

Pro: Keeping Tools Alive

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I was on a site recently where the contractor dug out his very old and abused tile saw, complete with a sliding table and a water tray below. It was a great gadget to keep the mess to a minimum, except that it was full of cracks and holes, dripping rather messy water all over the driveway and impossible to use inside. I asked him if he had any PL Premium in the truck? of course he did. He was rather surprised when I took out my knife, scraped clean the inside surface, right down in the dirty water, and proceeded to plug all the holes under water. Most of our construction adhesives are solvent based and would not have worked at all. Cold patch would have left a tar-like mess. But both silicone and polyurethane, adhesives and sealants, are cured by contact with moisture or water. PL Premium, a non-toxic polyurethane, can actually be used to seal a leaking aquarium from the inside, without taking the fish out. Congratulations to those of you who actually clean up a dry water tray in the shop and apply a proper fibreglass patch. The rest of us need to know a little about the chemistry of things we use every day to know how to make an emergency patch. While we are talking about polyurethane, understand an important distinction. The adhesive is formulated to set into a rigid material, necessary for non-slip structural bonding, while the sealant or caulking is formulated to set to a very rubbery texture, to keep moving joints sealed. So if you need to glue a hinge to a canvas type tote bag, use adhesive. If you need to glue the flexible seam, use sealant. Thermal plastics are not a good choice for these repairs as they shrink a lot and tend to become brittle. If you have never used epoxy putty, two sticks of putty that you massage together until you get an even colour, you need to experiment with it. With some proper anchoring or roughing up of the surface, you can actually reconstruct broken plastic, fibreglass and metal parts like triggers and even drill housings. The simple hardware store variety works well? or some dealers stock specialized epoxy putties for aluminum, brass etc. Too much trouble you say? When that favorite tool of yours is too old to be able to find replacement parts, you will fall in love with epoxy putty. Uses for Contact Cement Here is one you may not have known? contact cement, when dry, is basically neoprene rubber; 100 per cent acrylic paint is similar but has less rubber-like memory. So if you put on layer after layer of either, letting them dry thoroughly between coats, you end up with a rubber gasket or a rubber jacket. Put a release agent (spray oil, grease or wax) on your object first, struggle with the first two coats because they won't want to stick, and when you have built it up thick enough, you can peel it off like a glove. This produces form fitted waterproof boots for anything that needs weather protection without painting it shut. I also use this technique to make tip protectors for my odd sized or odd shaped chisels, using a dip technique rather than a paint brush. Another tool box tool protector is that thin plastic protector that comes over the teeth of many hand saws. You can replace it at a stationary store with the plastic splines that the kids buy for their school reports. Although you can't stop sandpaper from wearing out, you can reclaim belts and disks when they simply clog up. You can buy blocks of crepe rubber, that when pushed into moving sandpaper, cleans the paper without wearing down the grit. Yes this is exactly the same stuff we find occasionally on the soles of shoes and sandals, and an old shoe works just as well as the store bought block. How about cleaning burned-in sap off of circular saw blades? You may have discovered that Easy-Off oven cleaner does a good job, but is sometimes a bit hard on the metal or the solder that holds the teeth in place. Ammonia is much slower but less caustic on both the blades and your lungs. To minimise both the quantity and the smell of the ammonia, buy two pizza cook trays. Put the saw blade in one, cover it with ammonia and cover it with the other tray. The next day you can wipe off the sap. There are two good ways to dress? a rectangular sharpening stone to get it flat again. Place some Wet/Dry paper on a piece of glass, wet it with oil or water depending on the stone, and rub your stone into it until it is as flat as the glass. The other way is to buy two stones the same size and regularly rub them together in a figure-8 fashion, using lots of lubricant. The figure 8 will not transfer grooves from one stone to the

other, but cause both stones to come out flat. In the old days, everything was attached, even repaired, with bailing wire. The interesting modern version of very strong emergency tie down is ? dental floss. Weave just 5 strands of it together and try to break it. In fact the first reported illegal use of dental floss was a successful escape rope woven out of months of dental floss in a Virginia state prison.**Originally published as an article by Jon Eakes in Home Builder Magazine, the magazine of the Canadian Home Builder's Association.

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