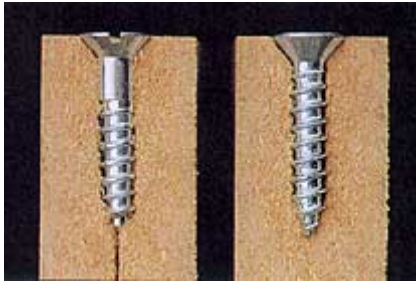


Screwing into MDF



I often use medium-density fibreboard (MDF) for my shop jigs and fixtures. There are many things I like about MDF. It's stable, heavy and costs about *half* as much as cabinet-grade plywood.

One thing I *don't* like about MDF is its tendency to split along the edge of a work piece. But, luckily, there are a couple of things you can do to avoid this problem.

MDF tends to split most often when drilling and screwing in its edge, especially when using a *tapered* woodscrew, left above. It acts like a wedge to drive the work piece apart. So I've gotten into the habit of using a *straight-shanked* screw, right above.



However, a straight-shanked screw isn't a cure-all. Even when using a pilot hole and the right screw, MDF can still split out. So one final precaution is to support the sides by clamping an ordinary hand screw across the work piece, see the photo at left. It makes it almost impossible to split the MDF.

Try these two tips the next time you're working with MDF and you shouldn't have any problems with splitting.