

TESTBENCH TIPS

Hold That Cable

Ribbon cable becomes very slippery stuff when I try to hold it in position as I squeeze the parts of an insulation displacement connector in a vise. Often, the wire slips just a smidgen and the contacts pierce through the insulation to the wrong wire. I discovered that if I coat the connector's pressure bar (A) and the



edge of the ribbon cable (B) with ordinary rubber cement, and press them together when the cement is dry to the touch, the wire stays in position and



doesn't budge when the connector is squeezed together. Every connector becomes a perfect installation (C). The rubber cement residue has no effect on the cable's insulation. —H.F., Hewlett, NY



Feed Fixing

My single-sheet printer becomes a nightmare when I need to print a long list of names, files, or a BASIC program. I found that a small roll of paper from an inexpensive printer will sit on top of the printer in the groove formed by the platen and the paper rest. With the paper roll pushed against the left paper stop, a dowel is cut to the exact fit between the roll of paper and the right side of the printer—just loose enough for the paper



to feed freely. You can count on the paper roll to remain in perfect alignment for a l-o-n-g listing. Like the paper, the dowel fits in the platen groove.

—K.J., Medicine Hat, Sask.

Still Another Use!

The conductive foam used to pack static-sensitive components is a perfect vise-jaw gripper when I have to hold delicate parts in a vise. The foam surface is unusually coarse, providing suitable gripping action to hold a fragile part in position even if the vise isn't tight. The



The very next time you come up with a simple, but clever, idea that helps you build a better project, or do a better job of installing, or testing, a project, let us know about it. Put your idea on paper (typewrite it), spelling out the details on one sheet. Take a black-and-white photo of the idea in action and send it to the Editor. (Color photos lose too much contrast.) If your tip is used in this column, you will receive a check for \$20. Sorry, we will be unable to return your tip or photo, and all entries become the property of **Hands-on Electronics**. Send all mail to **Hands-on Electronics Testbench Tips**, Room 1101, 200 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10003.

foam's extra firmness prevents it from deforming and releasing the pressure on the part. Also, since it conducts electricity, should you mount a static-sensitive component or board in the vise, provide a good electrical ground to the vise's frame to avoid static-charge buildup. —A.W., Kansas City, KA

New Tool

The extra fine dental burrs sold at flea markets are great for modifying homebrew printed-circuit boards. Their extra small footprint and high sharpness lets me slice through unwanted foils leaving barely a mark on the plastic substrate. The only problem I had was with the chuck size required to hold the burrs.



Dental burr shafts are very thin and require a chuck smaller than the standard size that comes with a hobby grinder. Go to your local hobby-supply store and pick up a copper or brass metal tubing that snug fits over the burr's shaft. Now the expanded shaft is of a suitable thickness for most hobby-type drills.

—W.T., Indianapolis, IN