

Finding Lost Tiny Parts, version 1.1

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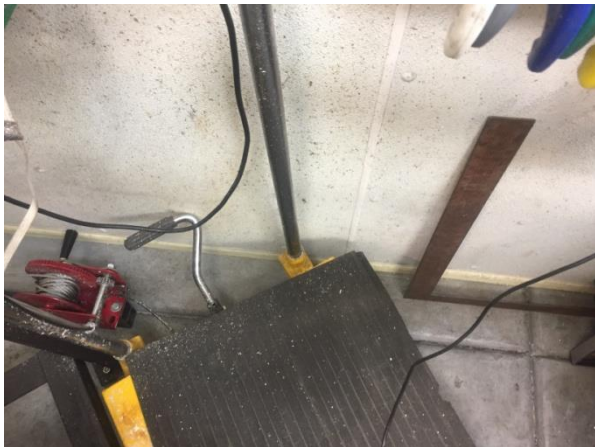


The part on the right would fit into a ¼ inch cube. As I took apart a locking mechanism, the spring inside shot this tiny part into a pile of swarf behind my mill.

I poked my head back there and could not find it. Lots of places for the part to hide. It could have even bounced a few feet away. Time to bring out my magic tiny parts finder: my shop vac!

First I opened up my shop vac and cleaned it. Then I verified the hoses were clear.

All surfaces behind that mill were vacuumed. I had parts from my press stored there and each of them was carefully cleaned. The expansion joint in the floor was cleaned along with every other square inch of floor.



It didn't take long and, well, it had been a long time since this area was clean.

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Time to open my shop vac. I carefully tapped the filter so the debris caught in its folds fell into the bucket.

No part jumped out at me but I sifted the small amount of swarf in the bucket with my hands. I could have used my screw sorting tray.



Although not visible, my hands found a few small bits including the missing lock piece.

A few years ago my wife dropped a tray of artificial gems into our high pile carpet. We used a variation on the above technique. Rather than empty the bucket, a single layer of cloth was placed between sections of the hose. The area was vacuumed and the cloth inspected. There were all of the gems!

Terri Talton suggested: Use a piece of hosiery (like pantyhose or stocking) over the end of the hose. It will let the air through and trap any small parts right there. Cheesecloth will do too but may let the tiniest parts through.

I welcome your comments and questions.

If you wish to be contacted each time I publish an article, email me with just "Article Alias" in the subject line.

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