quick & easy Tool-Saving Tips

Protecting your tools from rust is a snap with these handy tips.

It always amazes me how quickly rust can appear on a tool. Sometimes it happens overnight. And even some types of tool guards can cause rust in a damp shop (margin photo at left). The good news is that there are several ways to protect your hand and power tools that won't require a lot of time or effort. Some are even a bit unconventional, but effective.

Cleaning. The first step in preventing rust is to remove any corrosion, dirt, and grime already on your tools. A little solvent like paint thinner, lacquer thinner, or denatured alcohol on a rag will tackle most grime. And for light rust, you can use *Sandflex Rust Eraser* blocks or *3M's Scotch-Brite*.

With the tool clean and dry, you're ready to take the steps needed to help keep rust at bay. How you do this depends on whether it's a hand tool or a stationary power tool.

▼ ***Trapped Moisture.*** *Plastic guards can trap moisture against the steel, causing rust.*

HAND TOOLS

When it comes to hand tools, I'm mainly concerned with keeping them tuned up and sharp. But there are also a few simple things you can do to prevent rust.

A Quick Wipe. Steve Johnson, our shop craftsman, uses his hand tools quite a bit. When he's putting them away at the end of the day, he just gives them a quick wipe with camellia oil (main photo above). It takes no time at all to apply and he says he's never had a problem with rust, even in his basement shop.

You might think that any lightweight oil would do the trick. But unlike camellia oil, it may stain the wood.

Aerosols. Another quick and easy solution is to use a spray. And if you walk down the aisle at the hardware store, you'll find dozens of spray products that claim to prevent rust. The idea is to form a protective barrier against moisture on the steel. But for woodworkers, it's also important to know what's in the product.

No Silicone. Using any product that contains silicone or *Teflon* can spell trouble when it comes time to finish your project. If it rubs off onto the wood, the finish may not adhere properly. So it's best to steer clear of these products altogether.

A Quick Spray. When choosing a rust-preventative for my tools, I like to use products that are

▲ ***Corrosive Fingerprints.*** *Sweat and skin oils can be corrosive. A quick wipe after use is a good way to prevent rust.*

woodworker-friendly and compatible with my tools and projects. One such product I like to use is *Boeshield T-9*. It leaves a thin, waxy film. And all it takes is a quick spritz. You can wipe off the excess or just let it dry to form a heavier film (photo at right).

Wax On. Woodworkers are pretty passionate about which products work best for rust protection. And they all seem to have their favorite paste wax. From expensive, museum-quality waxes to inexpensive furniture waxes, the point is they all work to protect against moisture. You're just aiming for a thin, protective layer.

Spray Protection. *A spritz of rust preventative will keep your hand tools looking new.*

POWER TOOLS

It seems like the cast iron surfaces on a stationary power tool are the worst for attracting rust. And that's especially true if your shop is in a basement or garage. But it's easy to combat rust.

A Porous Surface. Why does cast iron rust so fast? It's because it's so porous. There are tiny openings in the metal, and these pores are great collection spots for any moisture in the air.

So, like your hand tools, the key is to provide a protective barrier. And, to do this, you can use one of the many products I mentioned earlier. But there are a couple of low-cost, "unconventional" treatments you can try.

Waxed Paper. I talked about using paste wax, and that will do a good job. But there's a quicker, no-mess way to apply some wax.

Wax Applicator. *Buffing cast iron tools with waxed paper adds some moisture protection and shine.*

Crumple up some waxed paper and rub it vigorously on your table saw table and the beds of your planer and jointer (lower left photo). Besides protecting them from rust, it also forms a slick surface.

Smooth as a Baby's Bottom. Another unconventional technique is using baby powder or talcum powder. When you think about its original use, it makes a bit of sense — talc repels moisture. But you have to make sure you use powder made from talc and not corn starch. While talc resists moisture, corn starch will absorb it.

Just sprinkle the powder liberally on the surface and rub it in with a felt chalkboard eraser (photo above). The talc works its way into the pores to repel moisture and leaves a smooth surface.

The bottom line is, protecting your tools from rust doesn't need to be an all-day chore. Your tools will thank you for the attention. For long-term rust protection for tools you need to store or move, see the box below.

▲ ***Powder.*** *Talc found in baby powder protects cast iron and creates a slick surface.*

Tool Storage: Long Term Rust Control

If you have to move your shop or store your tools for several months or years, you need to be concerned about the potential for rust.

The key to long-term rust protection is adding a durable coating to act as a barrier against all forms of moisture. The product shown at right is just one example. It can protect a tool from rust for up to two years.

But if you can't find these products, you can use a couple coats of paste wax or spray a heavy coat of a product like *Boeshield T-9*.

When putting the tools back into action, just clean off the rust preventative with a solvent. And take the time to perform any other maintenance needed. Then re-apply a rust preventative as discussed above.

► ***Thick Coatings.*** *Waxy or oily coatings will keep your tools rust-free for long-term storage.*