## Quick Reference Guide

**March 2019**

**Version 2019.0**

### Chapter 5 – Installing Top Plates

| Requirements | 1. Walls must be tied together by nailing overlapping top plates to the tops of the walls.  
| 2. Top plates at the intersection of interior and exterior walls are done first.  
| 3. Top plates on all bearing walls **must** extend a minimum of 4’ on each side of the wall plate joint and at each corner.  
| 4. Top plates on non-bearing walls that extend into the 2” notch of the exterior top plates must be at least 16” long.  
| 5. At all corners of exterior walls and at all corners and intersections of inside walls, the top plate must cross the joint of the wall plates below.  
| 6. Where interior walls intersect exterior walls, create a notch 2” deep in the top plate of the exterior wall so it can receive the intersecting interior wall top plate.  
| 7. Verify that the interior wall is plumb before locating and cutting the notch.  
| **NOTE:** Notching 2” deep leaves 3½” of material on exterior 2x6 top plates |
| Installing Top Plates | 8. To locate the notches in exterior wall plates, lay the exterior wall top plate on the wall in its final position.  
| a. Mark the location of each intersecting interior wall.  
| b. Place the top plate on the deck, and using a speed square, mark lines at each location.  
| c. Set the blade of a circular saw to a 2” depth.  
| d. Cut the marked edge of the top plate at the **outside** of each line (this should allow clearance for the width of the intersecting top plate).  
| e. Make multiple cross-cuts between these two cuts and knock the piece out with a hammer.  
| 9. Nail the wall top plates, using three 16d or 3¼” Paslode nails across the 2x6 plates and two nails across 2x4 plates.  
| a. Before nailing, be sure the **interior** edges of the top plates are flush with the edges of the plates below and that interior walls are tight to the exterior walls.  
| b. Nail at each intersection of top plates and at each stud location.  
| c. Nail two to four pairs of nails across exterior window and door headers.  
| **NOTE:** Occasionally the house will include a 2x4 interior wall butting against the end of a 2x6 plumbing wall (in a straight line). In this case, install a 2x4 top plate the full length of the wall, on the flush side. Install a 2” wide “filler” on the 2x6 section of the wall (necessary to provide nailing surface for wall sheetrock). |
Quality Points

Chapter 5 – Installing Top Plates

- Intersections of interior and exterior walls completed first
- Top plates on bearing walls extend minimum 4’ on each side of wall plate joint and each corner
- Non-bearing wall top plates extending into 2” notch of exterior top plates are minimum 16” long
- Interior top plates notched into exterior top plates 2” and nailed to exterior wall upper plate
- Top plate crosses joint of wall plate joints below at all corners of exterior walls and all corners and intersections of interior walls
- Interior edges of top plates are flush with edges of plates below, interior walls are tight to exterior walls
- Top plates nailed with three 16d or 3¼” Paslode nails across 2x6 plates and two nails across 2x4 plates