

Prep Your Toolbox to Tackle Top Projects

(Family Features) The do-it-yourself (DIY) movement in home improvement continually grows stronger as a way for people to update their homes while saving money. If you're one of those DIYers ready to get to work, you need to make sure you have the right tools for the job — no matter what that job is.

You can find project guides, how-to videos, and buying guides for tools and more at www.homedepot.com/howto.

Painting Prep

Repainting a room is a quick, inexpensive home project that can make a dramatic difference.

It's important to make repairs and clean and prime the walls before applying that first coat. Pre-gummed fiberglass repair tapes and premixed patching compounds allow you patch and paint in the same day. For an older home, wash walls with a trisodium phosphate (TSP) solution and a sponge.

Traditional brushes and rollers are tried and true, but the newest technological innovation on the market can speed up the process. A cordless paint sprayer, such as the Ryobi 18 Volt ONE+ ProTip Speed Sprayer, has a long-lasting, lightweight lithium-ion battery, a reversible spray tip that rotates to clear clogs quickly, and sprays latex paint as well as stain.

Organizing Your Life

Closet and garage organization systems increase the amount of usable storage space by using vertical space.

For working in tight spaces, a right-angle drill can be useful. The Milwaukee M18 Lithium-ion 18 Volt Cordless 3/8-inch Right Angle Drill has a multi-position trigger and a compact head for use in small areas. The use of power tools with lithium-ion batteries, as opposed to traditional ni-cad batteries, can make the job easier — the tools are lighter, the batteries last four times longer, and the charge doesn't fade so you have power for the entire job.

Cabinet Facelift

By updating cabinet doors and replacing or installing drawer pulls and other hardware, you can change the look of your kitchen without the time and expense of a complete remodel. Try using a Ryobi 3/8-inch 12 Volt Cordless Lithium-ion Drill Kit to spruce up your kitchen with ease.



Renewing the Deck

Old paint and stain should be scraped off the wood, and then the wood should be sanded. A stiff-bristle brush should be used to remove any flaking stain or dirt. For pressure-treated decks, an orbital sander can smooth out rough areas on deck boards, railings or stair treads. The Makita 18 Volt LXT Lithium-ion Cordless 5-inch Random Orbit Sander has three speed settings, and is designed for efficient sanding, fast material removal and a swirl-free finish.

Before cleaning and refinishing a deck, you need to check posts, supports and decking for loose, weak or damaged areas, then replace or repair as needed. To handle long or large screws and bolts, an impact driver, such as the Ryobi 18 Volt ONE+ Lithium-ion Impact Driver Kit, gives you power and control.

Project Clean Up

For small post-project clean ups, keep household wipes handy — not only can you clean up any spills or smudges you made, you can clean up your hands, too. For bigger jobs, a wet/dry vacuum can do wonders. It can do all the traditional things a regular vacuum can, while also getting into hard-to-reach areas and cleaning spills and liquids. The Milwaukee M18 Lithium-ion 18 Volt Cordless Wet/Dry Vacuum has a HEPA-rated filter

that can be washed and does not need to be changed between wet and dry applications.

Battery Buying Guide

— Lithium-ion batteries produce a consistent charge throughout the life of the battery. Ni-cad batteries lose power as the battery runs.

— Lithium-ion batteries can be charged many more times than ni-cad batteries, and are not damaged by leaving the charger on too long.

— Lithium-ion batteries are lighter than ni-cad batteries, allowing for smaller, more powerful outdoor and power tools.



Build a concrete house to withstand high winds

(MS) — The newest home building technology is solving energy costs and wind damage at the same time. The standard wood frame used in buildings can now be replaced by a reinforced concrete system, known as the interlocking, 'insulated concrete form.' This ICF technology gives homeowners improved indoor comforts, too.

"Opting to build your house with concrete instead of wood will immediately give you a home with greater impact resistance, specifically to withstand winds of up to 250 miles per hour," says Todd Blyth at Nudura, a leading name in the supply of insulated concrete forms. "The ICF system interlocks, like Lego, to create one monolithic wall with a thickness from 4 to 12 inches, all of which also provides superior fire protection, sound resistance, temperature control and additional occupant comforts. Better still, this type of insulation and durability can save you up to 70 percent on your energy bills. You get a far stronger house — and it comes with a warm and inviting atmosphere."

The aesthetic beauty inside and out is also important on the list of dream home features, Blyth points out, adding that a concrete home can be designed for brick or for more creative finishes like stone, stucco, wood siding and more, just like a traditional house. Inside, many innovative architectural shapes, like arches, bay windows or specific door styles, can be easily achieved.

"Building the walls with concrete is an option that needs to be decided early in

the planning," he continued. "The system discards wood framing in favor of pre-assembled, interlocking concrete forms."

The benefits he says are in the details, as follows:

Safety: If high wind in your community is a concern, data shows that a Nudura home delivers hurricane and tornado impact resistance up to 250 mph — and the fire protection rating is up to 4 hours.

Fuel Savings: Premium insulation is essential with energy costs on the rise. Concrete walls vastly reduce air infiltration (compared to wood walls) and this improves energy performance. By combining two panels of thick (EPS) foam with the structural strength and thermal mass of concrete, the walls can provide an efficiency rating as high as R-50 (compared to an average R-20 in wood structures), saving you up to 70 percent on energy bills. Lowering demand

for trees is good for the environment as well.

Comfort: Outside cold easily travels through wood-framed walls causing thermal bridging and creating uncomfortable chilly spots inside your home. Walls with a solid concrete core address and prevent thermal bridging to deliver even temperatures throughout the house. Mold, mildew and toxins associated with wood structures are also eliminated.

Quiet: Solid concrete is an effective sound barrier. It dampens sound vibrations from outside noise, such as traffic, trains and neighborhood parties. Internal peace and quiet is a sheer bonus.

Improved Value: It is generally expected that a stronger, safer, greener home — and one that is more durable, cost efficient and needs less maintenance and repair — will steadily increase in resale value.



Home Safety Simplified

(Family Features) Each season brings new threats to the safety of your home and family. In 2012, the U.S. experienced multiple major weather events including Hurricane Sandy. This year is likely to be no different. Be prepared by following these simple tips to avoid the devastation caused by home fires, break-ins and weather-related disasters. By implementing these easy precautions your home will be a safer place.

* Prepare for fire safety. Be prepared by ensuring that your home's smoke detectors and carbon monoxide monitors are well maintained. This includes installing smoke alarms on every level of your home, regularly re-

placing their batteries and changing out old alarms every 10 years. When the time comes to replace your detectors, consider a First Alert product.

* Protect against theft. Take proper home security precautions to keep your family safe. The use of deadbolts on doors, locks on windows, motion-sensor lights on driveways and walkways can help deter theft. Many home security kits allow you to customize your own "do-it-yourself" security package. Your local RadioShack offers a variety of options to support all of your home security needs.

* Make a plan. Plan and prepare your family for the havoc brought-on by in-

clement weather. With your family, discuss your plan for dangerous weather. It is also essential to build a weather safety kit containing a flashlight, portable power for your electronics, an emergency radio, walkie talkies, bottled water and dry goods. Stocking up on extra alkaline batteries is always a good idea in case of emergency. A two-pack of Energize 9V batteries at RadioShack is a small investment to keep your family safe.

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