You get two benefits when you build or remodel with wood studs. The studs provide the strength and frame work for the structure, and the empty spaces between the studs serve an important function, too: They provide the perfect place a veritable vertical freeway to run pipes, vents, drains, wires and duct work. The drawback? When you have to run pipes, ducts or wires horizontally through the studs, you often have to notch or drill holes sometimes big ones to get them to their destination.

But you can’t just drill and saw away. There are rules you have to follow for drilling and notching studs. Some rules

**Non-bearing wall rules**
- Notches may not exceed 40 percent of the stud’s width (1-7/16 in. maximum in 2x4s; 2-1/8 in. maximum in 2x6s).
- Holes may not exceed 60 percent of the stud’s width (2-1/8 in. maximum in 2x4s; 3-1/4 in. maximum in 2x6s).

**Electrical rules**
- Edges of holes for electrical wires must be 1-1/4 in. from the edge of a stud.
- Areas where edges of holes are closer than 1-1/4 in. must be covered by a protective plate.

**Bearing wall rules**
- Notches may not exceed 25 percent of the stud’s width (7/8 in. maximum in 2x4s; 1-3/8 in. maximum in 2x6 walls).
- Holes may not exceed 40 percent of the stud’s width (1-3/8 in. maximum in 2x4s; 2-1/4 in. maximum in 2x6s).
- The exception: Holes up to 60 percent of the stud’s width may be drilled through no more than two consecutive “doubled-up” studs.

**Protective plate**

**Reinforcement plate**