



Start off small. Collect a basic tool kit. There's plenty of DIY info online including video. Keep an eye out for hardware store classes. Find a knowledgeable sales assistant at the hardware store to advise you. Hang out with a handy friend. Call a tradie for any electrical or plumbing work, do not do it yourself.

## DRIPS AND LEAKS

- Water can cause serious damage - often unseen - behind walls, under floors etc.
- Replace washers on dripping taps and showers.
- Use plumbers' tape (thread seal tape) on leaking screw fittings.
- Seal up any gaps using something like silicone sealant to stop water getting where it shouldn't be.

## GAPS AND DRAUGHTS

- Inspect doors, windows, skylights, floorboards, ventilation fans, skirting boards etc
- There are many products to seal up gaps, from gels and pastes to expanding foams.
- Door snakes, foam strips, door draft excluders (rubber and brush varieties), compression draught excluders etc

## HANGING PICTURES, MIRRORS, SHELVES, TOWEL RAILS ETC

### You will need:

- Electric or cordless drill.
- Drill bits.
- Tape measure.
- Spirit level.

- Pencil or other marker.
- Tape (optional).

### Consider:

- The material you are drilling into.
- How heavy the object is you're hanging.
- What fasteners you need to secure it safely.
- What type of drill bit you need.
- How to get it level, plumb and/or centred

### Drilling:

- Practice drilling into different surfaces before starting on the real thing.
- Harder and faster is not always the right answer.
- Get a feel for the material you're working with.
- Carefully locate and mark where you need to drill.
- In most cases ensure you keep the drill perpendicular to the surface you're drilling.
- Use a depth attachment for holes with set depths.
- Use the correct drill, drill bits and settings on your drill.
- Protect surrounding areas from accidents. Eg. Use tape on tiles to reduce the risk of the drill bit from slipping.

- Hardwood is very difficult to drill into. Don't overheat the drill bit, you can leave burn marks on the timber.
- When a drill bit exits a hole drilled in timber, it can split and damage the area around the hole. Drill carefully. Drill from the side that will be visible towards the side that will not (where possible).
- Always pre-drill where recommended.

### Drilling into different types of walls:

#### Stud walls:

- Locate the studs carefully.
- Use an electronic stud finder if required.
- Stay clear of electrical wiring and other services within the wall.
- Use the centre of the stud for maximum holding power.

#### Brick walls

- Use masonry drill bits.
- Use a hammer drill or a hammer drill setting.
- Plastic wall plugs may be required.
- Don't drill into mortar between bricks.

## Location

- Two people make this a much easier job.
- Cut a sheet of paper to the size and shape of the item you're hanging and moving it around until you find the right spot.
- Use a tape measure and spirit level and mark the exact location of the object.
- Take into account the type of hanging mechanism the object has so you can work out exactly where to drill the holes. Eg. The length of hanging wire on a painting.

## WEIGHT

- The heavier the object the more securely it must be hung.
- Weight will determine the type and number of fittings.
- Multiple brackets are required to support shelving for books.
- A mirrored bathroom cabinet will need securing at points top, middle and bottom.

## PATCHING AND SANDING WALLS

Top-quality preparation is essential for a good finish on any surface.

Materials and tools you may need are:

- Filling compound.
- Some sort of filling knife/broad knife/joint knife etc.
- Stanley knife (for plasterboard).
- Sandpaper in various grades.
- Sanding block.

Clean the area to be repaired, remove any loose material.

For plasterboard, trim ragged edges, use a Stanley knife and cut a V-shaped groove to tidy up cracks.

Select appropriate filler for the location and size of repair, ie Timber/plaster, large/small holes, is flexibility or water resistance required etc.

- Force filler into holes by scraping knife and filler smoothly over the surface.
- Deep holes may need more than one application.
- If you will be sanding the filler later, overfill holes. Products often shrink while drying.
- Fill very deep holes with an appropriate product or it may not cure properly.
- Allow plenty of time for filler to dry.
- Sand away excess filler where required once completely dry.

## REPLACING AND TIGHTENING LOOSE SCREWS AND FITTINGS

- Take any fittings that need replacing to the hardware shop with you to get the right size and type.
- Hand tightening screws is usually enough, using power tools can burr screw heads which will then need to be drilled out to be removed.
- Burred and broken off screws need to be drilled out.
- Screw holes in timber that have been damaged and are now too large to replace the loose screws can be repaired if they are not too large and aren't supporting a lot of weight.
- Dip matchsticks into wood glue and push as many of them as you need to fill hole.
- Wait for the glue to dry
- Trim the protruding matchsticks flush with the surface.
- Carefully replace the screw.

## CHIPPED PAINT

Paint on door and window frames can become worn and chipped in high-traffic areas.

- Sand the chipped area to smooth the ridges.

- Depending on the extent of the damage, you may need an undercoat on raw timber.
- Match the new paint to the original colour.
- Either patch paint the damaged area or repaint the whole area for a top-quality repair.

## MARKS ON PAINTED WALLS

- Some marks will come off with sugar soap.
- Stubborn marks may need something mildly abrasive.
- Some immovable marks can be carefully painted over if you have the original paint colour.
- Patched/repainted walls will need to be painted. Check if you need an undercoat for the surface you're painting over.
- To touch up paint, use a small amount of paint on a brush and stipple over the mark. Solid, heavy brushstrokes will be more obvious. Let it dry and do a couple of coats rather than one thick one.

## REPLACING GROUT, PUTTY, SILICONE AND CAULKING

- Carefully remove damaged material, be especially cautious with putty around window glass.
- Prepare all surfaces according to product instructions.
- Apply new material.
- Use a rag, scraper or a wet finger to smooth material where required.
- Clean up any excess product before it dries.

## REPLACING LOOSE TILES

- Carefully remove loose tiles or retrieve them from wherever they've been stashed.
- Scrape out loose material under and around the area.
- Test tiles around the area for further potential problems.
- Inspect the area for any underlying issues such as cracks or water damage. Have this repaired before replacing tiles.
- Use an appropriate adhesive for your job, ie indoor/outdoor, wall/floor, wet/dry areas etc.

## MAINTAINING TIMBER

### Check

- Woodwork that is exposed to the elements regularly, for example window frames and decking.
- For any damp, rot and pest damage etc.

### Treatments

- Decking may need to be thoroughly cleaned and refinished every year.
- Product selection will be determined by the existing finish.

- Finishes for woodwork include paint, polyurethane, wax, oils and stains.

### Sanding

- Always sand with the grain of the timber.
- Start with coarse sandpaper and work down to the finest grade required.
- The type of timber and its current condition will determine which grade of sandpaper you start with.
- Use a sanding blocks for an even finish.
- Throw away sandpaper when clogged or worn smooth.
- Keep the surface being sanded clean, loose grit leaves scratches.
- Chemical paint strippers may be required if you have a build up of many paint layers.
- Use extreme caution working on materials such as veneers, exotic grains, fine patinas and finishes such as french polish.
- Take care using power tools, they can make jobs quick and easy, but will quickly cause damage if misused.

- Sanding timber floors is a huge job and should never be attempted without some prior timber DIY experience. Damaging timber floors is easy, fixing that damage can be very difficult and very expensive.
- Sanding produces fine dust which is harmful to lungs and eyes. Aside from physical damage caused by fine particles, toxic chemicals can be released and ingested or cause skin reactions. Take particular care with treated timber (used outdoors) and when removing chemical timber finishes.
- Wear and use all appropriate woodworking safety gear including goggles and a respirator.

## SAFETY

Safety equipment is essential, especially where you have dust and chemical fumes. Use the appropriate dust mask or respirator equipment as well as the other safety essentials such as hearing and eye protection. Take care when cutting or drilling into ceilings, walls or floors to avoid any electrical wiring and pipes etc.

Look for any power points and electrical fittings nearby. When in doubt, turn the power off and use a cordless drill.

Read more safety advice in our DIY Special Feature.

This information is general in nature and covers just a small amount of the information you will need to complete your specific project.

Consult the relevant experts to get specific advice about your plans. Your list of requirements will vary according to what you start with and what you're planning to do. DIY can be very dangerous. Be careful, read and follow all instructions provided with the tools and materials you're using. Use all appropriate safety equipment.