

Trimming a sticking door.

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Maria has a door that sticks and she is tired of having to use her hip to open the door, especially in the summer time. So let's look at a few tips about un-sticking doors. It is best to work at the time when it sticks the most. For Maria that is the summer time when the humidity is highest and the door swells the most. We will adjust the door under the worst conditions, and then seal all the edges so that humidity has less effect on the door in the future. If it sticks on the top or the bottom, you simply shorten the door. If you need to remove more than an inch, remove some from the top and some from the bottom. The reason for this is that there is a wooden frame inside doors and with hollow doors that frame is not very large. Removing too much from one end could leave the door without a top or bottom frame piece. The trick to sawing off the end of a door without splinters is to score the cut line with a knife before sawing, and then cut just outside the cut line. The door surface will still try to splinter, but the splinters will break at the cut line -- giving you a clean cut. Splinters occur on the bottom with a hand saw, on the top with a circular saw, so score the line on the side where the splinters want to appear, the side where the saw teeth push through and away from the wood. When you are done cutting, use your knife or even sandpaper to make a little bevel on the ends of the door. That will prevent the floor or the top frame from grabbing the door laminate in the future and creating splinters just by forcing the door. The bevel will pull the top surface of the door, the part that wants to splinter, away from the meat of the frame and protect it. If the door is jamming on the edge, not the top or bottom, then you need to remove some wood from the side of the door. Unless you just need to touch a little on the upper or lower extremes of the side, you should not touch the handle side. When you remove a lot of wood on the handle side, you end up having to move the handle itself and that begins to present all kinds of problems. Always remove the wood from the hinge side of the door. You can see one of my working tips in the second photo above. As you remove wood from the hinge side, you could simply 'erase' the hinge mortise. That makes it more difficult to get the hinge back in the right place later. I like to stop and use a chisel to mark the edges of the hinge mortise before the old one disappears. That way I can simply place my chisel in the remaining indentation of the old mortise, make the cut a little deeper and then continue planing down the door. Once I have finished planing, then I cut out the mortise. Remember to seal all the edges, as well as the top and the bottom of the door, after any planing work to minimize future dimensional changes from humidity.

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