



Five-minute workshop jobs

With **Josh Giumelli** on holidays this month, we decided to ask him what he would do if he had only five minutes spare in the workshop.
Photos by **Ben White** and **Josh Giumelli**

It is often the way a spare few minutes is utilised now that can make all the difference later when the pressure is on.

For instance, spending a few minutes each day keeping your workshop tidy will not have a significant impact on the day, but it can make all the difference when you need to fix a piece of machinery in a hurry. If you spend five minutes or so each day packing away tools, sorting fasteners and other supplies, cleaning up mess and even simply sweeping the floor, it will keep your workshop in a state of readiness for when you need to get things done quickly.

This month we look at a range of jobs that can be performed in five minutes or less. Naturally, cleaning and packing away tools goes at the top of the list, but there are a range of other small tasks that can be performed quickly which can save time later on.

In addition, if you have employees on your farm, then these tasks are a good way to make sure they use idle time productively. If you have a whiteboard in a prominent place, make sure it has a “to-do” list that is kept up to date.

Tools sourced from Toolmart



1

Poor old hand files never seem to get any attention. They work so much better if they are regularly cleaned, by scrubbing along the serrations with a wire brush or file cleaning card.



2

If you've got some chalk, give the file a rub. The chalk dust will help the file shed any filings or dirt that may otherwise get caught in the teeth.



3

Bench grinding wheels will lose their flat face through normal use, making fine work almost impossible, such as sharpening a drill bit. In addition, they can become clogged with dirt and soft metal particles such as aluminium.



4

Regular dressing with a dressing stick or a rotary dresser will clean the surface of the wheel and reface it to a square, flat face (inset).



5

With the wheel dressed, a few spare minutes can be put to good use sharpening blunt cold chisels or drill bits, but remember to cool often in a cup of water.



6

If you find hand-sharpening drill bits difficult, it may pay to invest in a 'Drill Doctor' or similar sharpening tool. These range in price from around \$200 to \$550 depending on the maximum size drill bit they can accommodate.



7 Wooden tool handles suffer over time as they dry out and become splintery. This is especially true for spades, shovels, axes and sledgehammers which get used outside. Wooden handles which dry out also often become loose. Mix up a brew of 50:50 boiled linseed oil and turpentine.



11 Fill another spray bottle with a mixture of water and dishwashing liquid. Spray it around oxy-acetylene fittings and hoses to check for leaks. They may be small, but a slow leak will cost dollars over time.



8 Give handles a liberal coating with an old paint brush. The turps helps thin down the boiled linseed oil, helping it soak into the handle. Don't use raw linseed oil as it will take ages to dry, and may remain sticky. The boiled linseed/turps mixture should be dry in about a day.



12 While you are at it, check any reticulated compressed air system for leaks with the detergent mixture. The air compressor will cut in continually to maintain the system pressure if there are even small leaks. If you tend to leave the system on, this will cost electricity.



9 Commercial penetrating fluid is expensive (\$50 for 4 litres) but a very good, possibly superior substitute can be made by mixing 50:50 mineral automatic transmission fluid (unused) and acetone. While diesel or kerosene makes a reasonable substitute for a commercial penetrating fluid, the ATF/acetone mix has a superior ability to wick into seized parts.



13 It also pays to check compressor oil levels and drain any moisture from reservoirs and water traps. These jobs are typically overlooked until a problem crops up.



10 Keep the mixture handy in a spray bottle. This mix works out at around \$7.50 per litre.



14 AB powder extinguishers are cheap insurance for a fire in the workshop or on a vehicle. But the powder can clump together when they have been sitting for a long period of time. Invert each extinguisher and give it a shake. You should be able to hear the powder as you shake the canister.

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15

Old clothes are often donated to the workshop for use as rags. Invariably, they are grabbed straight from the bag and used as a whole garment. But this usually wastes much of the rag.



18

On the subject of bins, fill another one with sawdust or wood shavings, or even cat litter. It comes in very handy for mopping up accidental oil spills.



22

Here is a handy 'fitting smacker' we have made from a scrap of hardwood.



16

Using a pair of sharp scissors cut or rip all rags into approximately 300 or 400mm squares, removing all buttons, studs and zippers in the process. If you go through a fair amount of rags, it may pay to invest \$20 or \$30 in a pair of good dressmaking scissors which will make cutting cloth considerably easier.



19

Marking tools for security is another good job to chip away at when you have a few spare minutes. This Kincrome pen engraver has a hardened tip, ideal for marking spanners, and costs around \$39.



23

It is just the shot to drive the insert up the centre of the poly pipe without damage when installing rural pipe fittings. Keep one in each vehicle or box of pipe fittings.



20

Extension cords are difficult to tidy up at the best of times. Here are two different types of cord-tidies you can make in minutes; one from galvanised rod and one from ply board.



24

Clean chemical containers have long been a handy source of storage for the farm workshop. Just make sure they really are clean and have not held anything toxic. A bandsaw (above), jigsaw (below) or even an angle grinder with thin disc can be used to cut them with relative ease.



17

Rags are best stored in a dedicated bin or tub with a lid to keep the dust out.



21

Note the tidy made from rod has the ends bent over so it can be hung up, while the one cut from ply has a hole drilled for hanging.



25

The resulting 1/3 and 2/3 sized containers give two handy options for storing tools or supplies.