

LETTERS



Ruler Confusion

To the Editor:

I would appreciate it if someone could help me find a more convenient ruler for use with house plans. I'd like a flat ruler that has just one scale, 1/4 inch equals 1 foot, on both sides. I have not been able to find such a ruler.

My present ruler does have the 1/4-inch scale, but my problem is that it also has five other scales, one on each side of each of its three edges. Every time I pick it up, I have to find the correct scale before I can use it. While working over drawings, I probably set my ruler down, and then pick it up again, 20 times per hour. So, 20 times per hour my ruler forces me to take a multiple choice quiz, searching for the correct answer among six choices.

Richard O. Hammer
Hillsborough, N.C.

Yes, architectural scales can be a nuisance to use, particularly the type with two scales overlaid — one reading left to right, one right to left. The best solution we can offer is to buy a ruler with the scales color coded, or code them yourself with paint or colored tape.

— The Editors

Kitchen Recycling Schemes

To the Editor:

Recently our county has adopted a recycling plan for newspapers and soon to follow will be plastics and glass. So I was thinking, where in my house am I to store these items. Since I'm a remodeling contractor, naturally I got a piece of paper out and started to draw some ideas for cabinet storage or bins of some kind. At this time, I'm still not certain what is the best design or most practical use of my space. I live in a medium-size townhome and our space is limited.

My purpose in writing is to ask if *The Journal* has projected in a future issue any discussion or design ideas from other remodelers who have tackled these same ideas. It would be very interesting to see what these other contractors have done.

Keep up the good work. I enjoy reading every issue.

Steve Klitsch
Carlyle Construction Co.
Germantown, Md.

David Goldbeck responds:

The careful disposal of garbage and the saving of materials to be recycled is a

responsibility that can be made easier with some forethought. It is very important to remember that designs should be coordinated with local recycling requirements: You must determine what is being recycled and how it must be presented at the recycling center or at the curb. Some municipalities require that specific containers be used while others don't.

A good plan is one that both makes sorting easy and provides a container for transport.

Kitchen drawers are the most logical place to store recyclables. Where appropriate, I am partial to designs that utilize supermarket paper bags as receptacles since they allow for ease of removal. (And, of course, the bags, too, are recycled.)

A simple plan uses a wide or deep drawer that can hold three bags. This provides one receptacle each for glass, plastic, and metal. In a 30x20x12-inch drawer, there is room for a fourth bag to be added for deposit bottles or other recyclable materials that may be added. Where space permits or need dictates, more than one drawer can be used.

In existing kitchens, drawer space is often available for retrofit that would accommodate the design described above. Unfortunately, standard drawers are often not deep enough to hold supermarket bags upright. However, it is quite easy to make two, or even three shallow drawers into a single deep drawer by removing the top drawer(s) and ganging up the drawer fronts.

Drawers can also be appropriated to hold newspapers. To facilitate bundling, which is usually a requirement of newspaper recyclers, I have added nautical cleats to opposite sides of a drawer's interior to which a piece of twine can be attached. The twine lies across the bottom of the drawer; the newspapers are then stacked on top of the twine and more easily tied up when the drawer is full.

Chutes that carry materials to containers in the basement take advantage of gravity and minimize the recycler's chore. In the future, such systems could be standard in new residences.

The dumbwaiter, a common feature of prewar housing, might be considered as a way to transport recyclables and garbage.

There is particular need for systems in apartments and residences where space is limited. Dual-access recycling cabinets may be the solution. Cabinets with doors on two sides could be installed in a wall common to a kitchen and an exterior hallway so that maintenance personnel could routinely remove full containers. They could also be used in private homes where a kitchen shares a wall with a

porch, mudroom or foyer. Ideally, you should allow for additional recyclables as well as items like garbage bags, shopping bags, and returnable bottles.

David Goldbeck is the author of *The Smart Kitchen*.

Estimating Program Debate

To the Editor:

Morris Carey, Jr. was mistaken when he said that CMS will be the first estimating program to solve the problem of minimums (State-of-the-Art Contractor, 9/90). I have been using Timberline Software's Precision Estimating (PE) since its initial release in 1987, and have had no trouble at all with this common estimating requirement.

Since PE allows you to store a formula with every item in the database for optional use during takeoff, it's easy to set up the "if-then-else" statement to handle minimums. To solve the problem, I use a formula with two variables — length in feet and width in feet (variables are user-defined in PE) — to arrive at the total square footage of masonry required. It looks like this: If (length x width < 33, 33, length x width).

This simple formula does the following: If the area of masonry is less than 33 square feet, it uses 33 anyway; otherwise it uses the actual area. All the user needs to do is supply the length and width dimensions, and the formula takes care of the rest.

Sal Alfano
Alpha Design & Construction Inc.
East Calais, Vt.

Morris Carey responds:

Thanks for your help Sal. I've talked at length with the folks at Timberline about creating minimums, but we never came up with anything as simple or effective.

My concern back in September, though, wasn't so much at the line item level, but at the subtotal level. In my experience, several line items would be taken off in a given group, which, in combination, might have to meet a minimum.

In the meantime, the problem has been solved by Timberline's new release. It allows the estimator to change a subtotal to a given minimum. Actually, any group of values can be changed. The system works in the difference from the estimated amount backwards to each of the line items in the group selected.

A Family Tradition

To the Editor:

Thank you for your article "Passing on Control of your Family Business" (11/90). It was very interesting and informative.

Isn't it wonderful to be involved in a trade as steeped in tradition as home building? I've been building my construction business for the past six years. We are a small (two employees besides myself) outfit but do a good amount of work. I average one custom home a year and a lot of exterior remodeling, garages, and additions.

We recently completed an exterior remodeling job of adding a large covered cement porch, and reroofing the existing house. After the completion of the job the owner and I were talking about our family backgrounds. We came up with an amazing realization: my grandfather had built the house for these same people.

I hope to pass down to my children not just the ability to earn a living by building, but to have pride in craftsmanship and revel in the knowledge that what they are building will be here when their children are grown. I look forward to your publication and read it cover to cover every month.

Mark J. Donato
Carmichaels, Pa.

Another Hinge Template Feature

To the Editor:

I read "Templates For Hinge Mortising" (Toolbox, 12/90) with interest. Unfortunately, I find that one of the best features of my template — the deluxe Bosch model 83038 — was not mentioned.

This model includes an accessory called jamb gauge blocks. When they're attached to the template, it is possible to quickly transfer existing hinge locations from jamb to door or vice versa. This template is easy to set up and I use it for door replacements in remodeling quite frequently.

James DeVore
DeVore Construction
El Cerrito, Calif.

Editor's note: Jamb gauges are also available for the Porter-Cable model 59380 template.

Keep 'em coming...We welcome letters, but they must be signed and include the writer's address. *The Journal of Light Construction* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail letters to JLC, RR#2, Box 146, Richmond, VT