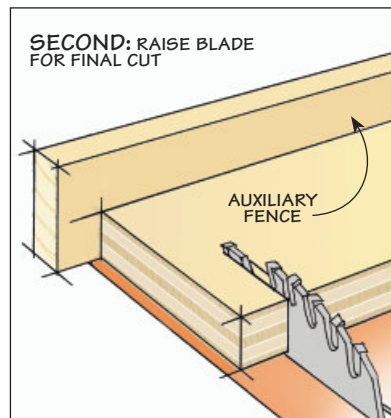
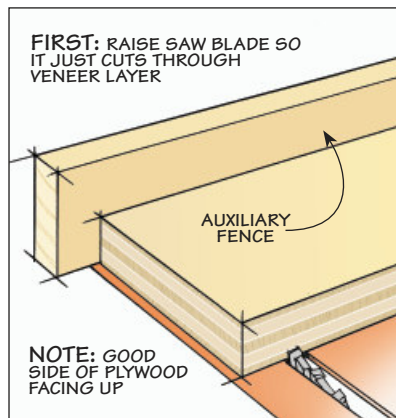
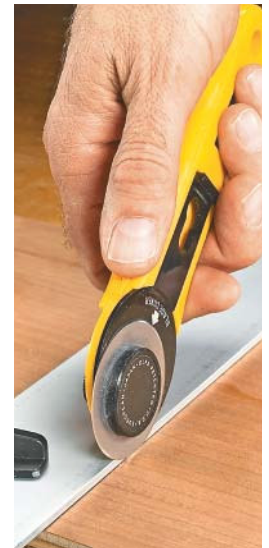
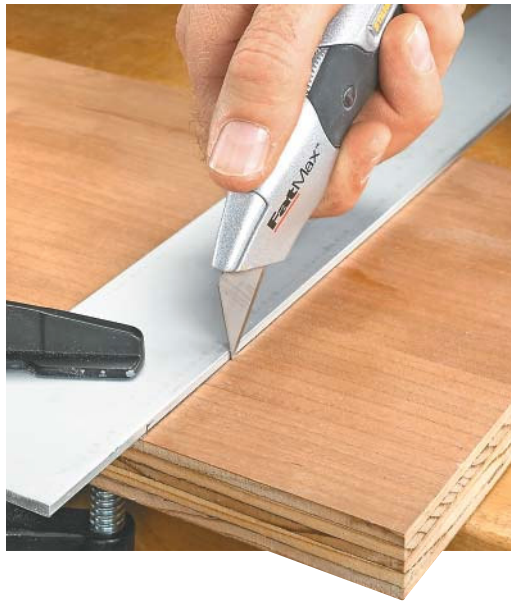


# 7 tips for clean Plywood Cuts



**1 Scoring.** ▶ The key to preventing splinters from appearing along the edge when you crosscut plywood is to pay special attention to the thin veneer layer. One of the easiest ways to do this is to score or cut through the wood fibers of the veneer before making the cut. A sharp knife or a rotary fabric cutter, like you see in the photo at right works great for this.

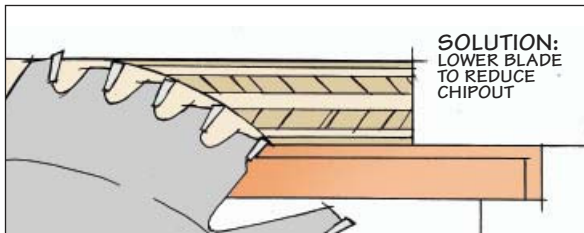
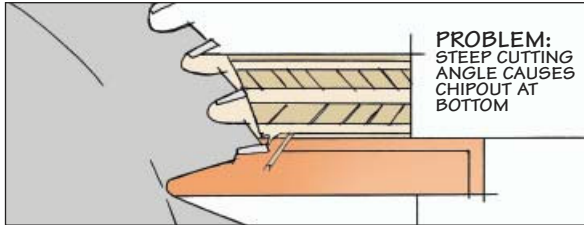
You'll find this method is fast and effective. But you'll need to take some time to align the saw blade accurately with the score line. That way, you'll cut through the fibers you already scored.



**2 Saw Blade Scoring.** ◀ Another method to prevent splintering is to use your saw blade to score the veneer of the plywood. With this method, you'll need to make two passes, as shown at left.

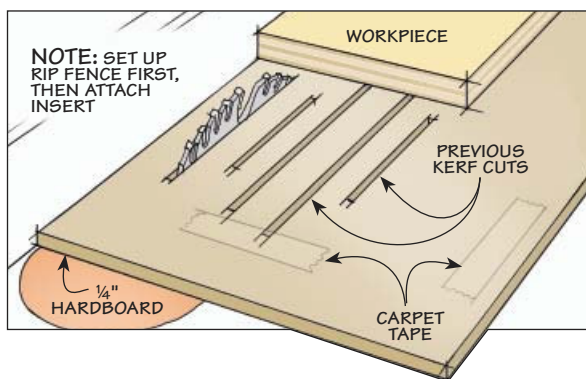
On the first pass, set the blade at a height that will just cut through the lower veneer layer. Next, you can raise the blade and complete the cut with a second pass. I like to use an auxiliary fence on my miter gauge to help keep the workpiece aligned with the blade. And if multiple pieces are being cut, I add a stop block to ensure the pieces are the same.

**3 Adjust Blade Height.** ▼ The height of the blade as it cuts through the plywood can be a cause of splintering. If the blade is set too high, the teeth cut almost perpendicular to the veneer. This makes a clean cut on top but it causes chipout at the bottom. You can correct this problem by simply adjusting the blade height so that it's only 1/8" above the plywood. The change in cutting angle reduces chipout.



**5 Zero-Clearance Inserts.** ▼ A good way to get a clean cut is to have no opening between the blade and the table saw insert. Then as the blade cuts through the workpiece, the insert is there to back up the bottom veneer of the plywood. This ensures you'll make a clean cut each and every time.

A quick, zero-clearance insert can be made by using carpet tape to attach a piece of hardboard to your table saw. Then raise the blade through the top.



**7 Circular Saw.** ► Cutting plywood with your circular saw presents a different problem. Here, the splintering occurs on the top side. If I need a clean cut on both sides, I start by placing the good side down. Then, I make an auxiliary hardboard plate, like you see in the illustration at right, and attach it to the baseplate of the saw. The plate acts as a zero-clearance slot for the blade as it cuts the plywood.

**4 Tape.** ▼ Another way to prevent splintering is to support the veneer layer as the blade makes the cut. One of the easiest ways to do this is to apply a strip of masking tape directly over the layout line (see photo below). This gives the face veneer enough support to keep it from being torn away by the saw blade. After making the cut, slowly remove the tape by pulling it toward the edge of the cut.



**6 Backer Board.** ▼ A quick method of supporting the veneer layer is to place a piece of hardboard directly below the workpiece as you make your cut. The hardboard supports the bottom veneer layer so it can be cut cleanly without splintering. Again, I like to add an auxiliary fence to the miter gauge, like you see in the illustration below. This helps keep the workpiece aligned with the blade and holds the backer board firmly in position as the cut is made.

