

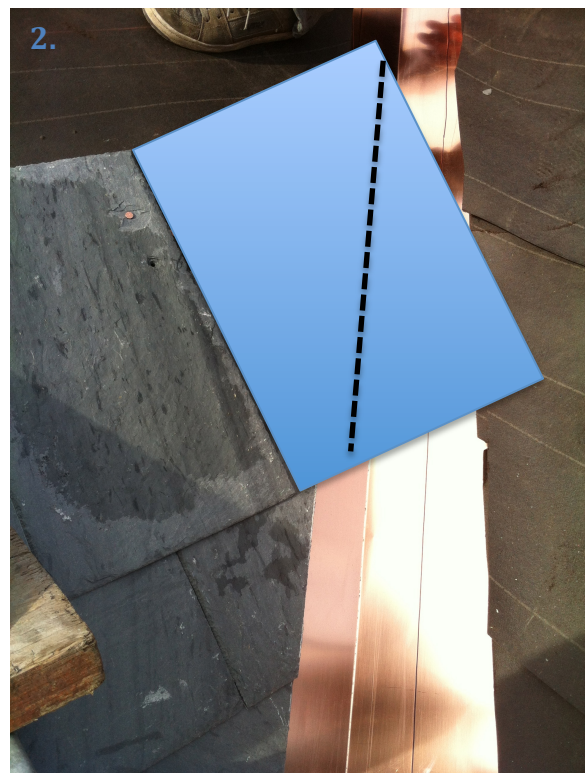
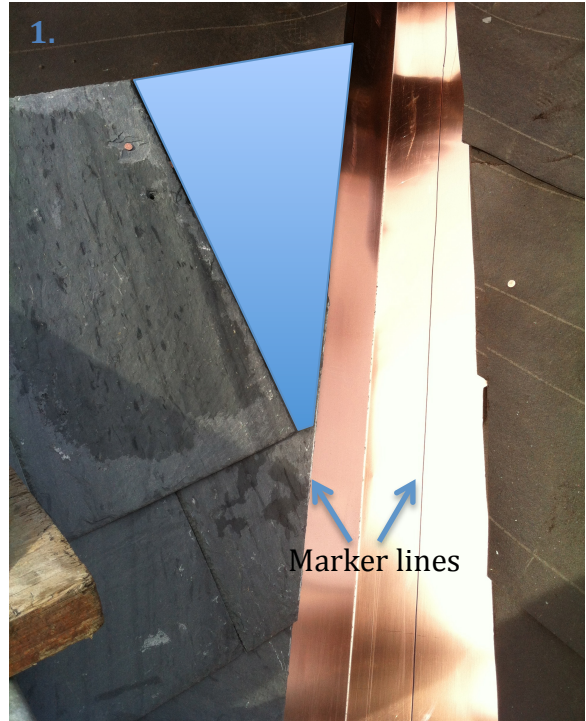
# Cutting Valley Slates Like A Pro

By Orion Jenkins

Cutting valley slates might not seem like a hard task but knowing a simple trick can save time, energy and create less slate waste.

First, to gain our bearings, let's look at **photo 1**. Notice the copper valley metal with a crease down the center; a black, marker line parallel to this crease on the right side of the valley; and, the slates running alongside of the hidden marker line on the left side of the valley. The *blue*, triangular shaped slate will be the slate that I will explain how to mark, cut, and install in the following photos. But first, let's look at how valley slates are normally cut before I teach you the trick I have learned from slating hundreds of valleys.

Most slaters would lay a *full size* slate *in* the valley in preparation for marking and cutting. As shown in **photo 2**, a full size slate in this position won't sit flat on the roof, instead, it is held up by the right side of the valley. This makes it difficult to place a cut mark on the lower and especially the upper edges of the slate accurately. The most common way to proceed would be to quickly hack the bottom right corner of the slate off (dashed black line, **photo 2**) while cutting on the front side of the slate, in an attempt to get the slate to lie flat in the valley and, therefore, prepare oneself to draw accurate cut marks. Once the accurate cut marks are placed on the front of the slate, those same marks have to be transferred to the backside so that the slate can be cut from the proper side (slates should always be cut from the backside). This standard method of cutting and marking valley slates is time consuming; we have already cut the slate once, marked it twice, and we still do not have the proper sized valley slate. Not to mention that the scrap triangular piece is now junk and cannot be



reused elsewhere in the valley unless re-cut along the backside.

In an ideal world, we would only have to mark and cut the slate once without having to flip it from its front-side to its backside numerous times; the cut-off, scrap piece of slate would have the bevel on the proper side and, therefore, could be used elsewhere in the valley if desired. In the following steps, I will explain how this is easily accomplished.

- 1) Grab a full size slate and flip it over so you are looking at the backside of the slate (refer to **photo 3**). Line-up the slate to the **chalk line** that corresponds with that row of slates. Hold the slate so that its bottom right corner lines up with the edge of the cut valley slates (**blue arrow**). Mark your slate where it meets the right lower corner of the adjacent field slate (shown as a **yellow "V"**).
- 2) Now, tilt the slate so that its right edge is flush with the marker line (**photo 4**). Adjust the slate up or down the marker line until your mark (**yellow "V"**) aligns with the side of the adjacent field slate (**blue arrow**). Make a second mark where the slates edges meet near the top of the slates (**red arrow**). *\*In some cases you won't be able to see the edge of the field slate near the top so you must extend this line up the roof a few more inches.*
- 3) Now, cut between your two marks, flip your slate over, and install your slate (**photo 5**).

This method of marking and cutting valley slates is very accurate, saves time, and allows your scrape, cut-off slate to be reused elsewhere if needed. I have personally used this technique not only for valleys, but also while slating up the sides of dormers (where the dormer wall meets the roof pitch) and on hips.



Practice, have fun, and good luck!