

Beginner's Business Guide

by Pete Young

If balance sheets and double-entry accounting sound like mumbo jumbo, Ellen Rohr's *Where Did the Money Go? A Beginner's Guide to Basic Business Scorekeeping* (\$20, Maxrohr Business Basics Series, 3120 S. Know It All Lane, Rogersville, MO 65742; 877/629-7647) should help out. Rohr wrote this book after learning the ropes while keeping books for her husband's plumbing and heating business. Humorously unconventional, the book is intended as a first step towards business literacy. Rohr uses an ongoing skit of sorts that revolves around an imaginary plumber, Bob Bird, and his new business, the Eagle Plumbing Company. Bob's first decision concerns buying a company truck. From there, the book follows the growth of Eagle Plumbing — with an "eagle" eye on where the money goes.



Contracts, Scope of Work, and Subs

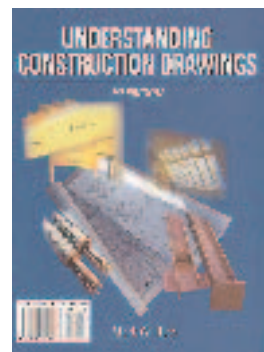
Contracts with the Trades, by John Fredley and John Schaufelberger, covers the business of working with subcontractors from start to finish. Writing good contracts and clearly defining the scope of work are at the core of this business primer (\$38.50 from Home Builder Press, 1201 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005; 800/223-2665; www.builderbooks.com). Sample scope-of-work descriptions are provided for more than 20 subcontracts, along with advice on the best way to choose subs and manage their work on your jobs. Included are hard-copy blank forms as well as a diskette of blank forms for use with several word processing software packages.



Understanding Construction Drawings

Estimating from blueprints can get confusing, and mistakes made during takeoffs can turn up later on as profit-eating problems. *Understanding Construction Drawings* (\$51 From Delmar

Publishers, P.O. Box 15015, Albany, NY 12212; 800/865-5840; www.delmar.com) provides the background information you need to work with a complete project drawing package. Starting with site preparation plans and moving through the prints involved in all subsequent aspects of residential and light commercial construction, author Mark Huth explains the standard details that construction drawings contain. In addition, Huth demystifies drawing techniques — views, scales, elevations, sections, and so on. Four sample drawing packages (a duplex, a lake house, a townhouse, and a school addition) are inserted inside the back cover.




Engineering Basics

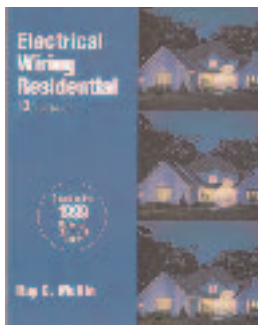
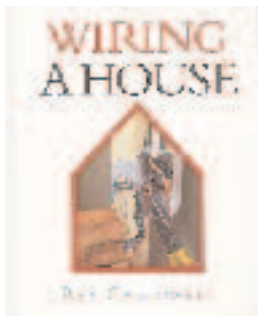
Builders appreciate a straightforward explanation of engineering issues. That is just what Max Schwartz provides in *Basic Lumber Engineering for Builders* (\$38 from Craftsman Book Co., P.O. Box 6500, Carlsbad, CA 92018; 800/829-8123). At 250 pages with good illustrations and charts, this general engineering reference has sections on the different types of lumber products, the design properties surrounding their use, and the different applications in various types of buildings. Schwartz also provides informative sections on framing connections, concrete formwork, and best-practice workmanship, along with a helpful contact list for building-related codes and standards organizations and associations. Included with the book is a simple computer program for sizing wood beams, posts, and joists in common scenarios. Unfortunately, the program-as-included covers only dimensional lumber. To size engineered lumber, a "professional" upgrade is available for \$125 — not an outrageous price for software, but you should probably check out the free version first.



Electrical References

Most construction book publishers offer some sort of comprehensive electrical wiring reference. Of those, two stand out: *Wiring a House* by Rex Cauldwell (\$35, Taunton Press, P.O. Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470; 800/888-8286; www.taunton.com) and *Electrical Wiring Residential*, 13th Edition, by Ray Mullin (\$52, Delmar Publishers, P.O. Box 15015, Albany, NY 12212; 800/865-

5840; www.delmar.com). Both books are well organized and contain informative diagrams and pictures. Making a choice between one or the other probably comes down to differences in depth of treatment and quantity of details. Cauldwell's book is concise and weighs in at 225 pages with twelve generalized chapters — among them planning, service entrance, main panel, grounding, receptacles, switches, fixtures, and appliances. Mullin presents a hefty, information-packed 31 chapters in 600 pages, with detailed sections on print takeoff and code compliance, and specific chapters for each type of residential space and application. A pared-down version of the Mullin book, *House Wiring with the NEC* (\$25), is just now coming off the presses. 



FREE & CHEAP

Sound Control Guide

The North American Insulation Manufacturers Association offers a free 20-page guide on sound control issues (44 Canal Center Plaza, Suite 310, Alexandria, VA 22314; 703/684-0084). Sound Transmission Class (STC) is explained as the industry measure of the sound reduction properties of various building assemblies. STC requirements are given for common commercial and residential rooms. The guide uses diagrams and tables to match various wall and floor assemblies to their corresponding STC performance ratings.



Repointing Historic Masonry

We've all heard about how using modern high-strength mortar to repoint old buildings can cause extensive damage. *Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings*, by Robert Mack and John Speweik, is an excellent primer on maintaining historic masonry in terms of both appearance and physical integrity. The second in a series of Preservation Briefs (\$1.75, GPO stock number 024-005-01192-7, National Park Services, Preservation Services, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240; 202/343-9583) put out by the feds, this pamphlet provides extensive information as well as good follow-up contacts.



Welding Hints

Many of us do some occasional welding to save money on simple repairs or basic job-site tasks. Almost as many of us don't know a whole lot about welding. If this matches your situation, call for a free short booklet on welding basics, *Helpful Hints to Basic Welding* (ITW/Hobart Brothers, 400 Trade Square East, Troy, OH 45373; 800/424-1543; www.hobartbrothers.com).



Greywater Systems

Greywater systems were relegated to the homesteading crowd until recently when the Universal Plumbing Code (UPC) and California's greywater law began to regulate and legalize their use in certain situations.

Now there are many states throughout the West where builders may encounter customers who choose to separate greywater from sewage drains for use in landscape irrigation. Art Ludwig has written two 50-page pamphlets (Oasis Design, 5 San Marcos Trout Club, Santa Barbara, CA 93105; 805/967-9956) on constructing greywater systems and managing lands with greywater drainage: *Builder's Greywater Guide* (\$15) and *Create an Oasis with Greywater* (\$10).

