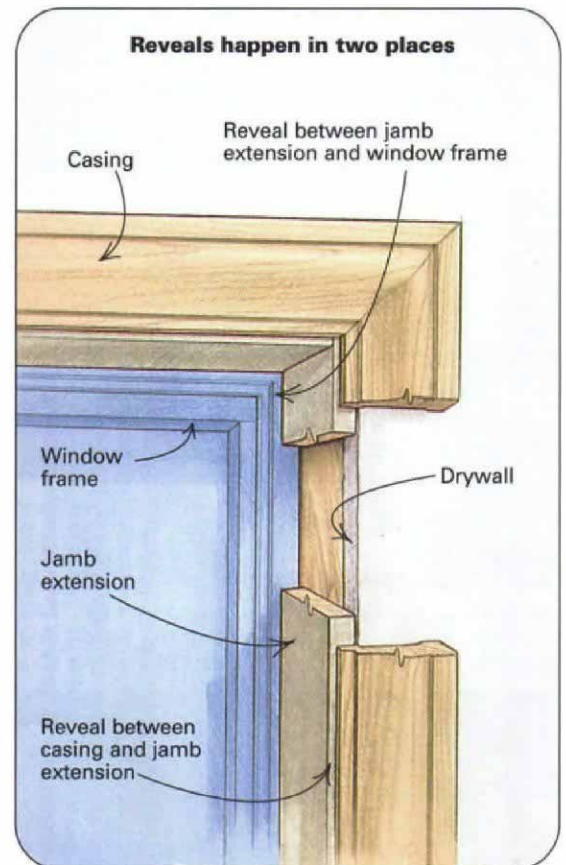
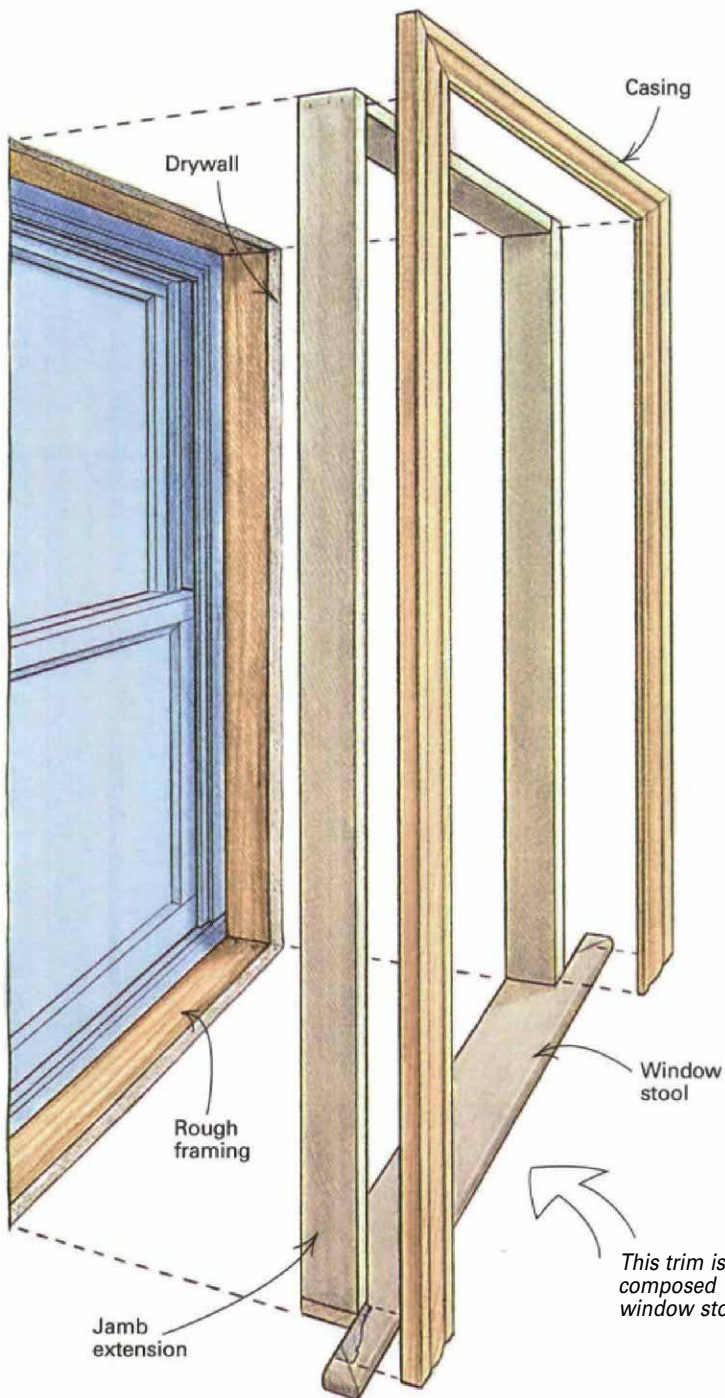


Bench-Built Window Trim

How one trim carpenter turns jamb extensions into an advantage by using them to reinforce preassembled window casings

by Jim Britton

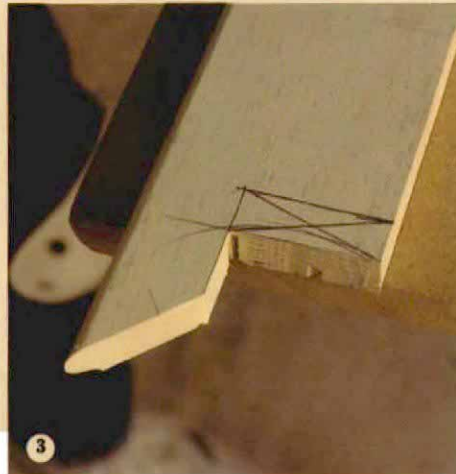


This trim is applied as a single unit composed of jamb extensions, window stool and casings.



Prebuilt window casings start as a box composed of jamb extensions and the window stool

① Windows that are made for 2x4 walls end up in a lot of walls framed with 2x6s. The resulting raw edges between the window and the drywall will be covered by jamb extensions on the sides and top, and by the window stool at the bottom. Here, the author marks the stool for the notch that will create the horn, the portion of the stool that extends beyond the window casings. Note how the middle of the stool is registered against a line that marks the center of the window opening. ② Next, he marks the plane of the drywall on the end of the stool to show the cutline. ③ The window-stool horns are then mitered for their returns. ④ The side jambs are affixed to the stool with a pair of drywall screws at each corner.



Back in the early 1980s, I saved a general contractor a bushel of money by preassembling a massive window-trim unit (for 12 windows), and then lifting it into place as a single component. I could do this because all the windows needed jamb extensions, which acted as reinforcement for the mitered casings for each window. So I built the trim on the floor near the windows, and a fellow worker helped me set the unit in place. With only minor tweaking, I was able to plumb and line the trim to near perfection. Since that day, I have never trimmed a window a piece at a time.

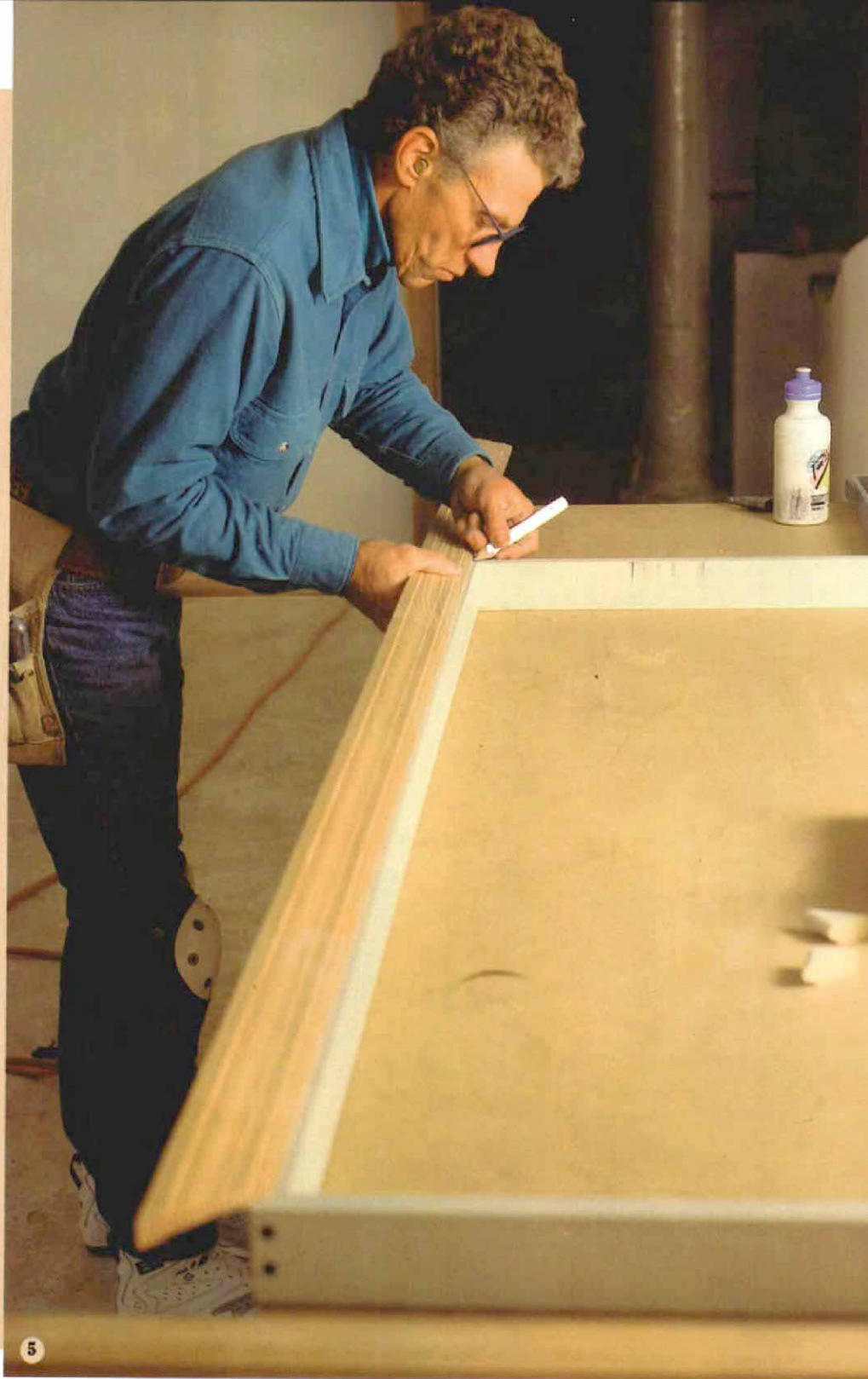
Preassembled casings and jambs begin with the stool—I'd say about 80% of the windows that I install need jamb extensions. Windows are typically made for 2x4 walls, and they end up in walls framed with 2x6s (photo 1). You can pay a premium for windows with jamb extensions, but the builders I know usually make their own to save a little money. I typically make them out of preprimed, 3/4-in. thick finger-jointed pine, the material used in the project illustrated here. But you can also use any of the other popular trim woods or medium-density fiberboard. The first step in making jamb extensions is to

decide how wide to make them. I measure the distance from the window to the finished wall at the top and bottom of the window, and then split the difference. This works fine if the discrepancy is no more than 1/8 in. If it's more, you'll have to cut tapered jamb extensions, a sure way to bring a production pace to a virtual halt.

My first cut is the head-jamb extension. Its length is equal to the width of the window plus the reveals on both sides of the window. I chose a 3/16-in. reveal for this job, so the length of the head-jamb extension equaled the width of the window plus 3/8 in. Next, I calculate the height of

The mitered parts go together next

5 Britton marks the cut on the edge of a piece of casing. The cut mark allows for the width of the reveal between the edge of the jamb extension and the casing. 6 Using a 16-ga. nailer, the author next attaches the casings to the jamb extensions. At this stage, resist the temptation to nail through the mitered corners or the bottom of the stool to the casing. To do so eliminates some of the flexibility of the assembly, which will work to your favor during installation. 7 Before installation, the author uses hot-melt glue to attach the mitered returns to the stool's horns.



the side extensions. In this case, I measured the window and added $\frac{3}{16}$ in. for the top reveal, plus $\frac{3}{4}$ in. for the thickness of the head jamb. The length of the stool (photos 1, 2, 3) depends on the reveals, the width of the side casings and the distance that the stool projects beyond the casing— $\frac{3}{4}$ in. for this job.

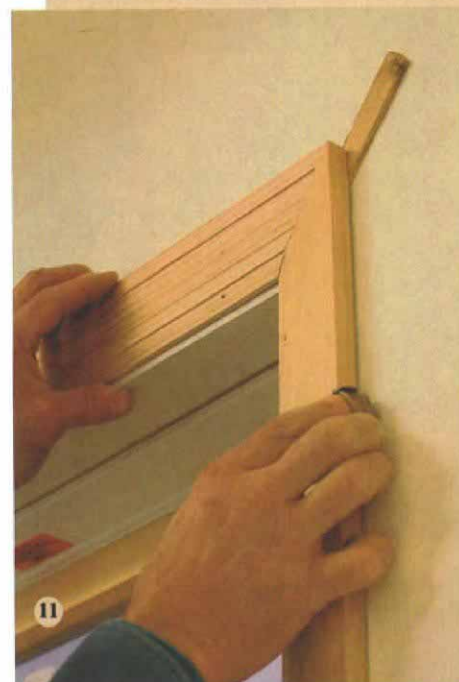
Once I've got the jamb extensions and the stool screwed together into a big, shallow rectangular box, I'm ready to attach the casings and

the return miters at the ends of the stool (photos 5, 6, 7).

Jockey the assembled frame into its opening—I lift the trim unit into position and wiggle it around until I like its location with respect to the desired reveals. Then I fasten the assembly at the lower corners by nailing through the side casings into the trimmers (photo 8). Next I fasten the top corners by nailing through the side cas-

ings near the top. The assembly is now located and ready for lining the head, sides and stool. To line, simply move the casing, and the jamb will follow. When it's straight, nail through the casing (photo 9). I end up putting my nails about 12 in. apart.

To ensure that the jamb extensions butt into the window frame, I push on the extensions near the corners and nail them into the trimmer (photo 10). I'm not worried about the lack of



The casing becomes a nailing flange during installation

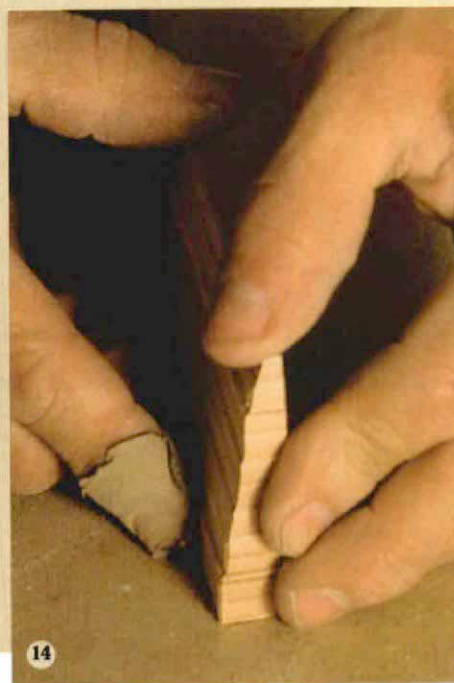
8 Once the bench-built trim is in its opening, Britton tweaks its placement until the reveals around the edge of the window look right. Then he affixes it to the wall with nails at each corner, beginning at the bottoms. **9** When the corners are fixed, Britton next adjusts the alignment of the jamb extensions by pushing or pulling on the middle of the

casing. **10** Casings affixed, the jamb extensions are pushed against the window frame and nailed. **11** Nails into the jamb extensions should be placed near nails into the casings. If irregularities in the wall or window position cause the miters to remain open, use a shim to close them, and then drive a single nail across the corner to pin the casings together.

Finish up with the stool and the apron

- 12 With a pry bar holding the stool in line with the window, Britton nails the stool to the framing. 13 14 Mitered returns glued to the ends of the apron make for a delicate detail that eliminates end grain. 15 The apron conceals any gaps between the stool and the drywall while simultaneously supporting the stool.





backing here because the screwed connection between the jamb extensions keeps them from being driven out of alignment.

When I drive nails into the jamb extensions away from the corners, I always place them near the nails in the casings. This placement keeps the nails from pulling the extensions too far inward. A note of caution here: This shimless system works just fine if the gap between the trim and the framing is no more than $\frac{3}{8}$ in. If it's any more than that, I nail furring strips to the inside of the rough opening.

Finish with the stool and its apron—Next, I nail home the stool, aligning it by eye with the bottom of the window as I support the stool with a pry bar (photo 12). The stool is now pinned in place and can be fine-tuned up or down. I use the steel bar to pry or tap it in line if necessary. If you think that you need solid backing under the stool, now is the time to add it. But truth be told, the nails will support the stool just fine unless somebody decides to stand on it. And remember, the apron also works to support the stool from below.

I prefer mitered returns on the apron (photos 13 and 14). I cut these delicate pieces with a power miter box. Then I use hot-melt glue to affix them to the apron. I nail the apron to the framing under the stool with nails on 12-in. centers (photo 15). Like the rest of the assembly, the nails should be long enough to get at least $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. penetration into the framing. □

Jim Britton is a contractor and trim carpenter who lives in Jacksonville, Oregon. Photos by Charles Miller.