



101 Critical Days of Summer

Safety Tip #13 - Do It Yourself Projects



When it comes to home improvements, many of us have champagne tastes on a beer budget--we noodle-out the perfect plan for a project, then the contractors' bids come in at twice what we can afford. So we become do-it-yourselfers. We know that, by eliminating the labor expense, we can often chop a project's cost in half.

But should you do the work yourself? The answer depends upon a number of factors, including your abilities, your collection of tools and safety gear, your time, and your inclination to roll up your sleeves.

Unless you are a highly skilled do-it-yourselfer, avoid taking on jobs that may be dangerous, particularly difficult, or where a mistake can be quite costly. Some jobs are not worth the risk. For example, think twice before doing:

- Extensive electrical work
- Plumbing that involves crawling under the house
- Roofing work on a steeply-pitched or high roof
- Difficult or laborious work, such as chopping out and pouring a new concrete floor
- Siding work that requires scaffolding higher than two stories
- Work where there may be hidden mysteries
- Any other task that you're not confident you can handle.



Consider your skills, tools, and time. Then take a closer look at your options before you make a final decision.

Skills - Be **realistic** about your skills. Don't try to take on work that you won't be able to finish or that may end up looking unprofessional. Avoid intricate work or work that requires a high degree of craftsmanship unless you're competent at the job. For example, don't plan on building raised-panel cabinets unless you have the necessary cabinetmaking skills.

Tools - Be aware that you'll need special tools for some jobs. You can rent tools, and you can often buy tools with what you'll save on labor, but if you don't already own the tools, you probably don't have very much experience at using them. Once again, think twice before jumping in with both feet unless you have experience with the necessary tools. Here's a quick link on power tools: <http://www.diy-hq.net/power-tools/ten-must-know-power-tools-safety-tips.html>

Time - Don't forget to take your time into consideration. Even spare time has a value--and the value of yours is worth factoring into the equation. Although a professional repairperson can probably do the job considerably faster than you can, you actually may complete some jobs sooner by doing them yourself because you won't have to wait for professionals to show up.

A closer look at your alternatives - There is definitely something to be said for hiring a pro to handle a project from start to finish--particularly if you find a professional who gives you a quality job at a good price.

Unfortunately, that isn't always easy. The best way to find good people is through personal recommendations. Talk to friends or neighbors who have had similar work done and were happy with the results and the service. Or, on the web, you can search for local home professionals.



Or you can talk to local building supply dealers or turn to the Yellow Pages--your most likely source of names if you're dealing with a home-repair emergency. So that you're not left to this device in a pinch, it pays to have the names and numbers of good repair services on hand. It's also smart to check with the local chapter of the Better Business Bureau to make sure there isn't a history of consumer complaints against the pro you plan to hire.

For problems with products or some materials--such as appliances, flooring, or carpeting--always check the conditions of your warranty before hiring a repairperson or doing the work yourself. By using factory-authorized service people, you may not have to pay for the repair if the material is under warranty. And if you don't use authorized service people, not only will you have to pay--you may void your warranty.

Another option is to do some of the work yourself and save the more complicated tasks for the pros. Demolition work usually can be tackled by homeowners who aren't afraid of getting a little dirty. Painting is another good way to be involved in the project and save money. But be aware that, if you set up this type of arrangement, you must stay ahead of your contractor--he or she won't want to be slowed down by the need to wait for you.

A few more quick tips for you Do-It-Yourselfers:

- ❖ Use caution when you transport materials for any DIY project. If your vehicle is not designed to carry the considerable weight of lumber required for your chosen DIY - do it yourself project, please have it delivered.
- ❖ Your project may require heavy work which some people may not be suited to. A DIY - Do it yourself designation does not imply that all people should take part in these activities. **Use caution** whenever lifting or digging as the project requires to be done or have someone else do the heavy work required to complete your project.
- ❖ **If your project requires footings to be installed be sure to call your utility company before you dig.**
- ❖ Prior to starting your project, familiarize yourself with the instructions and cut lists.
- ❖ Keep your work area clear of tools and debris. Tripping is the easiest way to injure yourself.
- ❖ Before you use your first tool when preparing your materials, familiarize yourself with the safety guidelines in all your tool user's guides.
- ❖ **Always use the right tool for the job.** If you don't know what that is... ask a professional.
- ❖ Make sure there is plenty of light around your workspace.
- ❖ **Always use safety equipment, vision, hearing etc. while you complete your project.**
- ❖ Need to reach a high place, always use ladders. Chairs are not designed to help you install ceiling fans!
- ❖ Always make sure the **power is turned off** (possibly turning off the circuit breaker) when working with anything electrical.
- ❖ If altering the details for your project even slightly, have them inspected for safety by an engineer or building department inspector.
- ❖ When required by statute or building code, submit for and obtain building permits for your project.
- ❖ Consider pre-finishing your parts prior to assembling your project. It will make your project last much longer and require less stain maintenance. Please refer to the stain guide included in your project plans.

Do you have an electrical project to do? Here's a good place to start:

<http://www.electrical-online.com/safety.htm>

Ladder Safety Tips: <http://www.naturalhandyman.com/iip/infosafety/infladdersafety.html>

Good article on Safety: <http://www.hometips.com/articles/safety.html>

*Good Luck With Your
Projects – Your Risk
Management Staff!!*

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