

Simple Tips for Cutting Sheet Goods

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On the following page, you'll find tips and tricks for cutting sheet goods that will help you create this compact office. For more information about the project, see the May/June 2011 issue of *My Home My Style*.



Create a Cutting Board

Rather than cutting sheets with a circular saw on sawhorses, simply lay a sheet of 2"-thick foam insulation on the ground, and then lay the sheet to be cut onto the foam. The foam supports the sheet and the cutoff as you make your cuts (*Photo, right*). Set the saw so the blade cuts about 1/4" into the foam. You can reuse the foam many times.

Use an Edge Guide

The easiest way to keep a circular saw tracking straight is to use an edge guide (*Photo, below*). We bought this one, made by Swanson Tool Company, at Lowe's for less than \$20. It has two 50"-long sections and comes with clamps. You can use each section alone when cutting across a sheet or join them to cut a sheet lengthwise.



Tag-Team Curves

If you need to make a cut that starts straight and then curves, use both a circular saw and a jigsaw. First, make the straight cut with the circular saw, stopping the saw before the curve (*Photo, far left*). Let the saw stop, and then lift it off the sheet. Now lower the jig saw blade into the cut, and complete the curved portion (*Photo, near left*).

Get the Right Gear

Along with a straightedge, you'll need several simple tools to ensure precise layouts and smooth cuts in sheet goods. A tape measure, framing square, compass, and a pencil handle the layout. To make sure the cut is smooth, use a circular saw blade made for cutting sheet goods. The 40-tooth carbide-tipped blade shown here works great and sells for less than \$20.

