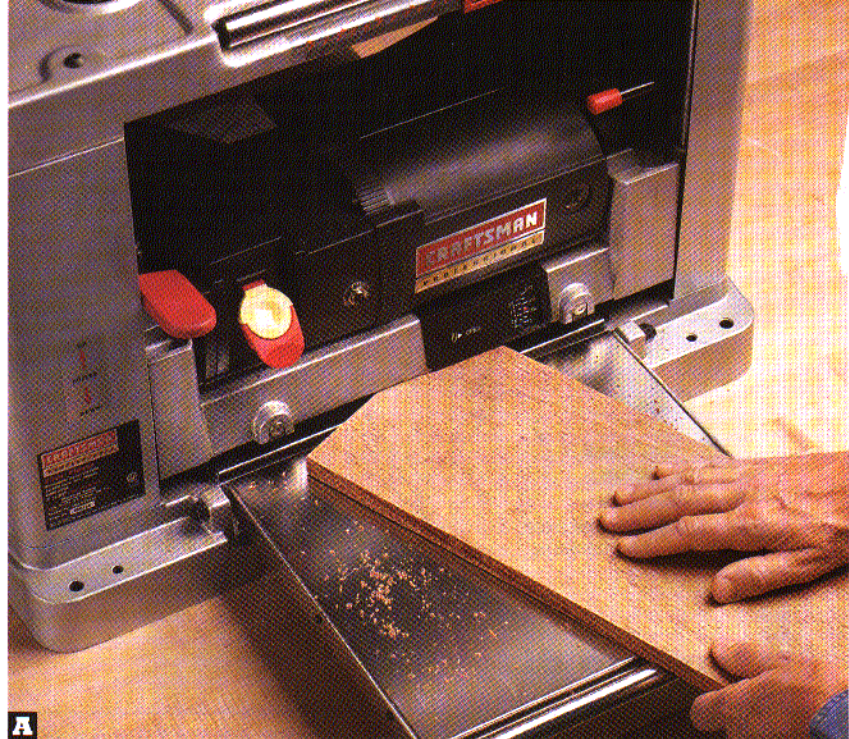


# planer tricks & truths

Follow these simple steps for top results every time.



**A**

If your thickness planer produces minimal snipe, this trick might be all you need to solve the problem. Start to feed the board at an angle, and then rotate it to pass through the planer in a straight line.

**A** Almost any thickness planer gives quick results, but is yours giving you quality results? If not, check your machine as described here, and then put these shop-proven practices to good use.

For starters, make sure the cutter knives are sharp and properly aligned. Run a piece of stock through it, and measure the thickness of each edge with calipers to determine if the knives are even. Make any needed adjustments.

When planing, take a light cut—no more than  $\frac{1}{32}$ "—on the final pass. And here's a tip we use in the *WOOD*® magazine shop: Lower the cutterhead beyond your desired depth of cut, and then raise it into position. This step helps to reduce snipe—a slight gouge on the ends of boards—by taking up the slack in the cutterhead adjustment threads.

## Let's go on an anti-snipe hunt

Almost any portable planer used in a home workshop will create some snipe. Tool experts blame a couple of factors, both related to the pressure rollers that hold the stock flat and feed it through the planer. One problem is that each end of the board can rise up into the cutterhead while it's between the rollers. Also, on some planers, particularly those with only two posts instead of four and those without a locking feature, the cutterhead pivots slightly when the workpiece is applying pressure on only one roller.

Snipe that's .005" deep, for example, doesn't sound like much, but it's a visible flaw that only a good deal of sanding or scraping can eliminate. Aim to hold the snipe to about .002", which is equal to the thickness of a couple of pages of this magazine. You can make that amount of snipe quickly disappear with light sanding.

One or more of the techniques shown here should get your snipe problem under control. The simplest method is to start your board at an angle, as shown in **Photo A**. The board's corner preloads the cutterhead with the least possible exposure of the workpiece. Swing the board perpendicular to the knives immediately after they start cutting. Of course, this method is not an option with boards that are near the planer's limit for width.

The approach shown in **Photo B** is more time-consuming, but pays off when you're handling short, expensive stock—or any piece shorter than the

## Black knot? Red flag

When you spot a knot with black edges and a dried-out appearance, keep it out of your planer. The hard knot might nick your knives, and it can damage the workpiece or the rollers if it breaks loose, as it's likely to do.

