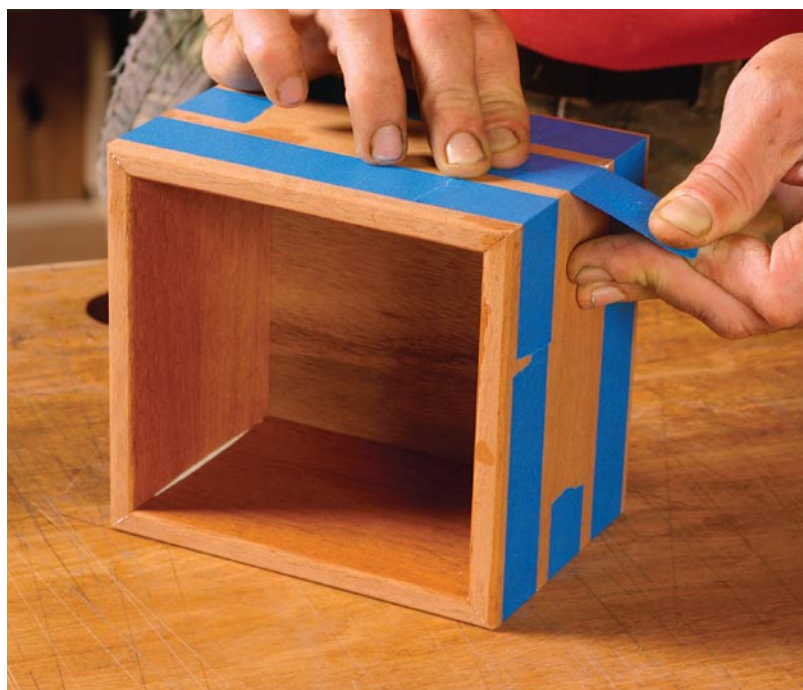
Miters are difficult to glue up with traditional clamps because the slightest imbalance in pressure can cause a side to squirm out of position. By applying uniform pressure to all four corners, tape overcomes this problem. Stretch strips of blue tape across the centers of the three adjoining joints, then stretch long pieces of tape along the entire length of the three joints. The number of strips will depend on the width of the miter joint. For this 5-in.-tall box, two strips are enough. By slightly stretching the tape, the joints are pulled tight and may even overlap very slightly.

Flip over the assembly and apply glue to the bevels of the miters. Insert the bottom of the box and begin rolling the assembly together. The tape provides clamping pressure and acts as a hinge, keeping the sides aligned. For the last corner, simply stretch short strips of tape across the joint. Check for square; you may need to lightly tap down a corner to maintain a flush edge.

It's a good idea to reinforce this type of joint using splines. Leave the tape on when cutting the slots on the tablesaw to avoid tearout, but remove it before gluing in the splines to avoid the risk of tape getting glued in with the spline.

### No-clamp glue-up.

Lay the four sides of the box on a bench, using a straightedge for alignment. Stretch short strips of tape across the center of the joints, then long pieces along the entire length (top). Flip the assembly, apply glue, insert the bottom of the box, and roll the assembly together (center). For the last corner, simply stretch short strips of tape across the joint (bottom).

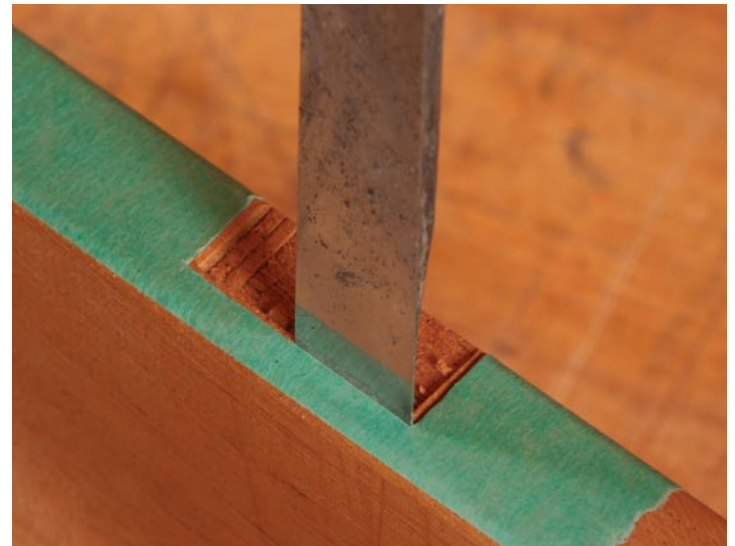
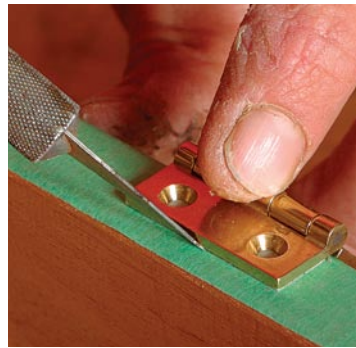


**Perfect spline slots.** To avoid tearout, leave the tape in place when cutting the slots on the tablesaw.



# Green tape and double-faced tape

## Combine them to simplify hinge installation



**Locate the hinge mortise.** Apply green tape to the hinge area and attach a piece of double-faced tape to one leaf of the hinge (left). Then temporarily secure the hinge in its final location with double-faced tape and use a sharp X-Acto knife to scribe around the hinge (center). Peel away the cut-out section of tape, leaving a chiseling template. Chop away the bulk of the area while staying about  $\frac{1}{16}$  in. inside the tape perimeter, then make a paring cut along the line (right).

An ill-fitting door or lid is an eyesore, so you should install your hinges precisely. I originally developed this technique to achieve clean inlays in dark woods such as wenge, walnut, and ebony, where scribed pencil or knife lines are difficult to see even in the best of light. I now use it when inlaying on all woods, and when installing hinges and locks on doors and boxes.

Apply some green tape to the areas of the case where the hinges will be located. Then apply some thin double-faced tape to an outside leaf of each hinge.

After placing the hinge in the exact location desired, use a sharp X-Acto knife to scribe around the hinge, cutting through the tape. Peel away the tape from the field that needs to be chopped out, leaving the rest of the tape as a template surrounding the hinge area. Once the bulk of the wood is removed, place the back edge of a chisel against the edge of the tape and give the chisel a light tap with a mallet. The thin lip of the tape will act like a stop. Proceed around the outline until the final size of the recess has been defined.

Place the hinge in the recess and apply a piece of double-faced tape to the outside surface. Now place a piece of green tape on the door or lid where the hinge will be located, making sure the tape extends down the edge. Align the door to the cabinet or the lid to the box, press it down on the hinges, and then remove it with the hinge stuck to the green tape. Scribe around the hinge with a knife, and use a marking gauge set to the thickness of a hinge's leaf to mark the depth of the recess. Peel off the tape, remove the waste, install the hinge, and close a perfectly aligned door.



**Determine the hinge location.** Set the hinge in the mortise and apply double-faced tape to the back of the other leaf (above). Apply green tape to the hinge area of the lid or door and carefully lower it into position. Lift off the lid or door and the hinge will stick to it (left). Scribe around the hinge and excavate the mortise in the same way as before.