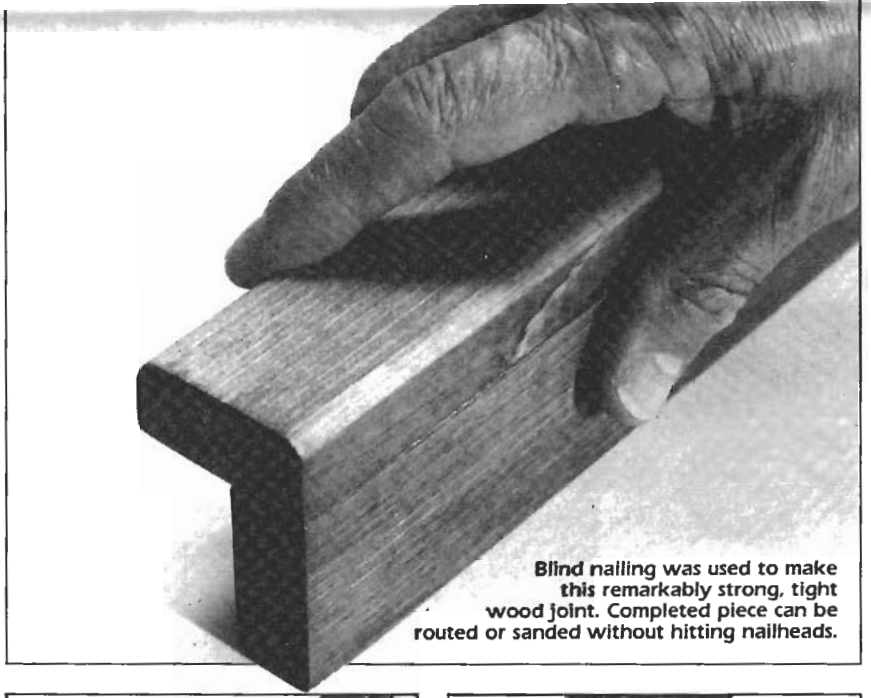
Joinery With 'Invisible' Nails

Open your eyes to a no-show and no-tell wood joinery technique.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JORMA HYYPIA



Blind nailing was used to make this remarkably strong, tight wood joint. Completed piece can be routed or sanded without hitting nailheads.

The next time you need to join two lengths of wood, but don't want the nailheads to show, try a technique called blind nailing. When combined with glue, blind nailing is a fast, easy means of making remarkably strong wood joints.

This technique is most often used to produce a finished, L-shaped trim around countertops and table edges, and to conceal a plywood edge. You can also produce a wide variety of moldings—including baseboard, crown, chair rail and corner guard—by blind-nailing two, three or four routed pieces. Blind nailing is also used to edge-join boards to form wider panels.

A tight-fitting joint

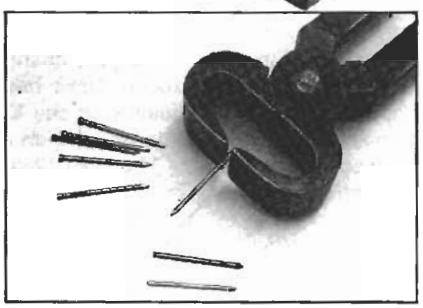
First, be certain that the two pieces to be joined form a tight-fitting joint. Sand or plane the wood where necessary. Next, mark the nail positions onto the larger, flatter piece. For most jobs, 1½- or 2-in. finishing nails spaced 6 in. apart work fine. In the photos, 4d (1½-in.) finishing nails are used to blind-nail ¾-in.-thick pine.

Cut off the nailheads with end-cut nippers or cutting pliers. Then hammer the nails partially into the edge of the first piece, as shown in the photograph. You should make certain that the nails don't protrude too far, otherwise they'll pass through the second piece.

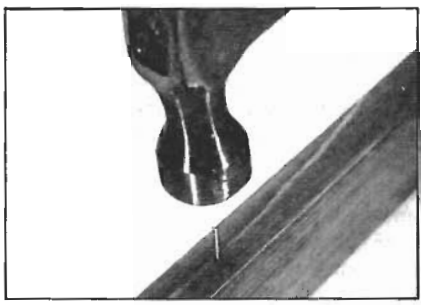
Next, grind sharp points onto the protruding nails using a stone grinding wheel in a drill press or portable electric drill. The sharpened tip offers less resistance to wood penetration than the blunt-end nail.

Gluing the wood

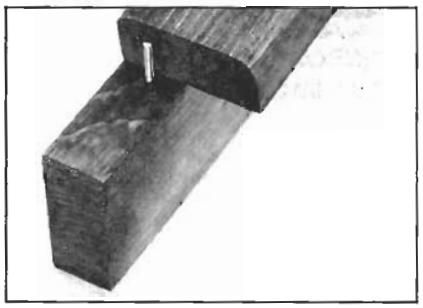
Apply carpenter's glue to the first piece and clamp it to the edge of a workbench. The protruding nails with the sharpened ends should be facing the rear of the bench. Position the second piece against the nails and apply pressure *gradually* by squeezing the two parts together with C-clamps. Tighten the clamps little by little, starting at the ends and working toward the center. Place newspaper under the work to absorb any glue squeeze-out. After the glue has dried, the assembly is ready to be sanded, routed or planed without hitting the nailheads. PM



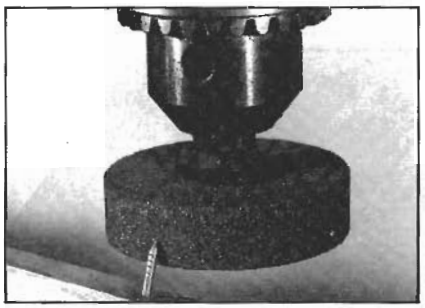
Snip off the nailheads before you hammer the nails into the edge of the workpiece.



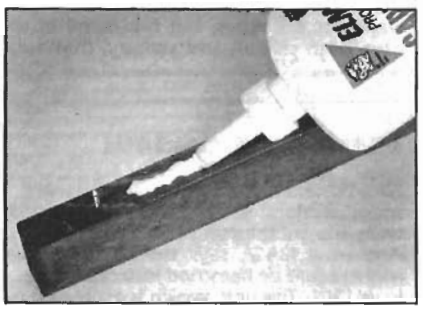
Space the nails as needed and drive them partially into the edge of the workpiece.



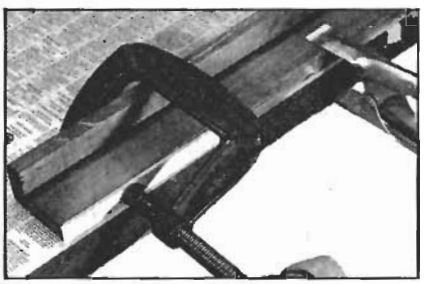
Use the mating workpiece as a guide to check the height of the protruding nails.



Grind the nails to a sharp point. A file can be used to sharpen the nails as well.



Apply carpenter's glue to the nailed edge. Be sure that the surface is clean and dry.



Tighten the C-clamps gradually to draw the two pieces together. Place newspaper down to absorb messy glue squeeze-out.