

Using Wood Plugs

Woodscrews are a sure-fire way to assemble a project securely. The problem there are times when I don't want the screw heads to show. Simple problem right? Just counter bore the screw hole and then use a wood plug like the ones shown above to cover up the head of the screw.



is

The type of plug you use and how you install it can make a big difference in how it looks. For instance, most store-bought plugs are cut from the end of a dowel. So they absorb stain or finish like a sponge. This makes the plugs darker than the surrounding wood so they end up standing out like a sore thumb.

An easy way to get around this is to cut your own plugs. This way, you can cut a face grain plug that will absorb finish more easily. Another advantage is that you can use the scrap pieces remaining from a project to create an almost invisible plug, as shown in the upper photo at right. Or maybe you'd like to highlight the plug by using a type of wood that contrasts in colour, as shown in the lower photo.



Regardless of the look, you still want the plug to fit the hole like a cork in a bottle. To do this, I follow the simple six-step process detailed below.



- 1.** With a plug cutter chucked in a drill press, cut the plugs in a scrap piece from the project. Be sure to make a few extra. This way, you'll be able to select a plug that best matches the colour and grain of your project.

- 2.** The next step is to free the plugs from the work piece. To do this, I clamp a tall auxiliary fence to the band saw table and cut the plugs so they drop free.



- 3.** With a pile of plugs in front of you, it's tempting to start gluing them in place. But take a minute to select just the right plug for each hole that matches the grain and colour of the surrounding wood.

- 4.** To avoid a big mess, don't apply glue to the plug. Instead, brush glue around the sides of the hole. Then tap the plugs in place. Just don't overdo it. The plug doesn't have to "bottom out." All you're looking for is a snug fit.





5. Now it's just a matter of removing the part of the plug sticking above the work piece. To avoid scratching the work piece, slip a scrap of poster board (or plastic laminate) with a hole in it over the plug as you saw off the waste.

6. With the excess waste removed, all that's left to do is sand each of the plugs flush with the surface of the work piece. A block and some sandpaper make quick work of this.

