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How to use a craftsman hand planer

© 1996-2014, Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates Skip to main content Home House & Components Rooms Workshop Updated: Oct. 02, 2018 Family Handyman This article shows you how to get the most out of your power planer. Use it for leveling joists, making stubborn doors close easily and for building projects in your workshop. We'll demonstrate time-tested tips and techniques for using an electric planer. By the DIY experts of The Family Handyman Magazine You might also like: TBD Time A full day Complexity Beginner Cost \$51-100 Using a power hand planer for remodeling Photo 1: Shave low spots in floor joists Level floor joists by using a straightedge to mark joist irregularities. Then label the low spots, set up a stable work platform and shave those spots till the joists are flat—ready for a new ceiling. The adjustable chip deflector is a valuable accessory for directing the stream of chips away from your face. The first time I used a power hand planer (also known as an electric planer), I was remodeling an old house and needed to level several sagging, uneven ceiling joists to prepare them for new drywall (Photo 1). I made my first pass. The hand planer yowled and chewed, showering the room with a blizzard of shavings. In no time, those joists were leveled and smooth. It took my breath away, and the finished ceiling looked fabulous. Continue reading to learn how to use a hand planer. As with all power tools, protect your eyes and hearing by wearing appropriate safety gear. After turning the tool off, protect yourself and the work—and the blades—by setting the front shoe of the hand planer up on a wood block while the spinning cutter head stops. Work safely above your head by placing walk planks between two ladders, in line with the direction you'll be making your cuts. Once your neighbors spot the speed and ease with which you use your hand planer, watch out! You'll need a sign-out sheet to keep track of all the borrowers. A time-saving tool Photo 2: Plane post corners Shape deck post edges quickly. First center the V-notch in the front shoe on the timber corner and make one long, continuous pass. Then continue to make long, smooth passes until you reach the desired depth. Photo 3: Plane a door edge so it'll close easily Bevel a door edge to a precise 5-degree angle using an adjustable fence on the hand planer. Bevel on the hingeless door edge so the door closes smoothly and the leading edge doesn't "click" on the jamb. To achieve both a uniform bevel angle and a straight edge, stand where you can make long, smooth passes with the tool while keeping the fence snug against the door face. Photo 4: Remove the wood from the back of door casings Hollow out the back of door casings so they'll fit flat against both the wall and the door jamb. Drywall that protrudes from the edge of a jamb can cause casings to "tip." The hollowed-out casing will step over this edge. Control the depth of your cut to avoid a too-thin casing face that will crack during nailing. Photo 5: Plane filler boards for tight-fitting cabinets Taper-cut filler boards so cabinets fit tightly against walls. Ensure this no-gap fit by carefully shaving to the wall scribe mark and angling the hand planer slightly to cut more wood off the backside of the board than is cut off the front. This is called "back beveling." Plane the entire edge of the filler board by raising the cabinet high enough off the floor to allow the tool to complete its pass. Power planers are timesavers that have found their niche with such varied tasks as edge-smoothing and leveling framing lumber and chamfering handrails and posts (Photo 2). With the proper skill and accessories, you can also use power planers for finesse work like beveling door edges, scribing cabinets and countertops, and shaping and tapering wood trim (Photos 3 - 5). We'll show you five common applications, plus tell you how to use, maintain and work safely with this unique, versatile tool. Using a power planer Like a hand plane, the power hand planer (or electric planer) rides on a shoe, or sole plate (Fig. A). Like a jointer, the planer has blades mounted on a cutter head or drum that spins at 20,000 rpm, removing wood equal to the difference in elevation between the front and rear shoes. The front hand grip doubles as a depth-adjustment gauge. The gauge, with its built-in scale settings, turns back and forth to move the front planer shoe up or down, setting the depth of the cut. Depending on the depth you set, the planer removes lots of wood (1/8 in. per pass) or, like a belt sander, a little (1/64 in.). Get the most out of the tool by mastering the right way to hold and push the planer. Properly balancing your body ensures safety and the best planning results. Balance means standing with your feet apart in a position that you'll find comfortable throughout the full tool pass on the workpiece. Each pass of the planer involves a rhythm of balance and hand pressure: Begin by resting the front shoe of the planer flat on the wood without letting the blade touch the work. Start the tool, let the motor reach full speed, then ease the plane into contact with the work and push it steadily forward. Keep your initial pressure on the front grip as the planer enters the workpiece. Balance hand pressure between the tool handle and front knob as both planer soles contact the work. As you push the tool off the work, apply greater control to "catch" the rear handle. Avoid overreaching at the end of a pass; the front shoe will drop off the wood and let the blades take an uneven bite off the end of the wood (called "snipe"). The speed at which you push the tool and the depth setting you choose will affect the final smoothness of your work. For power-shaving dimensional lumber, bites of 1/8 in. per pass are OK. To obtain the smoothest results when you're edge-planing hardwood boards, use a 1/64-in. or 1/32-in. depth setting, push the tool slowly and make more passes. Two carbide blades spinning on a cutter head are the heart of a power planer. Using the depth adjustment knob, control the bite of your blades by raising or lowering the movable front sole plate (or "shoe"). Blades: Resharpen or replace? Photo 6: How to change blades Change blades when they become dull or nicked. As blades dull, they smoke up the room, the planer becomes difficult to push, and wood debris comes out as sawdust instead of shavings. Nicked blades leave a groove in the smoothed wood. Unplug the power planer and read your tool's instructions carefully. Avoid tool vibration by installing the blades squarely in the set plate and bolting the drum plate tightly on the cutter head. Some power planers have two full-sized blades that must be resharpened using a whetstone. However, most planers (ours included) use two double-edged, carbide, disposable "mini blades" (Photo 6). Many planers come with plastic "gauge bases" that help correctly position both the mini blades and the set plate for mounting on the drum. Other tips about blade replacement: Unplug the power planer before you change blades or make any repairs and adjustments to the tool. Change blades before they get so dull that they create smoke or fine powder as you plow through the work. Forcing the planer like this harms the motor. Resharpen or replace both blades at the same time. This maintains cutter head balance and ensures quality cuts. Blades that aren't mounted squarely on the cutter head cause the tool to vibrate. Double-check mounting bolts for tightness before running the planer. Most power planers have blade widths of 3-1/4 in. Some are equipped with blades 6-1/8 in. or wider. Planers differ in cost because of blade width, quality of construction, amp power and standard accessories—like a carrying case. Light-duty models will handle 90 percent of your tasks and cost less than \$100. Contractor grade planers are more rugged, have more accurate and easier-to-work depth gauges, include standard accessories and cost \$130 or more. Select tools or buy accessories with: Cast metal sole plates, which warp less than stamped metal plates. Power cords longer than 6 ft., because they're less likely to hang up on the workpiece and interrupt a smooth pass with the tool. Adjustable fences (Photo 3) that allow you to work accurately on door edges, wood trim and boards. Chip deflectors (see Photo 1), which direct waste instead of "broadcasting" it. Power planers rent for about \$25 a day, but they're tough to find. Many rental centers are dropping planers from their tool inventory because of customers who abuse the tools by running the blades over old paint and hidden metal fasteners in the wood. Required Tools for this how to use a hand planer Project Have the necessary tools for this DIY project lined up before you start—you'll save time and frustration. Dust maskDustpanExtension cordHearing protectionSafety glasses You'll also need a power hand planer (of course!). Originally Published: October 02, 2018

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