

# Facing Fascia Installations

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Techniques to help ensure an effective fascia-sign installation

By **Francis S. Lestingi**

*click an image below to view slideshow*



Wall-mounted installations, or fascias, represent approximately 40% of our work; post-mounted projects represent the rest. We gild and carve by hand all of our signs on mahogany panels. When I produce a fascia installation, I always employ hidden hardware to avoid piercing and puncturing our precious panels with drilling or perforations.

How? I use two techniques: the French cleat and the hanger bolt. For a large, heavy panel, we'll use the French cleat. For smaller sign faces, the hanger-bolt method works quite well. In our most recent fascia installation, we used both techniques because we had two panels. The large panel spans 18 x 120 in.; the smaller one measures 10 x 90 in.



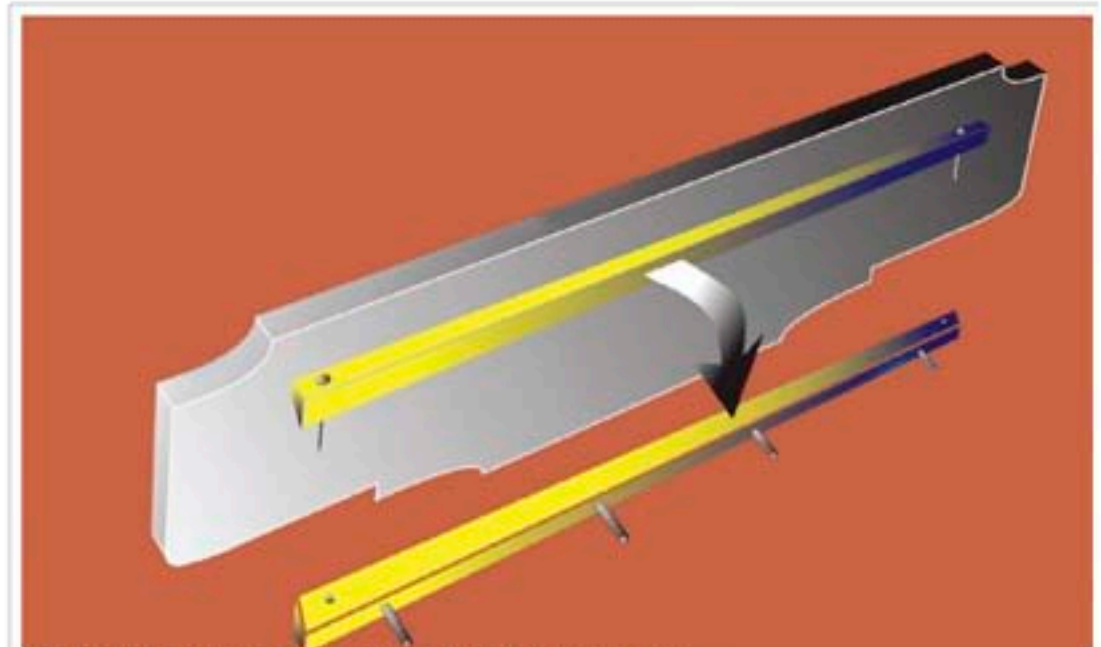
Installation often proves to be one of the most challenging aspects of sign production. In this column, Francis describes two effective options: the French cleat for larger signs, and the hanger-bolt method for smaller panels.



## The right angle

To prepare the French cleat for this example, I used a table saw to split a pressure-treated, 2-in. x 8-in. x 8-ft. panel down the middle at a 45° angle. I attached the half with the down angle to the back of the sign panel with deck screws. Then, I fastened the other half of the cleat to the wall with the "up-angle," so it was ready to receive the interlocking "down angle" from the panel. To stabilize the panel, I attached spacers to each side using pressure-treated 2 x 4s. The cleat and spacers gave the panel an attractive standoff roughly 1.5 in. from the wall.

Before securing the cleat to the wall, we prepared it by pre-drilling pilot holes and using counter-sunk hardware to accommodate the fasteners. Because we installed the panel on a brick wall, we used expansion bolts.



**This diagram depicts the hardware required to achieve a French-cleat installation.**

After appropriate measurements are made, we secure the cleat to the wall by drilling with a power hammer drill. As the expansion bolts are ratcheted in, they expand along the shaft and tightly grip the brick. While the shaft expands, the threaded posts progress outward and must be leveled off with a grinder. The wall cleat is now ready to accept the sign panel cleat. As a final step, we fastened the cleats together by ratcheting lag screws into pre-drilled holes.

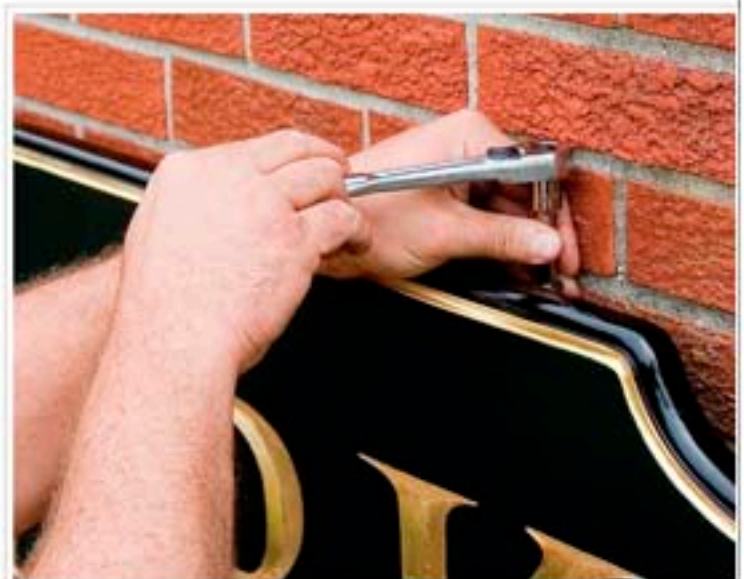


Lestingi's son, Stephen, drills holes into the brick to create space for the expansion bolts.

### **A firm foundation**

Because we wanted each panel to have the same stand-off distance, we fastened pressure-treated 2x4 blocks to the back of the panel with deck screws. Then, we used a Vise-Grip® to secure the bolts into pre-drilled holes. If we weren't concerned about the stand-off, we could have secured the hanger bolts directly into pre-drilled pilot holes in the panel. Careful measurements must be made to verify the exact bolt locations. Creating a template to map their positions offers another viable option.

After drilling the holes, which are twice the diameter of the bolt, and removing the dust, we made a "dry fit" to determine if any adjustments were required. We filled the holes with 100% silicone and inserted the panels with equal pressure from each side. The result: a neat installation with no marring of the panel surfaces, no sign of hardware, and a pleasing stand-off.



Installing lag screws fastens the French cleat's components.

## Equipment and Materials

**Cleat:** 2- by 8-in., treated, Southern yellow pine, available at lumber- and building-supply stores.

**Fasteners:** 4-in. expansion bolts; 3-in. hanger bolts; and 6-in. lag screws, available at building-supply and hardware stores.

**Spacers:** 2 x 4-in., treated, Southern yellow pine, available at lumber- and building-supply stores.

**Tools:** Table or circular saw; hammer drill; wood and concrete bits; metal grinder; Vise-grip; ratchet; level; tape measure; and permanent markers, available at hardware and home-improvement stores.

## More About Francis

Francis Lestingi, founder of Signs of Gold (Williamsville, NY), began his signmaking career creating gilded, handlettered paper storefront signs. After having earned his doctorate, and a lengthy career teaching physics and scientific history at SUNY-Buffalo, he founded his full-time signshop in 1993. Lestingi has earned nine First Place Awards from the USSC and ST competitions. He's also produced two digital typeface fonts, Fran Hand, available at [www.myfonts.com](http://www.myfonts.com), and Pierre, which can be found at [www.letterheadfonts.com](http://www.letterheadfonts.com). Lestingi has also been invited to lead gilding and moldmaking sessions at several international Letterhead meets and at the USSC SignWorld Show for several years.



Installers insert the smaller panel with hanger bolts into drilled holes filled with 100% silicone.