

Make a Dutchman

BY STEVE JORDAN ♦ PHOTOS BY ANDY OLENICK

A Dutchman is a small wood patch that's used as a repair where fillers won't reliably hold up—for example, on areas subject to abrasion, tension, or stress. They're also used when aesthetics demand an “in kind” material, like filling a gouge or missing piece on unpainted trim or furniture. Dutchman patches provide long-lasting solutions, and are easy to make if you have some basic woodworking tools and know-how. I installed one on the bottom edge of this sash.



▲ 1. Start by assembling your tools: a straight edge, combination square, router and straight bit, ruler, wood chisel, block plane, epoxy, random orbit sander, and enough wood to create the patch. Ideally, the wood should be the same type as the original, and match its grain as closely as possible. Begin by laying out the area to be removed and marking the boundaries with a sharp pencil or utility knife.

▼ 2. If the existing surface is painted, strip the area around the repair, including all places where the router plate slides, so the router can move smoothly across the surface. Using a square and a straight edge, mark the area to be removed. Next, attach a straight edge (and stop blocks if needed) to guide the router. Wearing eye and ear protection (a leather apron is also a good idea for router work), slowly move the router along the guides, taking care not to remove too much material at a time. (Removal also can be done with a wood chisel or an oscillating saw and chisel.) When finished, carefully square the corners with a sharp wood chisel.





▲ 3. Next, cut the patch from the new wood. Depending on the repair, you can do this one of two ways: Cut out the damaged material, then cut a piece to fill the void; or make the replacement piece first by tracing its perimeter over the damaged area, and then removing material to install the patch. Either way, a snug fit is essential except at the top, which should stand about $\frac{1}{16}$ " proud for planing and sanding. Since this repair was open on one end (along the bottom edge of the sash), I chose the first method.



▲ 4. Now it's time to insert the patch. Your choice of glue depends on how the patch is exposed to the weather. For interior patches, ordinary wood glue will suffice. For an exterior patch, use waterproof glue (epoxy, polyurethane, weatherproof carpenter's glue). I prefer epoxy because, when needed, I also can mix it into a paste that will fill voids. For this project, I used five-minute, two-part epoxy to complete the work quickly. After test-fitting your patch, apply the glue to all surfaces, and install it in the void. To maximize the bond, clamp the patch (done here in two directions). ▼



▲ 5. After the glue dries, remove excess material with a block plane and sand the patch smooth using a random orbit sander and 100-grit paper. Fill any cracks between the old and new surface with a filler, allow it to dry, and sand smooth. The repair is now ready for priming and painting.

