

The Home HANDYMAN

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TILING TRENDS:

BEST PRACTICES FOR
A PROFESSIONAL
FINISH - FROM
DESIGN TO
EXECUTION

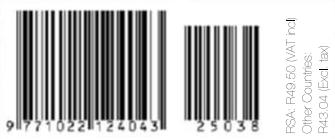


SA'S
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- The Complete Spring Cleaning Guide
- Breathe Easy - How to improve air circulation in your home
- Fire prevention basics - Essential steps to mitigate fire risks

PROJECT:
BENCH OR
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FROM THE WORKBENCH

Spring is finally here, and with it comes fresh energy, new beginnings, and the perfect excuse to roll up our sleeves for some much-needed DIY. Whether you're dreaming of sprucing up your home, tackling long-overdue projects, or simply giving your space a breath of fresh air, this issue is packed with ideas to inspire you.

We start with tiling trends, where we share best practices for achieving a professional finish, from design choices right through to execution. You'll also discover how to mix and match different tile styles to add personality to your home. Our tool spotlight dives into biscuit joiners, showing you how to achieve seamless joints while also pointing out the common mistakes to avoid.

Spring wouldn't be complete without a good clear-out, so don't miss our complete spring cleaning guide and our tips on organizing your home. For those looking to upgrade, we've included practical advice on improving indoor air circulation and clever ideas for transforming your garage. Safety also takes centre stage, with an essential guide to fire prevention basics.

Of course, DIY is about building too. Our projects section brings you step-by-step plans for a clever bench that effortlessly converts into a picnic table, plus expert guidance on installing bullet hinges like a pro. We've rounded things off with hacks, garden care tips, and smart advice for homeowners, from understanding welding rods to what happens to a home loan during separation.

This issue is all about doing more with what you have, while adding lasting value to your home. So, grab your tools, open the windows, and let's make this spring a season of fresh starts and creative achievements.

Stay safe, and as always, enjoy the satisfaction that comes from doing it yourself.

Until next time,
Hannes Lindeque
Publisher



The Home
HANDYMAN

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About The Home Handyman magazine:
The Home Handyman magazine is a specialized DIY publication and caters for a well-defined niche market since November 1993. The magazine equips its readers with relevant DIY information, knowledge and skills.

Editorial includes new products for DIY'ers, along with projects, home improvement ideas and expert advice. Expert advice from various fields (such as adhesives, abrasives, power tools, welding, plumbing, paint, lighting, waterproofing, wood and metalworking), provides readers with simple, cost effective solutions and methods in a series of practical, step-by-step features that are comprehensively illustrated. All projects feature local products and metric measurements, making the ideas easy to implement.

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From Design to Execution.

BEST PRACTICES FOR A PROFESSIONAL FINISH



Tools and materials:

Having the right tools makes the job smoother and ensures a professional finish:

- Tile cutter or wet saw
- Notched trowel
- Tile spacers
- Rubber mallet
- Mixing bucket
- Level and measuring tape
- Adhesive suitable for your tile type
- Grout float
- Sponge and clean water
- Sealant and caulking gun

Pro tip:

Work slowly and check your work often. Rushing is the fastest way to end up with crooked lines and uneven surfaces.

Tiling has long been a cornerstone of home improvement and interior design, offering durability, practicality, and an opportunity to add striking visual appeal to a space. In recent years, tile design has evolved beyond simple utility, with new materials, formats, and layouts redefining

what's possible in kitchens, bathrooms, living areas, and even outdoor spaces. Whether you're planning a small DIY project or a full-scale renovation, understanding current tiling trends, and pairing them with proven best practices, will help you achieve a professional finish from start to end.

1. Designing with purpose

A professional-looking tile installation starts long before you lay the first tile. Good design is a balance of aesthetics, practicality, and flow.

• Consider the Space

Size and proportion: In smaller rooms, large-format tiles can make a space feel bigger by reducing grout lines, while in larger areas, patterned or mosaic tiles can add interest without overwhelming the room.

Natural light: Glossy tiles can reflect light and brighten dark corners, while matte finishes offer a more

muted, sophisticated tone in sunlit areas.

• Colour and Pattern Trends

Neutral foundations: Timeless tones like soft greys, warm taupes, and creamy whites remain popular, creating a versatile base for any style.

Bold statements: Deep blues, emerald greens, and terracotta hues are making a comeback, often as feature walls or accent strips.

Geometric and herringbone layouts: Moving beyond standard straight lines, patterns such as chevron, herringbone, or basket weave

are trending, adding depth and movement to floors and walls.

• Material Innovations

Porcelain Imitations: Tiles that mimic marble, timber, or even terrazzo allow you to get the luxury look without the high maintenance.

Textured finishes: 3D and relief tiles add tactile interest, especially for feature walls or splash backs.

2. Preparing like a pro

The secret to a flawless tile job lies in meticulous preparation.

Surface readiness: Ensure walls and floors are clean, level, and free of moisture. Any uneven surfaces should be skimmed or patched before starting.

Waterproofing: In wet areas like bathrooms, a proper waterproofing membrane is essential to prevent leaks and damage.

Measuring twice: Calculate your tile needs carefully, adding 10 to 15% extra to cover breakages and off cuts. Always plan your layout on paper before you begin.

3. The execution phase

A professional finish comes down to precise technique.

• Laying out tiles

Always start from the centre of the room or focal point to create balanced cuts on each side and use tile spacers for consistent grout lines to maintain alignment.

• Cutting and shaping

Any job is easy if you have the right tools, so invest in a good-quality tile cutter or wet saw. Also remember that tiling is a project where patience pays off; measure twice and cut once. Clean, accurate cuts prevent chipped edges and gaps. For curved edges or irregular shapes, a tile npper is handy for detailed trimming, and take the time to perfect every detail.

• Adhesive application

Match the adhesive to the tile type and location for example; flexible adhesive

for floors and water-resistant adhesive for bathrooms.

Make sure you spread adhesive evenly using a notched trowel to ensure consistent bonding.

• Grouting and sealing

Always choose grout colours that complement or contrast your tiles. A matching grout creates a seamless look, while a contrasting one highlights the tile pattern. Apply grout diagonally across joints to fill gaps evenly. Once set, wipe away excess with a damp sponge.

Seal natural stone tiles and porous grout to protect against stains and moisture.

4. Finishing touches

Even the smallest details can elevate your tiling project therefore take special care regarding the following:

- Install clean, straight tile trim for exposed edges.
- Use silicone sealant in corners and expansion joints for flexibility and a neat finish.
- Give your tiles a final polish to remove haze and adhesive residue

5. Trends worth watching

Looking ahead, sustainable and eco-friendly tiling options are gaining traction like recycled glass mosaics, low-VOC adhesives, and locally sourced clay tiles. Outdoor tiling with slip-resistant finishes is also growing in popularity, creating a seamless flow between indoor and outdoor living spaces.



Work slowly and check your work often



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Whether you're renovating a bathroom, upgrading a kitchen backsplash, or transforming an outdoor patio, tiling can dramatically elevate the style and value of your space. But a beautiful finish isn't just about choosing the right tile, it's about understanding the trends, planning your layout, and following professional installation practices from start to finish.

In this feature, we walk you through the process, from design inspiration to flawless execution, so you can achieve results that look straight out of a high-end showroom.

1. Start with a vision: Choosing the right design

Before you pick up a trowel, you need to decide on the style and mood you want to create.

Current tiling trends include:

Large-format tiles - Minimal grout lines for a sleek, contemporary look.

Textured and 3D tiles - Adds depth and tactile interest to feature walls.

Natural stone and terrazzo - Perfect for earthy, timeless designs.

Herringbone and chevron patterns - A dynamic way to add movement to floors or backsplashes.

Mix-and-match patterns - Combining plain tiles with bold decorative inserts for a custom look.

Pro tip: Take lighting into account. Glossy tiles will reflect light and make smaller spaces feel bigger, while matte finishes add warmth and hide smudges.

2. Measuring and planning: The blueprint for success

Good planning prevents costly mistakes. Measure your space accurately, allowing for tile cuts and waste (usually 10 to 15% extra).

Sketch the layout before buying tiles - this helps avoid awkward narrow cuts in visible areas.

Consider symmetry - centering your tile layout on a focal point (like a window or doorway) creates balance.

Identify problem areas - corners, edges, and uneven walls will need special attention.

Pro tip: Use tile spacers and dry-lay a few rows before committing to adhesive to confirm your pattern and spacing.

3. Surface preparation: The foundation of a professional finish

No matter how beautiful the tiles are, a poor surface will ruin the result.

- Ensure the surface is clean, level, and dry.
- Repair cracks and fill holes before starting.
- For wet areas, install a waterproof membrane to prevent moisture damage.

Pro tip: A laser level is worth the investment for perfect alignment, especially with wall tiles.

4. The installation process: Step-by-Step

Mark your starting line and begin in the most visible corner or centre point.

Spread adhesive evenly with a notched trowel.

Lay the tiles carefully, pressing them firmly and using spacers for consistent joints.

Check alignment regularly and adjust as you go.

Allow adhesive to set (usually 24 hours) before grouting.

Pro tip: For patterned or directional tiles, check orientation as you go, rotating one tile accidentally can disrupt the whole design.

5. Grouting and Finishing Touches

- Mix grout to a peanut butter-like consistency.
- Work it into joints with a grout float, removing excess.
- Wipe tiles with a damp sponge, rinsing frequently.

- Once cured, polish with a dry cloth for a clean finish.

Pro Tip: Seal natural stone tiles and grout to protect against stains and moisture.

6. Common mistakes to avoid

- Rushing the layout and skipping dry-lay checks.
- Using the wrong adhesive for the tile type.
- Ignoring expansion gaps in large floor areas.
- Not allowing proper drying times before walking on or sealing tiles.

From DIY to showroom quality

By combining the latest tiling trends with professional preparation and installation techniques, you can create a space that's both stylish and durable. Tiling is a project where patience pays off; measure twice, cut once, and take the time to perfect every detail. The result will be a room that not only looks incredible but stands the test of time.

In conclusion; a successful tiling project blends creative vision with methodical execution. By keeping up with design trends and following time-tested best practices, you can transform any surface into a polished, durable, and stylish feature that stands the test of time, just like the pros do.

*Don't miss our article on **Mixing and Matching Different Tile Styles** in this issue.*



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BISCUIT JOINERS FOR SEAMLESS ASSEMBLY

Biscuit joiners, also known as plate joiners, are used to create strong and nearly invisible joints in woodworking by using oval-shaped wooden biscuits inserted into slots cut into the mating pieces. These joints are known for their precision, ease of use, and ability to provide a seamless finish, making them a popular choice for various woodworking projects, from furniture making to cabinet construction.



Tools and materials needed

- A biscuit joiner
- A drill
- A saw (circular, jigsaw, or handsaw)
- Wood glue
- Sandpaper (optional)

Step-by-step guide

Step 1

Mark the location of the joint on both pieces of wood. It is important to make sure that the marks are level with each other so that the two pieces will fit together flush.

Step 2

Set up your biscuit joiner according to the manufacturer's instructions. This usually involves clamping the tool to your work surface and adjusting the depth of cut.

Step 3

Once the biscuit joiner is properly set up, cut a slot into each piece of wood at the marked location.

Step 4

After cutting the slots, it is time to glue the biscuits into place. Apply a generous amount of wood glue to each slot, and then insert a biscuit.

Step 5

Make sure that the biscuit is fully seated in the slot before moving on to the next one. Once all of the biscuits are in place, wipe away any excess glue with a damp cloth. Allow the glue to dry completely before proceeding to the next step.

Step 6

The last step is to join the two pieces of wood together, and the biscuits expand slightly as the glue dries, creating a strong and aligned joint.

How it works

1. Cutting the slots

A biscuit joiner is a power tool that uses a small, rotating blade to cut crescent-shaped slots into the edges of two pieces of wood that will be joined.

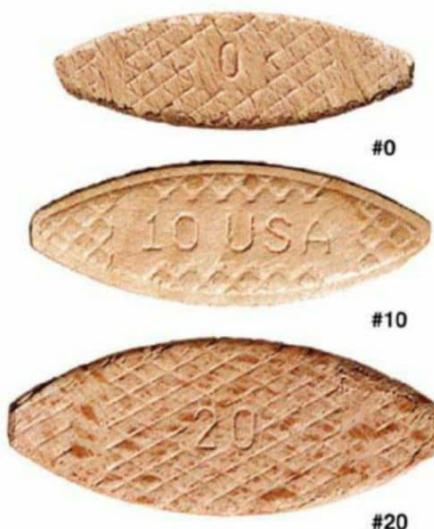
2. Applying glue and inserting biscuits

Glue is applied to the slots, and then the oval-shaped wooden biscuits (also called plates) are inserted.

3. Joining and clamping

The pieces are then joined together, and the biscuits expand slightly as the glue dries, creating a strong and aligned joint.

Achieve strong and invisible joints.



Biscuits are available in different sizes



Biscuit joiner

Advantages of biscuit joints

Precision and alignment: Biscuit joiners ensure accurate alignment of the wood pieces, preventing shifting during assembly.

Strength: While not as strong as some traditional joinery methods like mortise and tenon, biscuit joints offer sufficient strength for many woodworking applications.

Versatility: Biscuit joints can be used in various woodworking projects, including cabinets, tabletops, and frames.

Seamless appearance: When installed correctly, biscuit joints are nearly invisible, contributing to a clean and professional finish.

Ease of use: Biscuit joinery is relatively simple to learn and execute, making it accessible to woodworkers of all skill levels.

Disadvantages of biscuit joints

There are drawbacks that should be considered before deciding on this type of joint.

- If done incorrectly, it is possible for the biscuits themselves to split when being driven into place by hand;
- It may take two people working at once (one driving the biscuit and one holding up the piece being joined) to avoid this;
- The biscuit joint is not as strong as some other types of wood joints;
- Biscuits are often made from a softer wood, which means they may



Biscuits are very versatile



Joints can be strong and invisible

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Materials Needed

Gather all of the tools necessary to complete every task on your list before starting your spring cleaning journey. Supplies may vary depending on your personal cleaning methods, but most spring cleaning kits should have the following:

- Bucket
- Clean microfiber cloths

- Sponges
- Reusable spray bottle
- All-purpose cleaner
- Duster
- White distilled vinegar
- Baking soda
- Dish soap
- Vacuum
- Mop

There's something about spring that makes a freshly cleaned home feel even better. The sunlight lingers longer, the air is lighter, and suddenly clutter feels heavier than ever. Of course, deciding where to start with a full home reset can feel daunting, unless you have a plan. That's where a spring cleaning guide comes in: not just a list of chores, but a room-by-room journey that clears dust, reorders daily life, and even saves energy along the way.

This season, think of cleaning not as a burden but as a reset; a chance to breathe easier, reclaim order, and welcome spring into every corner of your home.

Living Room: Clearing the heart of the home

The living room is often the pulse of the house. It's where families gather, guests arrive, and lazy Sunday mornings stretch into afternoons. That's why starting here makes sense, if the heart feels lighter, the rest of the home follows suit.

Begin at the top. Ceiling fans and light fixtures are notorious dust magnets, their build-up only noticeable when the lights



flick on or the blades spin overhead. Work your way down through curtain rods, window sills, shelves, and baseboards. A microfiber cloth is your best friend here, catching dust instead of redistributing it. If possible, shift the furniture slightly and vacuum underneath, small details make a surprising difference.

The textiles in this room are often overlooked, yet they quietly collect allergens. Curtains, throw pillow covers, and even the sofa itself deserve a thorough clean. Vacuum upholstery, strip cushions, and run washable fabrics through the laundry. Fresh air is an instant mood lifter, so crack a window wide or, for allergy sufferers, run an air purifier. A diffuser with lemon or eucalyptus oil can also transform the space into something brighter and fresher.

Finally, tame the tangle of modern life: remotes, chargers, cables, DVDs, game controllers. Wipe down electronics with an anti-static cloth and give cords their own labelled homes. When the entertainment centre feels uncluttered, the whole room suddenly feels calmer.

Kitchen: Where order meets energy

If the living room is the heart, the kitchen is the engine. It's also the place where crumbs hide, sauces spill, and long-forgotten jars languish. Spring is the perfect excuse to give this high-use space a reset.

Start with the fridge and pantry. Toss expired condiments, stale flour, or those mystery containers hiding in the back. Wipe shelves with warm, soapy water before putting things back in neat groups, dairy with dairy, sauces with sauces. Labelling jars isn't just for Pinterest-worthy pantries; it makes daily life easier. As a bonus, a tidy fridge isn't only satisfying but energy-efficient. Overstuffing blocks airflow, forcing the compressor to run longer.

Next, give your appliances the deep scrub they've been waiting for. Remove stove knobs, degrease cabinet doors, and don't neglect the space between oven and counter where crumbs collect. Microwaves, toasters, and ovens deserve their moment of attention too.

And then there's the notorious junk drawer. This season, open it with courage. Out go expired coupons, dried-out pens, and random takeaway sauce packets. Pair lids with their matching containers, line the drawers, and breathe a sigh of relief. It's a small effort that pays off daily when dinnertime rolls around.



Laundry Room: The forgotten workhorse

Few spaces get used as relentlessly yet ignored as consistently as the laundry room. Spring is a chance to give it the attention it deserves.

Start with the machines themselves. Clean the lint trap thoroughly, pull the dryer away from the wall, and vacuum behind it. Run an empty hot cycle in the washing machine with vinegar or baking soda to freshen the drum. These small acts keep machines running smoothly and can even cut energy costs; dryers in particular are heavy power users.

Once the machines shine, turn to the cabinets. Haul everything out, toss empty or expired cleaners, and group the rest into categories like stain removers, detergents, or dryer sheets. Simple baskets or dividers keep things from spilling back into chaos. Check for leaks and rust around water connections - prevention here saves headaches later.

Not only does this reset make laundry less of a chore, it keeps the space safer and more efficient.



Bedrooms: Restoring the retreat

The bedroom is where we begin and end each day, yet clutter and dust often creep in unnoticed. A deep clean here isn't just cosmetic, it supports better rest, clearer breathing, and calmer mornings.

Strip the bed entirely and vacuum the mattress with an upholstery attachment. Sprinkle with baking soda to neutralize odours, wait half an hour, then vacuum again. Rotate and flip the mattress to even out wear. Wash pillow protectors and refresh or replace them if they've seen better days. Few things feel as rewarding as sliding into crisp, fresh bedding after a long day of cleaning.

Nightstands and closets are the next frontier. Pare your bedside table down to essentials, maybe a lamp, journal, or favourite book. Empty the closet with ruthless honesty: if you haven't worn it in a year, it's time to donate. Store off-season clothing in labelled bins and wipe shelves clean before restocking. A lavender sachet or cedar block keeps things fresh while adding a subtle sense of order.

Finally, think about the energy this room uses. Old bulbs, inefficient fans, and chargers left plugged in overnight add up.

Switching to LED lighting, using timers or smart plugs, and reducing standby power can trim your bills while improving the atmosphere of your space.

Garage and Entryway: Creating clear transitions

The garage and entryway are the home's gateways. They're also the spaces most prone to mess; shoes pile up, mail gathers, and tools multiply.

In the garage, start by pulling everything out. Sweep the floor, then sort items into piles: keep, donate, toss. Group tools by type and hang them on pegboards or wall hooks. Seasonal

items like camping gear or holiday decorations fit neatly into clear, labelled bins. A streamlined garage not only looks calmer but makes it easier to find what you need.

At the entryway, a good scrub transforms the welcome. Wash the front door, shake out mats, sweep and mop the floors. Inside, corral keys, mail, and other daily drop-offs into trays or small baskets. Store heavy overalls and shoes out of sight, leaving the space airy and inviting.

If you often use outdoor power tools, consider making life easier with a portable power station. It's not essential, but it certainly makes those big jobs smoother.

The universal spring reset

While each room has its quirks, some cleaning rituals belong everywhere. Baseboards, walls, and ceilings collect more dust than you realize. Rugs and upholstery need a deep clean, hardware loves a polish, and curtains, blinds, and window screens deserve seasonal attention. Don't forget to test smoke detectors and refresh fire safety plans while you're at it.

These tasks may not sparkle like freshly washed windows, but they add up to a house that feels renewed from top to bottom.

Making it stick

Here's the secret: spring cleaning doesn't need to happen in a single exhausting day. Break the work into rooms or timed sessions, and make it manageable. Put on lively music, set a 30-minute timer, and treat each finished task like a win. A printed or app-based checklist keeps motivation high as

those little boxes fill in. Better still, share the load with family or friends so that what feels like work becomes teamwork.

If you're wondering where to begin, tackle the most-used areas first - kitchen, living room, and bathrooms. The immediate payoff keeps you going when it's time to face the closets and junk drawers. And don't feel pressured to buy specialty products. Vinegar, baking soda, lemon, and microfiber cloths handle most jobs just fine.

A season of renewal

Spring cleaning isn't just about dusting shelves. It's about creating breathing room, lightening routines, and setting the stage for a calmer year ahead. By moving through your home thoughtfully, one room at a time, you're not just cleaning, you're reshaping how you live in your space.

So open the windows, let the fresh air in, and welcome spring by giving your home the refresh it deserves.

FAQs

What's the best way to actually stick to a spring cleaning checklist?

Don't try to conquer everything in one go. Break the checklist into rooms or bite-sized tasks and spread them over a few days or weekend slots. Use simple productivity tricks: set a 25 to 45 minute timer, play upbeat music, and reward yourself after each completed section. Print a checklist or use a checklist app so you can visually track progress. Those little "checked" boxes are surprisingly motivating. If possible, recruit a family member or friend to share tasks; teamwork halves the work and doubles the momentum.

How do I know which cleaning tasks to prioritize first?

Start with high-impact, high-use spaces: kitchen, bathroom and living areas, cleaning these improves daily life immediately. Next, tackle safety and seasonal items (smoke alarms, air vents, gutters, windows and door seals) that affect comfort and health. Work from visible/used areas toward hidden spots (cupboards, attic) so you get quick wins early,

that keeps motivation up for the more tedious jobs. Finally, declutter before deep-cleaning; it makes the rest faster and more effective.

Can I do spring cleaning without buying a bunch of fancy supplies?

Absolutely - many effective cleaners live in your kitchen cupboard: white vinegar, baking soda, lemon, and a good microfiber cloth cover most tasks. Basic tools like a vacuum, mop, an old toothbrush for crevices and a bucket are usually enough; for stubborn jobs, cast-iron elbow grease plus soak time works wonders. A portable power station can be handy outdoors or where outlets are scarce (to run a cordless vacuum, pressure washer or electric tools), but it's optional, most cleaning is about time and technique, not expensive gadgets. Always follow safety instructions for homemade or chemical cleaners and ventilate the area when needed.

Don't miss our article on **Routine care for ovens** in this issue.

Welcome home

The Woodoc Way



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FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

When you think of a garage, the first thing that comes to mind is probably storage, or a safe spot to park your car. But here's the truth: your garage doesn't have to be a dark, cluttered catch-all. With a little creativity, it can become one of the most versatile (and stylish) spaces in your home.

Whether you dream of an organized workshop, a modern home gym, or just a welcoming extension of your house, a garage makeover can take your space from ordinary to extraordinary.

Why give your garage a makeover?

Cluttered garages make it hard to find what you need, or even move around. By organizing and updating the space, you'll not only gain functionality but also create a room that works harder for you.

A garage can double as:

A workshop with all your tools neatly stored.

A fitness zone with gym equipment or a yoga mat.

A hangout spot with entertainment or hobby space.

And with the right flooring, insulation, and storage, your garage can be just as comfortable and practical as any other room in your home.

Is it worth it to remodel a garage?

The answer is a big yes. Whether you're just re-coating the floor, adding some cabinets, or completely remodelling your garage, these improvements are always worth the investment.

Having more space in your garage has proven to be highly beneficial. You will have much more storage and flex room in your upgraded garage. You can also use it to create a home gym, a new hobby or workshop room, and generally just more living space for your family.

How much does a garage makeover cost?

Garage makeovers come in different forms, from minor makeovers for aesthetic purposes to full garage remodelling.

This results in a wide range of associated costs. The most affordable garage makeover project that makes a big difference includes floor and wall paint and shelves. Some garage makeovers to living spaces can cost much higher, depending on the owner's preferences and budget.



Turn it into an entertainment zone

Here are some simple ideas to inspire your transformation.

IDEAS TO TRANSFORM YOUR GARAGE

Create a welcoming entryway

If you use your garage door as the main entrance to your home, treat it like a front door. A cheerful paint colour, a welcome sign, and a few potted plants can instantly make the space feel inviting. Add hooks or shelves nearby for shoes, coats, and leashes to keep things tidy.

Upgrade your garage door

Your garage door sets the tone for the entire space. Make sure it works smoothly, is insulated, and looks fresh. A new coat of durable exterior paint, or even a full replacement, can dramatically boost your home's curb appeal.

Add a splash of colour

Nothing brightens a garage like freshly painted walls. Choose bold, uplifting colours, and consider adding trim or baseboards for a polished finish. It's one of the easiest and most affordable ways to make the space look brand new.

Power up with more power outlets

Most garages only have one power outlet, which can be frustrating. By adding more, you'll have the freedom to use power tools, charge devices, or even plug in a sound system. Always consult a professional electrician to get this job done safely.

Control the temperature

If you plan to spend time in your garage, keep it comfortable year-round. Insulate the walls and door, add a ceiling fan for summer, or install a space heater for winter. A climate-controlled garage is one you'll actually want to use.

Make it multifunctional

Who says a garage is only for cars? Turn it into an entertainment zone with a big screen television, sound system, or even a pool table. With modular furniture or a small bar setup, your garage can easily double as a game room or lounge.

Refresh the floors

Say goodbye to dull gray concrete. Epoxy coatings and modular tiles are durable, easy to clean, and available in endless designs. A sleek new floor instantly upgrades the entire garage and makes it feel like an extension of your home.

Let in the light

If your garage feels dark and stuffy, add windows or improve lighting. Natural light makes it safer for projects, while better airflow keeps it fresh. You'll be surprised how much difference a few windows or bright LED fixtures can make.

Install a workbench

Every garage needs a solid workbench. It's not only a space to tackle projects but also a great place for extra storage. Many come with built-in drawers to keep tools, screws, and small parts organized.

Maximize storage

Improving your storage options can also help you eliminate clutter and find what you need when you need it. Look for storage solutions that can move your things from the floor to the walls. Install a pegboard beside your workbench on the wall for easy tool storage. Wall-mounted shelves can also be used to store plastic containers for Christmas decorations, beach toys, and other seasonal stuff. The more you organize, the more usable space you'll gain.

Add the finishing touches

Little details can take your garage from plain to polished. Coordinated shelving, matching screws on panels, or décor accents that tie in with your car or home style all help create a cohesive look. Think of it as decorating any other room because your garage deserves the same attention.

Call in the experts

If your makeover feels overwhelming, professional garage designers can help. They'll maximize your space with custom storage, flooring, and décor ideas. Before hiring, check reviews and past projects to ensure you're getting the right fit.

Final thoughts

Your garage can be so much more than a dusty, forgotten corner of the house. With these simple makeover ideas, you'll unlock a space that's functional, organized, and surprisingly stylish. Whether you go DIY or call in the pros, the end result is a garage you'll actually enjoy spending time in.

*Don't miss *The Art of Organizing Your Home* in this issue.*



Say goodbye to dull gray concrete

What Makes
Buyers Say Yes?



YOUR HOME, THEIR DREAM

When it comes to selling a home, first impressions matter more than many realise. In today's property market, the way your house looks, both online and in person, can be the difference between receiving serious offers or being overlooked altogether. Whether you're upsizing, downsizing, or simply moving on, presentation plays a major role in how buyers perceive your property. Sellers have far more control over this process than they think, and a few smart changes can make all the difference.

Sell a lifestyle, not just a property

Buyers aren't only looking for walls, floors and a roof. They're searching for a place to imagine their future lives, which is why styling is such a powerful tool. Something as simple as crisp bed linen, soft neutral colours, freshly opened windows or a subtle fragrance can shift a house from being "just another listing" to one that feels like home. When potential buyers can picture themselves living in the space, you're already halfway to a sale.

Small fixes, big impact

Many sellers assume upgrading a home for the market is expensive, but in reality, some of the smallest changes can create the biggest impact. A front door with a fresh coat of



paint instantly boosts the welcome factor, while modern light fixtures brighten up key rooms and add a contemporary touch. Even details as simple as swapping out old handles on kitchen cupboards or bathroom drawers can make rooms feel updated and fresh.

Other easy wins include regrouting tiles, using mirrors to enhance light and space, and replacing old light switch covers or plug plates to create a polished, uniform finish. Decluttering cupboards, garages and pantries gives the impression of spaciousness and order, while exterior upgrades like new house numbers or a clean mailbox add personality and professionalism. A deep clean of carpets and upholstery removes any lingering odours and creates a fresher atmosphere, while flowers or indoor plants add



life and warmth. And yes, the old trick of popping a tray of muffins in the oven before a viewing still works wonders.

Kerb appeal still counts

Before a buyer has even stepped inside, they're forming an opinion. The exterior of your home sets the tone, and overgrown lawns, dirty windows or an untidy path can put off potential offers before a word is spoken. On the flip side, a neat garden and a welcoming entrance create the impression of a home that has been well looked after, an impression that carries through to the rest of the property.

The sale starts online

With more than 90% of South African buyers starting their search on property portals, your online listing is just as important as the in-person experience. The first photo, often the kitchen or the front view, can determine whether a buyer clicks or scrolls past. Quality photography is essential. Clean, uncluttered, well-lit spaces grab attention and trigger emotional responses: a cosy fireplace, a sunny patio, or a kitchen that feels family-friendly. Research from Lightstone shows that women often lead the early stages of property searches, so make sure your images speak to that audience.

Price with your head, not your heart

Perhaps the hardest part of selling a home is accepting that buyers don't pay for memories, they pay market value. Overpricing can stall a sale, while strategic pricing, often just below market expectations, encourages faster, stronger offers. A trustworthy agent will back up their valuation with hard data, not just tell you what you want to hear to secure the listing.

Sellers also need to budget for the hidden costs of selling. These can include estate agent commission, bond cancellation fees, compliance certificates for electrical or plumbing work, beetle clearance where relevant, and municipal rates clearance. Holding costs while the property is on the market, like maintenance, rates, and utilities, also add up, so speed matters.



Work with the right professionals

In a crowded property market, the right agent makes a real difference. Skilled professionals don't just put your home online; they know how to position it correctly, attract serious buyers, negotiate effectively, and close the deal efficiently. The goal isn't endless show days - it's the right buyer at the right price.

Don't forget your bank

Here's a detail many sellers overlook. In South Africa, most banks require 90 days' written notice to cancel a bond without penalty. Miss that window, and you could end up paying thousands in early termination fees - sometimes the equivalent of months of extra interest. A quick letter of notice before listing your property can save you money and prove that you're a seller who means business.

Selling a home will always be a mix of strategy and emotion, but with thoughtful presentation, realistic pricing, and the right professional advice, you'll turn your home into someone else's dream, and seal the deal much faster.

*Don't miss our articles **The Art of Organizing Your Home**, and **The Complete Spring Cleaning Guide** in this issue.*

For more information, visit www.century21.co.za or call Century 21 South Africa Head Office, 011.455.0066

Quick-Action Checklist

The top 5 fixes you can do before listing:

1. Refresh your front door with a bold or classic colour to boost curb appeal.
2. Update lighting and swap out old cupboard or drawer handles for an instant modern lift.
3. Declutter and organise storage spaces to give the impression of more room.
4. Deep clean carpets, upholstery, and windows to make every space feel well cared for.
5. Add small touches like fresh flowers, indoor plants, or subtle scents to create a welcoming atmosphere.

How to improve air circulation in your home.



HOW TO IMPROVE AIR CIRCULATION IN YOUR HOME

Proper air circulation is essential for maintaining a comfortable and healthy indoor environment. Homeowners can enhance indoor air quality and promote better ventilation by improving air circulation. Fans and vents are effective tools for achieving proper airflow.

In this article, we will explore the importance of air circulation and discuss techniques for increasing airflow. We will also delve into the role of ventilation in maintaining fresh and well-circulated air within the home. Additionally, we will cover natural air circulation techniques and the benefits of achieving optimal air circulation.

Lastly, we will provide maintenance tips for fans and vents and offer troubleshooting suggestions to ensure they remain in good working condition. With this article, we aim to provide a comprehensive guide to improving air circulation and maintaining a healthy and comfortable home environment.

Understanding the importance of air circulation

South Africa is known for its high temperatures, which means a lot of time is spent indoors with the air conditioning running. However, many homeowners overlook the importance of air circulation in maintaining a comfortable and healthy indoor environment. Proper air circulation is essential for removing stale air, reducing

humidity, and promoting better ventilation. When air circulation is optimized, it can significantly enhance indoor air quality and, in turn, improve overall well-being.

Effective air circulation is also crucial for reducing the risk of health problems caused by poor indoor air quality. Indoor air pollutants, such as mould, allergens, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), can accumulate in stagnant air, leading to respiratory illnesses and other health concerns. By promoting proper air circulation, homeowners can reduce the concentration of these pollutants and improve the air quality within their homes.

Techniques to increase airflow

Improving air circulation doesn't always require expensive equipment. Here are some simple techniques that can be used to increase airflow:

Strategically open doors and windows

Opening windows and doors are the most straightforward way to maximize natural ventilation. Open windows in opposite rooms or create a crosswind by opening windows on opposite walls. Doing so allows the air to flow freely around the home, providing better circulation.



Ceiling fans are a cost-effective option

Utilize ceiling fans

Ceiling fans are a cost-effective option that can help increase airflow in a room. During the summer, set the fans to rotate in a counter clockwise direction to push air downwards. During the winter, the fan can be reversed to create an upward draft, which helps to distribute warm air and maintain comfortable temperatures.

Position furniture for optimal airflow

It's essential to position your furniture in a way that doesn't obstruct the natural airflow. Avoid blocking vents or placing furniture in front of or under fans. Instead, arrange furniture in a way that allows air to move freely through the room.

Regularly clean filters and vents

Dirty filters and vents hinder air circulation. Ensure that you regularly clean filters for air conditioning units, and clean vents and ducts to remove any dust or debris that may be blocking airflow. By doing this, you can ensure optimal air circulation in your home.

Enhancing ventilation for better air circulation

Proper ventilation is crucial for improving air circulation and promoting a healthy indoor environment. Ventilation involves the exchange of indoor and outdoor air, which removes pollutants, allergens, and excess moisture from the home. Here are some effective strategies for enhancing ventilation:

• Install exhaust fans

Exhaust fans are an excellent way to remove stale air from your home and improve airflow. You can install exhaust fans in bathrooms, kitchens, and other areas where moisture tends to accumulate. Ensure that the fans are properly sized for the room and have efficient motors.

• Open windows

Opening your windows is an easy way to promote natural ventilation and improve indoor air quality. Cross-ventilation is especially effective in removing stagnant air, so try to open windows on opposite sides of the room or house. However, be cautious of outdoor pollution and keep windows shut during peak traffic times or when the air quality is poor.

• Use ventilation systems

Ensuring that ventilation systems are properly installed and

maintained is essential for maximizing their effectiveness. Central HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems, for instance, should have clean filters and adequate airflow. Similarly, air ducts should be free of blockages and kept clean. Proper ventilation systems will not only improve indoor air quality but also reduce energy costs.

By implementing these techniques, you can significantly enhance ventilation and improve air circulation throughout your home.

Utilizing natural air circulation techniques

While fans and vents are effective tools for improving air circulation, there are also natural techniques that can be utilized to enhance airflow throughout a home. These methods can reduce the reliance on mechanical devices and promote a more sustainable approach to air circulation. Here are some natural techniques to consider:

Cross-ventilation

Cross-ventilation involves opening windows or doors on opposite sides of a room or house to create a flow of air. This technique works best when there is a breeze present, but it can also be effective even in still air conditions. To enhance cross-ventilation, try opening windows or doors in multiple rooms to create a through-flow of air.

The chimney effect

The chimney effect takes advantage of warm air rising and cool air sinking. This technique involves opening windows or vents at the top of a building or room to allow warm air to escape while opening windows or vents at the bottom to allow cool air to enter. This creates a natural flow of air that can help to circulate fresh air throughout a room or home.

Natural airflow patterns

Positioning furniture in a room can have an impact on natural airflow patterns. Avoid placing furniture in front of vents or windows, as this can disrupt the flow of air. Instead, try to arrange furniture in a way that promotes natural airflow patterns, such as placing a couch or chair perpendicular to a window to direct air into the centre of the room.



Check for obstructions and replace filters as needed

- Open windows or doors on opposite sides of a room or house to create a flow of air.
- Take advantage of warm air rising and cool air sinking by opening windows or vents at the top and bottom of a building or room.
- Avoid placing furniture in front of vents or windows to promote natural airflow patterns.

Benefits of optimal air circulation

Proper air circulation plays a critical role in enhancing the indoor air quality of South African homes. Achieving optimal air circulation through the use of fans, vents, and other strategies offers numerous benefits, including:

- **Improved indoor air quality:** Good air circulation helps remove stale, stagnant air and replace it with fresh, clean air. This can help reduce the presence of pollutants, allergens, and other harmful particles that can negatively impact indoor air quality.
- **Reduced humidity:** Poor air circulation can lead to excess humidity build-up, which can create an uncomfortable living environment and increase the risk of mould growth. Proper air circulation helps maintain optimal humidity levels, improving overall comfort and reducing the risk of mould growth.
- **Prevention of allergen build-up:** Proper air circulation can help prevent the accumulation of allergens such as dust, pet dander, and pollen, helping to minimize allergy symptoms and improve overall respiratory health.
- **Enhanced overall comfort:** Good air circulation helps maintain a consistent temperature throughout the home, preventing hot spots and cold drafts. This creates a more comfortable living environment for residents and can even help reduce energy costs by improving HVAC efficiency.

Enhance your comfort and health with proper air circulation

By implementing the tips and techniques discussed in this article, you can achieve optimal air circulation within your South African home and reap the many benefits that come with it. From improved indoor air quality to enhanced overall comfort, proper air circulation is an essential aspect for maintaining a healthy, comfortable living environment.

Maintenance tips

- Regularly clean vents and fans to remove dust and dirt build-up that can obstruct airflow.

- Lubricate fan motors according to manufacturer instructions to prevent wear and tear that can reduce efficiency and lead to breakdowns.
- Check and replace air filters in HVAC systems and air purifiers to promote proper airflow through the home.

Common issues and troubleshooting

- Vents that fail to open or close may have a broken damper or actuator that needs to be replaced.
- Noisy fans may indicate loose parts or worn bearings, which can be fixed by tightening screws or replacing components.
- Inadequate airflow from vents may be caused by blocked ductwork or a dirty air filter. Check for obstructions and replace filters as needed.

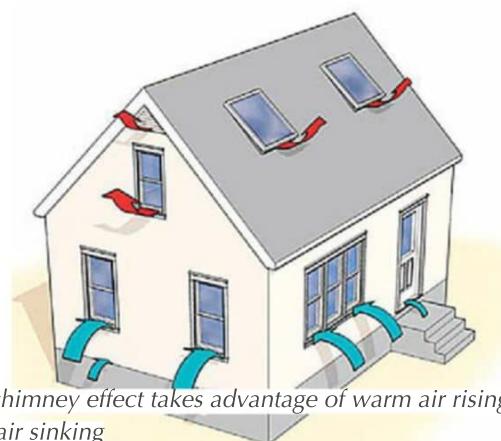
By following these simple maintenance tips and troubleshooting techniques, you can keep your fans and vents functioning optimally and maintain healthy air circulation throughout your home.

Conclusion

Improving air circulation is essential for maintaining a healthy and comfortable indoor environment in South Africa. By using fans, vents, and natural airflow techniques, you can optimize the circulation of air within your home. Proper ventilation systems are also crucial for promoting fresh and well-circulated air throughout your space.

Regular maintenance of your fans and vents is necessary to ensure they continue to function properly. If you encounter issues, troubleshooting techniques can help you resolve them efficiently.

Remember, achieving and maintaining optimal air circulation can significantly enhance indoor air quality, reduce humidity, and prevent allergen build-up. Follow the tips outlined in this article to promote better air circulation and create a healthier living space for you and your family.



The chimney effect takes advantage of warm air rising and cool air sinking



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FIRE PREVENTION BASICS

The use and control of fire by people in order to generate light, heat and prepare food is considered to be one of the greatest advancements of the human race. Today, we take it for granted, but it is used in controlled settings by us almost every day, especially in our homes. But what happens when fires grow beyond our control?

Home fires can be devastating, occur rapidly and can cause extensive damage to property and to people especially children, the elderly and the disabled.

When fire strikes in the home, it is quick, and as highlighted above, it can be deadly. It takes less than 30 seconds for a small fire to become a major one. However, the response time requirement for fire departments varies across the country with some stations not even answering their phones due to stolen cables, load-shedding, and more. Now throw in travel times and all the potholes in the road and you can see that once first responders make it to the scene, there is a good chance the situation has already turned deadly.

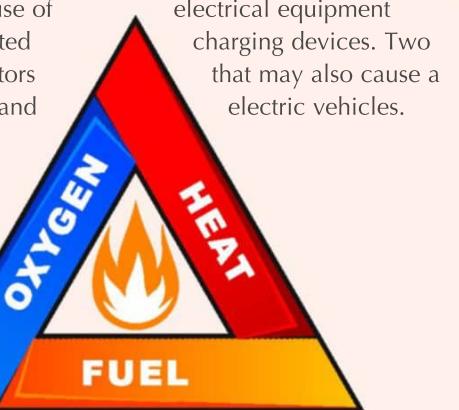
Fire planning and prevention

After looking at response times, and keep in mind we didn't factor in the time it takes for you to call for help or the time it takes for them to trigger the alarm, it's important to look at both the fire risks in your own home and prevention methods to avoid major fires. After looking at the risks in your home, it's then important to formulate a plan and practice responding to fire emergencies with your family.

Fire dangers inside your home

In order to understand how to prevent home fires, you must first understand what elements have to come together to produce a fire. The fire triangle describes the three elements of any fire, which consists of heat, oxygen, and fuel. To extinguish a fire, one of these elements must be suppressed because a fire cannot be sustained without the presence of all three factors. Fires extinguishing agents such as water, sand, blankets or chemical suppressing agents can remove oxygen or lessen heat, which in turn reduces and extinguishes the fire at its source.

Cooking equipment is the primary cause of home fires, followed by smoking. Another cause that is gaining more prominence as modern advances is the use of and their associated lesser-known factors fire are batteries and



Cooking-related fires

Cooking equipment (for example, stoves, microwaves, ovens, and toasters) can cause fires, particularly when food is left unattended. It is important to always monitor food while it is being prepared and keep young children out of the kitchen so that they don't inadvertently cause a fire or become burned by hot flames or surfaces. Additionally, any utensils or items like oven mitts or dishcloths should be kept away from appliances that create heat, especially the stovetop.

A quick way to extinguish minor cooking fires is to place the lid over the fire to remove the element of oxygen. This should only be done if the fire is small and there is no risk of injury. A fire blanket or fire extinguisher should be kept in the kitchen that is capable of handling grease fires, such as an all-purpose portable ABC fire extinguisher. Never use water on a grease or electrical fires; this will only make a bad situation even worse, and it will do nothing to extinguish the flames. In fact, it could make the fire even larger.



Smoking-related fires

Smoking is still one of the top reasons for home-related fires. For people who smoke, it is best to use fire-safe cigarettes and smoke outside whenever possible, it's not only safer, but your guests will thank you when they don't go home smelling like they just walked out of a bar.



- Smoking in bed should be avoided; most smoking-related fires start when someone falls asleep with the lit cigarette, and it then falls which onto the bed, carpet or materials on the floor.
- Cigarettes should be carefully extinguished in deep ashtrays, using water or sand whenever possible to ensure

Some other things you should be aware of

Batteries and pyrolysis should be understood as they can cause equally devastating fires.

Batteries may cause fires when the terminals of two batteries accidentally come into contact with one another. This can happen when batteries are discarded into trash bins or recycling containers. To avoid this, duct tape can be placed over the terminals so that the risk of contact is minimized.

Pyrolysis is a term that describes the contact of combustible materials with heat sources of 100°C or more. Examples of this can include improperly operated heating systems or chimneys

that the butts are no longer producing heat.

- Lighters, matches, and cigarettes should be kept away from the reach of children.
- For those homes in which medical oxygen must be used, smoking should not be permitted, and candles, matches or other ignition sources must be kept away from these units.

Electrical fires

This is an area of concern that most people never think about. Many home electrical fires occur every year, with peak fire deaths between midnight and 08:00. Faulty wiring, lighting or equipment are major contributors to these types of fires, but they may also be caused by:

- Overloaded electrical circuits with multiple heating appliances.
- Old and frayed charging cords.
- Cheaply made knockoff chargers.

Electrical cords should always be in good working order, and only one heating appliance per electrical port should be used at a time. Extension cords should never be used with heating appliances, and their use should only be temporary with other electrical devices in order to reduce electrical fire risks.



Don't overlook your dryer!

Dryers are an often overlooked source of household fires. These appliances should always be used with a lint filter that is cleaned after every load of laundry is completed. Air exhaust vents should be periodically checked for blockages, and the vent pipes should be cleaned of lint at least once a year.

that are not carefully maintained. The combustible materials eventually break down and can ignite without the exposure of a direct flame. Homeowners should always leave space between any type of combustible material and a heating source and remind all members of the family, especially children to ensure that items left around the house are kept at an acceptable distance away from these heating sources.

Gas and electrical safety

If you smell gas, turn it off immediately and don't switch on lights or appliances. Call a registered gasfitter and have gas heaters serviced yearly.

Fire safety

Smoke detectors

Your first line of defence

If you only do one thing to protect your family from fire, install smoke alarms.



Why? Because fire spreads faster than most people realise. In just a couple of minutes, flames and smoke can fill a room and make it impossible to escape. Working alarms give you precious extra seconds to act - you have less than minutes to escape. That makes smoke detectors, especially when people are sleeping, vital to your ability to survive a fire.

Many of all home fire deaths happened in homes where smoke detectors were either not present or not working.

Important things to know about smoke detectors:

- As soon as you hear the sound, you need to get outside and stay outside.
- Your alarms all need to be interconnected. When one sounds, they all sound.
- You should test your alarms once a month and all alarms should be replaced every ten years.
- Alarms should be installed in and outside of every sleeping area in your home. Install alarms on every level of the home.
- Smoke alarms may even come equipped with strobe lights or bed shakers for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

How many do you need?

At least two per home, with one near bedrooms. Multi-storey homes need one on each level.

Where should they go?

On the ceiling because smoke rises. If placed on a wall, keep them within 10cm of the ceiling.

Which type should you buy?

Photoelectric alarms are recommended.

For the hearing-impaired

Specialist alarms with strobe lights, bed shakers, or pagers are available.

Home fire sprinklers

If you don't have a sprinkler system in your home, you need to seriously consider installing a system throughout your home; it's like having a fire fighter on call inside your home 24/7.



Sprinkler systems, both residential and commercial, have been found to reduce fire deaths in the majority of cases where they are present. While safety is the foremost concern, home fire sprinkler installation may have benefits that exceed property and life preservation, such as the lowering of insurance premiums as well as a reduction in the amount of water used to extinguish a fire as opposed to the huge amounts used by the fire department.

Home fire sprinklers benefits:

- Sprinkler heads only activate in areas with fire, thus saving you a lot of money in potential water damage. Water damage from fires suppressed by a home sprinkler system is much cheaper in cleanup costs than water damage from a fire suppressed by a fire department.
- Fire sprinklers are so effective that they often put out a fire before the fire department arrives.
- Most furniture and modern day goods are made of plastics and synthetics that make fires burn faster, and they produce deadly smoke.

Fire extinguishers:

There is a difference!

When selecting a fire extinguisher, it's important to choose the proper one for your situation. Fire extinguishers are divided into four categories, which are based on the type of fire. They also have a numerical rating which tells you what the extinguisher can handle. A higher number means more power to extinguish the fire.

It is extremely important to use the right type of extinguisher. Using the wrong one for the wrong type of fire can be extremely dangerous.

Fire extinguisher guide:

- **Class A extinguishers** are used to put out fires caused by ordinary materials such as paper, wood, and most plastics. The numerical rating on these extinguishers tells you the amount of water it holds.
- **Class B extinguishers** are used on gasoline, kerosene, grease and oil fires.
- **Class C extinguishers** are for electrical fires. You should never use water to extinguish class C fires because of the risk of electrical shock.
- **Class D extinguishers** are for chemical fires and are not commonly useful for household needs. They are most often used to put fires that involve combustible metals.

Fire escape drills

The most important part of any plan is practicing the plan!

If you woke up tonight to the sound of a smoke alarm, would you have enough time to escape? If you have small children, older adults or people with disabilities, would they be able to get out on their own?

Families and households should practice fire escape drills so that all members, especially children, are aware of safe evacuation procedures and the fastest exit routes. Practice exercise and drills should include:

- A fire escape map that shows children the safe exists and alternative routes for evacuation including the meet-up point outside. Make sure your child knows to leave, and not until they get to that meet-up spot!
- Exiting by crawling low to the ground to avoid smoke inhalation, one of the major causes of fire-related fatalities.
- Testing doorknobs - hot doorknobs can indicate a fire right outside your room.
- Carefully opening doors as this may cause oxygen to rush into the room and increase the size of a fire exponentially.
- Techniques such as the 'stop, drop and roll' in case clothing catches fire in order to avoid burns.
- Quiz your children every six months so they remember what to do, where to go, and who to call in an emergency.
- There should always be at least two evacuation routes in order to escape a household fire.

Safety considerations

- Phone numbers of emergency responders (fire, police, ambulance, etc.) should be posted on the refrigerator or posted in an area of high visibility in the house and children regularly quizzed about this information.
- Houses with security bars should include quick-release devices.
- Older people, the disabled, or those with medical conditions should be placed near an exit in the house for easy and quick escapes.

Home insurance

Homeowners should be in contact with their insurance providers to understand how they may be covered in the event of a fire and should a fire occur, the agent must be contacted as soon as possible so that they will be instructed on how to document fire damage. Photo evidence is critical, and lists should be created to inventory the damaged items for claims purposes. Damaged goods should be kept until instructed otherwise by insurance agencies, and once the property is deemed safe for re-entry, appliances should not be re-connected unless checked by a licensed professional. If the property is held under a mortgage, the lender must also be contacted to inform them of the fire event.

Step-by-step guide

To operate a fire extinguisher, remember the word **PASS**:

Pull the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you, and release the locking mechanism.

Aim low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.

Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.

Sweep the nozzle from side-to-side.

Danger zones in the home

Fire risk lurks in nearly every room. Here's how to make each area safer:

The kitchen

- Never leave cooking unattended - most house fires start here.
- Don't fry food if you've been drinking alcohol.
- Keep tea towels, curtains, and cords away from the stove.
- Clean your grill and range hood filters regularly.
- Never throw water on a burning fry pan - cover it with a lid or damp cloth.

The living room

- Half of all fire fatalities involve cigarettes. Always stub them out properly.
- Use a fireguard for open fires and have chimneys swept yearly.
- Dispose of ashes in a metal bucket and dampen them; they can stay hot for days.
- Don't overload power boards or dry clothes on heaters.

Bedrooms

- Keep candles away from curtains, bedding, and clutter. Extinguish them before sleep.
- Get your electric blanket tested annually and always switch it off before bed.
- Keep a torch by the bed in case of emergencies.

Laundry and Outdoors

- Clean your dryer's lint filter after every use.
- Ensure good ventilation around appliances.
- Around the BBQ: keep kids away, clean off fat, and check fittings before lighting up.

Nightly fire check

A quick bedtime routine could save your life:

- Kitchen appliances off.
- Heaters off, clear space around them.
- Candles out.
- Ashtray emptied safely outside.
- Doors closed to slow fire spread.
- Keys accessible near doors.



MIXING AND MATCHING DIFFERENT TILE STYLES

Choosing tiles for your space can be tricky, especially if you are not redecorating from scratch. Most of the time, homeowners simply keep parts of the original "bones" of the space and upgrade what is necessary. When you are decorating a space from scratch, you have a blank canvas to work with. This means you can use whatever you want without having to take existing décor into consideration. But, when you are redecorating, say, your kitchen, you may only be tiling or re-tiling your walls while keeping your flooring intact. This means that your wall tiles need to work with your flooring, or else you will end up with a visual mess. Picking out the right type of tiles can be an intimidating affair with the variety of materials, patterns and colours available. Then, there is the task of matching your selected floor tiles or wall tiles with the other tiles you have chosen for your space. One common mistake a lot of people make while choosing tiles is not taking the other aspects of the space, such as overall colour palette, upholstery, furniture, décor and other tiles, in mind. This only ends up in creating an ambience that looks slightly off and out of place.

Why should you mix and match tiles?

Mixing and matching different colours and patterns in a space is not a big deal. But it is imperative that you do it right. There are various things that you need to consider before you choose a colour palette or pattern for your space – one of the most important aspects being timelessness. As mentioned before, tiles are a long-term investment. Choosing extremely trendy tiles may not work out in your favour as with time, as the trends change, your space might end up looking highly dated. This is why mixing and matching tiles is important. Mixing and matching different tiles is an amazing way to add some diversity to your home. It also allows you to give your space a unique and personal touch that will certainly not look old or dated with the passage of time. Also using a mix of different tiles can also help reduce the need for carpets, rugs, wall art and other decorative accessories in your space.

When choosing your tiles

Choosing tiles is one of the biggest decisions you can make while decorating or redecorating your home. Tiles are a long-term commitment and are not usually changed every two years, so think of your choices very carefully before zeroing in. Here are some tips that you can take into consideration before selecting a tile for your space.

• Functionality

While choosing the combination of tiles, one should be very sure about the traffic flow and the kind of utilisation of the different tile designs in various areas. In places that have high traffic, like kitchens, bathrooms, and entryways, it is a must to choose tile styles that can take on repetitive usage, are non-slip in nature, and ensure safety. Also, for places where moisture is most likely to occur, such as laundry areas, pool areas, and showers, it is most advisable to choose waterproof or water-resistant tile for the longest-lasting durability.

• Style and aesthetics

Style is also important when it comes to the combination of tiles, different tile designs, and wall and floor tile colour combinations. Make selections that reflect or complement the



Use the same material throughout

motif of the space. To achieve a unique style you can mix and match different sizes and shapes. Make sure you get around to experimenting with patterns and colour combinations of wall and floor tiles. Get creative with how patterns can inflict personality and how colours may affect the mood. Always remember to balance striking pieces of any setting with more neutral elements so that it doesn't become overwhelming.

• Material and maintenance

When considering your different tile design options, there's not only the look to be taken into consideration but also the practical elements that will affect the life and maintenance of your tiles. Different materials, like metal, glass, natural stone, vitrified, porcelain, and ceramic, all have properties that come into play. For example, metallic tiles offer very high toughness, while glazed porcelain tile does the best when you want something with low maintenance that will undertake everyday abuse gracefully. Knowing what each one of these materials can offer in added durability, resistance to water, or ease of cleaning, you can pick the one that would come closest to your priorities and lifestyle.

• Budget

A reasonable spending plan is everything when it comes to a tiling job, as there are so many things to be kept in mind. All of these must be budgeted to ensure that the job gets finished without any hitch, from the cost of raw materials to the cost of fixing them, extra add-ons like mosaics, or trimmings. The necessity to get carried away with the initial quotes is not required, rather look at the bigger picture. While premium tiles may initially cost more, they may end up being less expensive over time. They are more cost-effective since they require fewer repairs because they are stronger and last longer.

Here are a few rules for mixing and matching tiles:

• Using the same material throughout

The best way to create a mix-and-match tile design that is cohesive and gorgeous is by using the same type of material for all the tiles. So, if you fall in love with marble or ceramic tile, you can pair different colours, patterns and shapes together to create a cohesive, homogenous look. Try to use similar finishes for a gorgeous and eye-catching look.

• Mix and match materials

While it is easy to create a cohesive look while using the same tile material, there are many gorgeous tiling material options to just limit yourself to a single material choice. Lots of times, for an out-of-the-box look, designers and homeowners tend to mix and match tiles with other various materials. Be it combining ceramic tiles with wood tiles or wood panels (as in the image above) or porcelain tiles with glass tiles, you can go all out and create an eye-catching juxtaposition with different materials. By pairing different materials, you can add some depth and dimension to your space effortlessly.

• Sporadic use of busy patterns

It may seem tempting to plaster your chosen patterns on every



Mix and match materials

single surface, but it would be better to keep the use of patterns minimal in order to enhance their beauty. It is best to pair tiles with bold patterns with plain tiles for a soft yet eye-catching look. Also, make sure you do not use more than three different tile patterns in the same space – since too many patterns can make the space look too visually busy and cluttered.

• Mixing different finishes

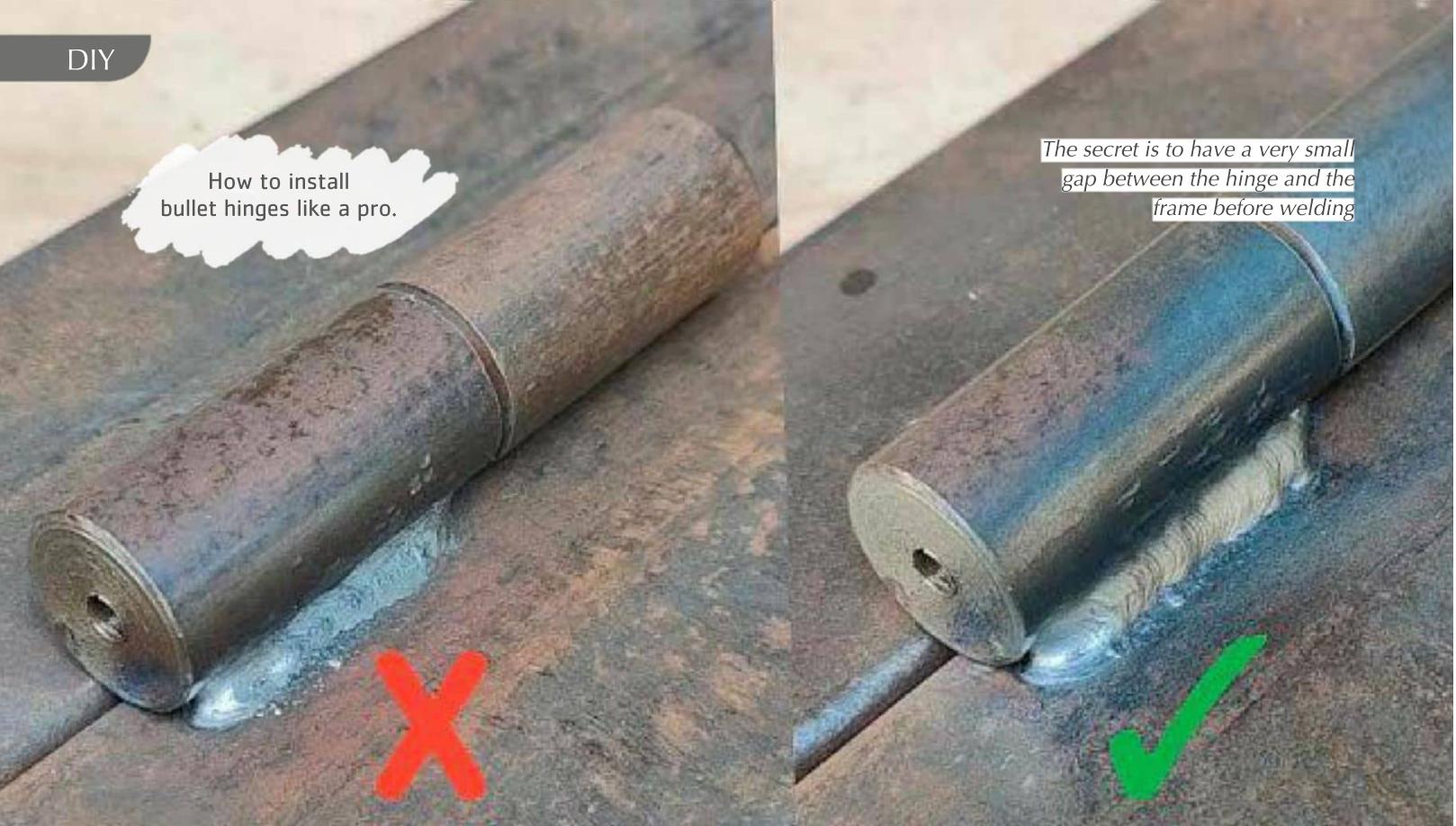
While using the same finish throughout can be pleasing to the eye, using different finishes can add a subtle contrast and add some texture to your space. For example, you can do a small matte tile border around a wall of glossy tiles. Or use matte and glossy floor tiles in a chessboard pattern on your floor. As long as the functionality is not affected, you can club multiple finishes for a chic and unique look.

• Using multiple colours

As mentioned before, while using multiple colours, it is best to match the undertones in order to create a cohesive look. You can use complementary colours, contrasting colours or even a combination of bright colours with a neutral to create a colour palette. But, as with patterns, do not go overboard and use too many colours – the space will end up a visual mess! You can even use the same tile in different colours for a dramatic effect. It is very important to ensure that the tiles you use for your space work well together to create your desired ambience. Mismatched tiles can end up making your room look unattractive and visually unappealing. While the process of mixing and matching different tiles may feel arduous, if you follow the ground rules, you will be sorted and be able to create an eye-catching and beautiful space that is as unique as you.



Sporadic use of busy patterns



BULLET HINGES



What you will need

Before getting started, it's important to have the right tools and materials on hand.

- Bullet hinges
- Welding machine
- Welding rods
- Welding helmet
- Long sleeve gloves
- Leather welding apron
- Wire brush
- Clamps or strong welding magnets
- Tape measure
- Chalk / marker pen
- Spirit level
- Metal primer, paint and paint brush

Installing bullet hinges is a straightforward project once you know the right steps. These heavy-duty hinges are perfect for gates, doors,

and metal projects where strength and smooth movement are essential. With a welder, a few basic tools, and some patience, you can achieve a strong and professional finish.

Tools needed

Before getting started, it's important to have the right tools and materials on hand. You will need your bullet hinges, a welding machine, and protective gear such as gloves, a welding helmet, and safety clothing. To prepare your surfaces, a grinder or wire brush will be necessary, along with clamps or strong welding magnets to hold the hinges in position. A tape measure, chalk or scribe, and a spirit level will help with precise marking and alignment. Once the welding is complete, you may also want primer and metal paint to protect your work from rust. Having everything laid out and ready to go will make the installation smoother and far less stressful.

Positioning

Once your surfaces are clean and marked, position the hinges. Place the bullet hinges exactly where they need to be and use clamps or magnets to hold them steady. Make sure the hinge pins are aligned vertically - this is critical for smooth movement. A quick check with a spirit level will help ensure accuracy before you commit to welding.

Welding

With everything aligned, begin by tack welding. Apply a small tack weld at the top and bottom of each hinge. This holds the hinge in place without fully

committing. After tacking, test the swing of your door or gate. Open and close it to ensure that it moves freely and that the spacing is correct. If you notice binding or misalignment, it's much easier to cut and reposition the hinge at this stage than after a full weld.

Once you're satisfied with the alignment, go ahead and complete the welds. Work your way around each hinge in short sections, allowing time for the metal to cool slightly as you go. This prevents distortion and ensures a cleaner finish. Aim for even, solid beads that cover the hinge barrel securely on both sides. Strong, continuous welds are essential here since hinges carry the entire weight of the door or gate.

Finishing

After welding, clean the joints. Use a grinder to remove any spatter and smooth the edges for a neat finish. At this point, you can also apply a primer or protective paint to prevent rust from forming on the exposed metal. Finally, give the door or gate a test swing. It should move smoothly and evenly, with the hinges holding firmly in place.

Pro Tips for perfect bullet hinges

If you want your hinges to last and your project to look professional, always choose the right size hinge for the job. A light garden gate may only need small hinges, while a large driveway gate will require heavy-duty ones. Position your hinges so that one sits close to the top and another near the bottom. For especially heavy doors, adding a third hinge in the middle helps distribute the load.

Key tip: It is very important to have a very small gap between the hinge and the frame before welding. This allows for some adjustment and prevents the hinge from binding, ensuring proper alignment and smooth operation once the door is installed.



Mistakes to avoid

The biggest mistake beginners make is skipping preparation. Welding over paint, rust, or dirt weakens the joint and leads to failure. Always clean your surfaces thoroughly before starting.

Another common error is welding the hinges without testing their swing first. Tack welds are meant for adjustments, so always check the movement before committing to full welds.

Avoid overheating the hinge barrel, as too much heat can warp the pin and reduce smooth movement. Welding in short sections and allowing the hinge to cool helps prevent this.

Finally, never underestimate the importance of hinge size. Using undersized hinges for a heavy project almost guarantees sagging over time. Choosing the correct hinge from the start saves frustration later.

With careful preparation, patience, and attention to detail, welding bullet hinges can be a simple and satisfying project. A little extra care in alignment and finishing will reward you with a gate or door that swings smoothly, looks professional, and lasts for years to come.

Don't miss our **beginners guide explain welding rods** in this issue.





WELDING RODS EXPLAINED

If you've ever watched someone weld, you've probably noticed the slender metal stick in their hand sparking against the workpiece. That's a welding rod, also known as an electrode, and it's one of the most important parts of the welding process. These rods serve a dual purpose: they provide the filler metal that forms the weld itself, and they conduct the electrical current needed to generate the arc. The secret to their performance lies not only in the metal core but also in the special coating that surrounds them, called flux. Flux acts as both a shield and a stabilizer. As it burns away during welding, it creates a protective gas cloud around the molten metal and forms a layer of slag that covers the weld bead, preventing contamination while the joint cools.

Welding rods are usually made from steel and are coated with a carefully designed mixture of minerals and metal powders. They come in different diameters and lengths, chosen according to the type of project you're working on. In practice, the rod is held in a rod holder connected to the welding machine. When the tip of the rod touches the metal surface, it creates a short circuit that instantly ignites

an electric arc. The heat of this arc is intense enough to melt both the rod and the edges of the workpiece. As the molten pool forms, the flux coating melts too, releasing gases that protect the weld and helping the slag form on top. Once the weld solidifies, the slag is chipped away to reveal a strong, clean joint.

There are several kinds of welding rods, each suited to different processes. Consumable rods are the most common, designed to melt down and become part of the weld, adding filler metal as they burn away.

Non-consumable rods, on the other hand, don't melt. They're used in processes like TIG welding, where a tungsten electrode maintains the arc but a separate filler rod is added if needed. Among the consumable types, stick welding rods are probably the best known. These rods are coated in flux and are used in shielded metal arc welding (SMAW), the traditional method relied on for everything from structural welding to pipeline work and everyday repairs.

TIG welding rods are used with tungsten inert gas setups, while MIG welding employs continuous spooled wire electrodes that feed automatically through the welding gun.

Choosing the right welding rod for a project depends on a few key factors. The rod's composition should always match or be compatible with the base metal to ensure a strong bond. The type of flux coating affects the way the arc behaves, how deep the weld penetrates, and how easy it is to remove the slag afterward. Strength also matters, a rod's tensile strength should be appropriate for the stresses the finished joint will face. Some rods are designed to work better in certain positions, whether flat, horizontal, vertical, or overhead. Others may only perform properly with specific current types, either AC or DC.

For beginners, understanding welding rod numbers can seem like a code, but once you know the basics it's straightforward. Take the popular E7018 rod as an example. The "E" simply tells you it's an electrode. The number "70" indicates a minimum tensile strength of 70,000 pounds per square inch, a measure of how strong the weld will be. The "1" means this rod can be used in all welding positions, while the final number "8" tells you about the flux composition, in this case, a low-hydrogen, iron powder coating that produces smooth, strong welds with minimal cracking.

From the outside, welding rods may look simple, but each one is a carefully engineered tool designed to create safe, strong, and reliable welds. Whether you're working on heavy structural steel or a small repair in your workshop, understanding the basics of welding rods gives you the confidence to pick the right one and achieve professional results.



The popular E7018 rod



CREATING CALM THROUGH ORDER

In a world of constant hustle and digital distractions, the home should be a sanctuary, a place of comfort, clarity, and calm. Yet, for many, the clutter of everyday life seeps into our personal spaces, creating stress instead of serenity. That's where the art of organizing your home comes in. It's not just about neatness; it's about creating a space that supports your lifestyle, nurtures your well-being, and reflects who you are.

Why Home Organization Matters

An organized home doesn't just look good, it feels good. Numerous studies show that clutter increases stress levels, disrupts focus, and even affects sleep. On the other hand, a well-ordered space can improve productivity, boost your mood, and foster a sense of control in a chaotic world.

Organizing is also about intention. When you take the time to thoughtfully arrange your living space, you're making room for what matters most, whether it's quality time with loved ones, peaceful solitude, or simply a clearer mind.

The Emotional Payoff

Beyond the visual appeal, a well-organized home brings emotional clarity. It helps you breathe easier, move more freely, and feel more in control of your environment. It also sets the

tone for your day - imagine waking up in a clean bedroom, or walking into a kitchen where everything has its place.

Here is a step-by-step guide on how to create calm through order.

Step-by-step guide

Step One: Declutter with Purpose

Every journey to a well-organized home starts with letting go. Clutter isn't just physical; it often carries emotional weight.

Tips to declutter:

- The One-Year Rule:** If you haven't used it in a year, it's time to reconsider its place in your life.
- Sort by Category:** Tackle one group at a time; clothes, books, kitchenware - rather than room by room.
- Keep, Donate, Discard:** Create clear piles and don't second-guess your decisions.

Step Two: Design Systems That Work for You

True organization goes beyond pretty containers and matching bins, it's about function. Create systems that fit your habits and lifestyle.

- Designate a Home for Everything:** When items have a designated spot, it's easier to maintain order.

- Use Clear Storage:** Transparent bins or labelled boxes help you find things at a glance.
- Optimize Vertical Space:** Shelves, wall hooks, and over-the-door organizers can work wonders in tight areas.

Step Three: Zone Your Space

Dividing your home into purposeful zones increases efficiency and flow.

- Entryway:** A small basket for keys, a shoe rack, and coat hooks can eliminate everyday chaos.
- Kitchen:** Group items by task — a baking zone, coffee station, or lunch-prep corner can make mealtimes smoother.
- Home Office:** Use file organizers, drawer dividers, and cable management tools to keep focus where it belongs.

Step Four: Create Habits That Maintain Order

The hardest part of organizing isn't getting there, it's staying there. Organization is a lifestyle, not a one-time project.

- Five-Minute Rule:** Spend just five minutes each day tidying up one area. Over time, it makes a big difference.
- One-In, One-Out Rule:** For every new item you bring in, remove an old one.
- Seasonal Audits:** Every few months, reassess your space and adjust systems as needed.

In Conclusion

The art of organizing your home is part mindfulness, part strategy, and part self-care. By decluttering your space, establishing smart systems, and maintaining the habit, you create a home that reflects and supports your best self. Start small, stay consistent, and remember... you're not just tidying up; you're transforming your life.

Don't miss our **Complete Spring Cleaning Guide** in this issue.



ROUTINE CARE FOR OVENS

Modern ovens are built to last, but like any hard-working household appliance, they perform best, and last longest, with regular maintenance. Whether you use your oven daily for family meals or only for weekend roasts, a little routine care can prevent costly repairs, improve energy efficiency, and keep your cooking results consistent.

Below, we'll explore best practices for cleaning, inspecting, and maintaining your oven to extend its service life.

1. Why oven maintenance matters

Neglecting your oven can cause more than just burnt food. Over time, grease, food debris, and heat cycles can:

- Reduce cooking efficiency
- Increase energy consumption
- Cause premature wear on components
- Lead to expensive repairs or replacements

Routine maintenance not only keeps your oven hygienic, but also helps avoid those slow-burn issues that creep up unnoticed.

2. Common issues that regular maintenance can often prevent

- **Uneven heat distribution:** This typically arises from a faulty burner element, which can be identified and replaced through regular inspections.
- **Burner malfunctions:** A burner that fails to ignite or adjust properly can disrupt cooking routines. Regular cleaning and connection checks can prevent such malfunctions.
- **Electrical issues:** Tripped circuits or other electrical problems warrant immediate attention from a qualified electrician to prevent any further damage.

- **Control panel problems:** Sticky buttons or unresponsive controls can be remedied through regular cleaning and careful handling.

3. Routine cleaning: Inside & Out

a. Interior Cleaning

- **After light spills:** Wipe up food or grease splatters as soon as the oven cools down. This prevents stubborn, baked-on residue.

b. Deep clean monthly:

- For non-self-cleaning ovens: Remove racks, soak them in warm soapy water, and scrub with a non-abrasive sponge.
- For self-cleaning models: Follow manufacturer guidelines. Remove any loose food debris before activating the cycle.

- **Avoid harsh chemicals:** Abrasives can scratch surfaces and damage heating elements. Opt for baking soda paste (baking soda and water) for stubborn spots.

b. Exterior Cleaning

- Use a mild detergent and damp cloth on the oven door and control panel.
- For stainless steel finishes, wipe with the grain using a micro-fibre cloth to prevent streaks.

4. Care for oven racks and accessories

- Remove racks during self-clean cycles unless the manual says they can remain inside; prolonged high heat can discolour or warp them.
- Lightly oil racks with a small amount of vegetable oil every few months to keep them sliding smoothly.

5. Inspect key components regularly

a. Heating elements

- Look for blistering, cracks, or burn spots on electric elements.
- For gas ovens, check the flame - it should be blue and even, not yellow or flickering.

b. Door seals

- The rubber gasket around the door ensures heat stays inside. If you notice cracks, tears, or brittleness, replace it to avoid heat loss and higher energy bills.

c. Thermostat and temperature accuracy

- If food is over- or undercooking, your thermostat may need calibration. Test with an oven thermometer and adjust according to your manual.

6. Ventilation and airflow

- Keep ventilation slots clear of dust and debris to avoid overheating.
- For built-in ovens, ensure there's adequate space for airflow behind and around the unit as per manufacturer specifications.

7. Energy efficiency tips

- **Avoid opening the door** mid-bake. Every peek can drop the temperature by up to 15°C, making the oven work harder.
- **Use the residual heat:** Turn off the oven 5 to 10 minutes before the end of cooking time for dishes that don't require precise timing.
- **Batch-cook meals** to make the most of preheated energy.

8. Annual professional check-up

Even with regular care, an annual inspection by a qualified technician can catch hidden issues like loose wiring, faulty ignition systems, or compromised insulation. Think of it as a health check for your appliance.

9. Quick Do's & Don'ts

a. Do

- Read your oven's user manual for model-specific maintenance.
- Use oven-safe liners on lower racks (never directly on heating elements) to catch spills.
- Allow the oven to cool completely before cleaning.

b. Don't:

- Use metal scouring pads that can scratch enamel surfaces.
- Spray water directly onto control knobs or into ventilation openings.
- Ignore unusual noises, smells, or performance changes.

Routine care for a longer-lasting, better-performing appliance

After Each Use

- Wipe spills and splatters once oven cools
- Check for lingering food debris

Weekly

- Wipe exterior door and control panel with mild detergent
- Clean stainless steel surfaces with a micro-fibre cloth (wipe with the grain)
- Check oven racks for stuck-on food and clean if needed

Monthly

- Deep-clean oven interior
- Remove racks and soak in warm, soapy water
- Scrub interior with baking soda paste (avoid abrasives)
- Lightly oil rack edges to maintain smooth sliding
- Inspect heating elements or gas flame for damage or irregular colour
- Check oven door seal for cracks or wear

Every 6 Months

- Test oven temperature accuracy with an oven thermometer
- Vacuum or dust ventilation slots/grilles to maintain airflow
- Inspect behind and under oven for grease or dust build-up

Annually

- Schedule a professional inspection and service
- Check wiring, thermostat calibration, and ignition systems (by technician)

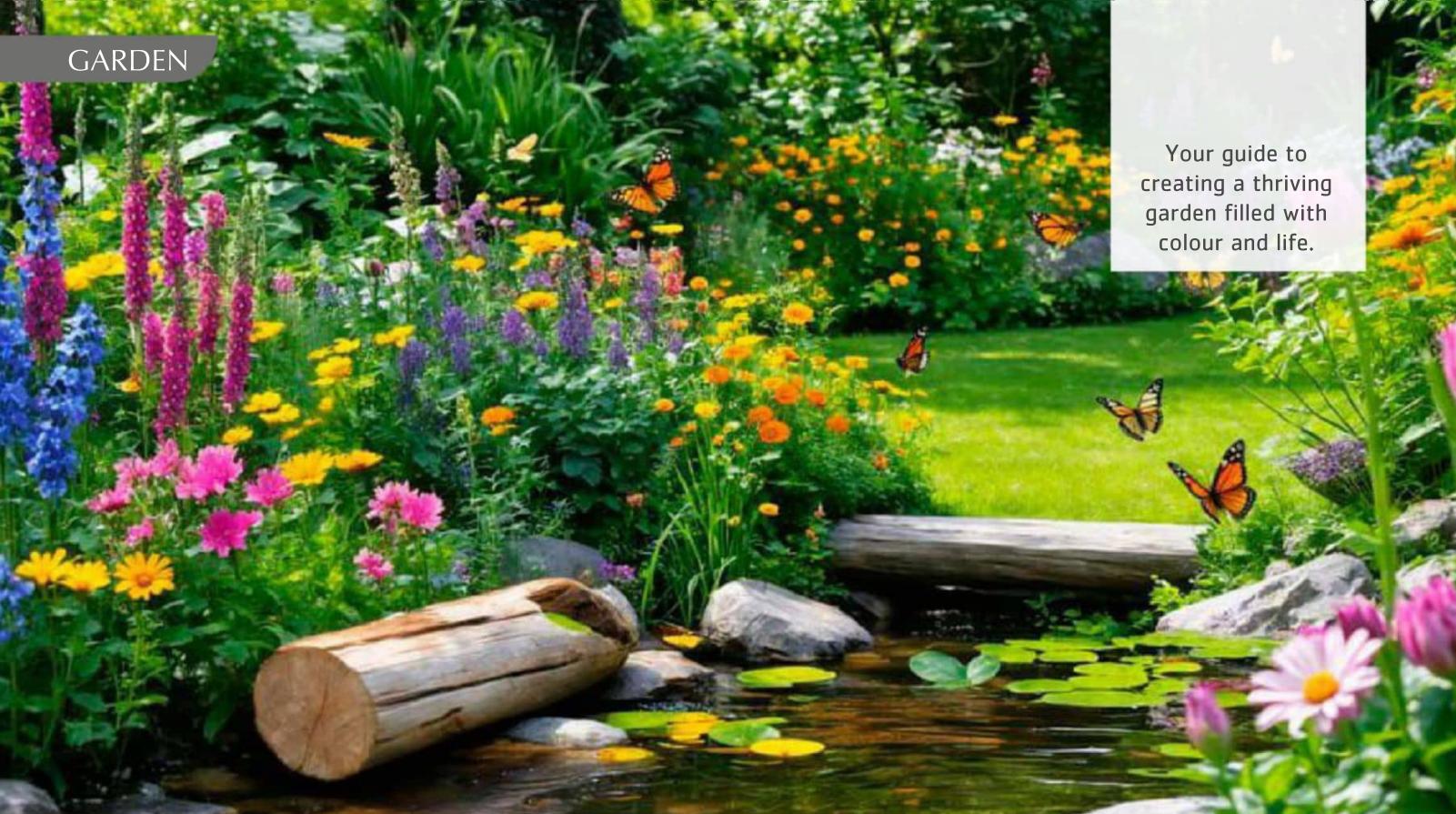
Quick Safety Reminders

- Never spray water or cleaner directly onto controls or ventilation slots
- Avoid metal scouring pads or harsh chemicals
- Always allow oven to cool completely before cleaning
- Remove racks before running a self-clean cycle (unless manual says otherwise)
- Avoid overloading the racks

Final word

An oven is one of the most heavily used appliances in a home, and like any investment, it deserves care. With consistent cleaning, periodic inspections, and mindful use, you can easily add years to its lifespan, keep your energy bills lower, and ensure every meal comes out just the way you intended.

Don't miss our next issue: Appliance maintenance: Routine care for washers.



Your guide to creating a thriving garden filled with colour and life.

PREPARING FOR SUMMER GROWTH



Essential tools needed:

- Shovel
- Trowel
- Hand rake
- Pruning shears
- Gloves
- Watering hose
- Wheelbarrow
- Garden knife



Optional but useful tools:

- Kneeling pad
- Lawnmower
- Spade
- Loppers
- Rake
- Soil scoop
- Weeders
- Garden twine
- Bucket

As the days grow longer and the sunlight becomes warmer, there is no better time to breathe new life into your garden. Summer has a way of transforming outdoor spaces into vibrant sanctuaries, filled with colour, fragrance, and the soothing hum of nature at work. Whether you are an experienced gardener or someone who is just beginning to explore the joy of planting, preparing your garden for summer is both a rewarding task and a chance to create a space that brings you peace and pride.

The first step toward success lies in being prepared. Summer gardening is about more than simply planting flowers and waiting for them to bloom. It requires planning, the right tools, and

a willingness to nurture your plants as they face the challenges of heat, pests, and changing weather. With a thoughtful approach, you can ensure that your garden not only survives but thrives, dazzling with colour under the summer sun.

Essential tools are a gardener's best companions, and each has a role to play in keeping your outdoor space at its best.

A sturdy garden hose, for example, is indispensable during scorching days when plants need reliable hydration. Choosing a hose with adjustable settings allows you to water effectively without wasting precious resources.

Pruning shears are equally important, helping you maintain healthy growth by trimming away dead leaves and branches.

For heavier work, a dependable spade makes digging and planting smooth and efficient, while a wheelbarrow takes the strain out of moving soil, compost, and pots around the garden. Even something as simple as a kneeling pad can transform your experience, allowing you to tend to plants in comfort for longer periods of time. Equipped with these essentials, you are ready to begin shaping your summer retreat.

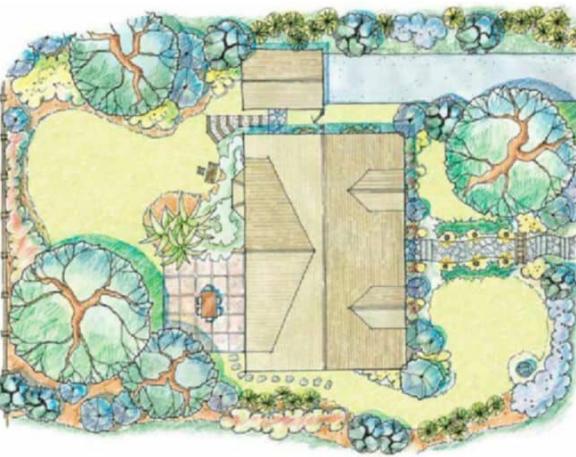


Setting the stage for success

Once you have the right tools at hand, the real fun begins. A thriving summer garden starts with the soil beneath your feet. Rich, healthy soil is the foundation of strong plants, and it benefits enormously from the addition of organic matter such as compost or well-rotted manure. Taking time to improve your soil before planting ensures that your garden will reward you with vigorous growth and resilience throughout the season.

Garden layout

Planning your garden layout is another key step. A well-thought-out design not only makes the space more functional but also adds to its visual appeal. Think about where the sunlight falls at different times of the day, which areas provide shade, and how tall your plants will grow. Arranging plants thoughtfully prevents overcrowding, creates harmony, and brings out the best in every bloom.



Choosing plants

When it comes to choosing plants, think of yourself as an artist selecting a palette. The plants you choose set the mood of your garden. Native plants are often the best starting point, as they are naturally adapted to your climate and require less maintenance. If you crave bursts of bright seasonal colour, annuals such as marigolds and petunias will not disappoint, even though they need replanting each year. For those who prefer low-maintenance beauty that lasts, perennials like daisies and lilies return reliably season after season. Gardeners in hot, dry regions may prefer drought-tolerant options such as lavender or succulents, which add beauty without demanding constant attention.

Timing and planting depth

Timing is equally crucial. Planting early in the season gives your garden a chance to establish itself before the hottest days arrive. Pay careful attention to planting depths, as seeds placed too deep or too shallow may struggle to germinate. Following these guidelines allows your garden to grow strong, healthy, and ready to face the long days of summer.

Watering

Watering, although seemingly simple, requires its own thoughtful approach during hot weather. Deep watering is far more effective than frequent shallow watering, as it encourages roots to grow stronger and reach deeper into the soil.

The best time to water is in the early morning, when plants can absorb moisture before the sun is at its peak and evaporation is minimal.

Mulching around your plants adds further protection by locking in moisture, keeping the soil cool, and reducing weed growth.

For larger gardens, a drip irrigation system can save time and water, delivering hydration directly to plant roots where it is needed most. The goal is always to keep the roots nourished without wetting the leaves, which can lead to disease.



Nurturing and protecting your garden

Creating a beautiful summer garden is just the beginning. Keeping it vibrant through the season requires ongoing care and a watchful eye. Regular weeding is one of the simplest yet most important tasks. Weeds compete with your plants for nutrients and space, and they can quickly take over if left unchecked.

Removing spent blooms, known as deadheading, is another vital practice, as it encourages plants to keep producing fresh flowers and extends their blooming period.

Fertilising every few weeks provides a steady supply of nutrients that keep your plants growing strong and healthy. Also monitor your soil's pH. Soil pH refers to the acidity or alkalinity of the soil, measured on a scale of 0 to 14, with 7 being neutral. Most plants thrive when the soil pH is slightly acidic, ideally between 6.0 and 7.0. Understanding and managing soil pH is crucial for optimal plant growth, as it influences nutrient availability and overall soil health.

Finally, routine clean-ups, removing fallen leaves, broken stems, or diseased plant material, help maintain a tidy garden and prevent the spread of problems.

Garden pests

Of course, no summer garden is complete without a few unwelcome visitors. Pests are an inevitable part of the gardening journey, but they need not spell disaster. Vigilance is your greatest defence, as catching infestations early makes them far easier to manage. Encouraging beneficial insects such as ladybirds is another natural solution, since they feast on harmful pests like aphids. Neem oil can be used as an effective organic treatment, protecting plants without harming helpful creatures. Companion planting also works wonders, pairing certain plants together to repel pests and promote healthy growth. For example, basil planted near tomatoes not only improves their flavour but also keeps insects at bay. In some cases, simple physical barriers like netting are all that is needed to protect your plants from birds and rabbits.

*A colony of aphids*

Tending a summer garden is a labour of love, but the rewards far outweigh the effort. The act of nurturing plants, watching them respond to care, and seeing them bloom under the golden light of summer brings a deep sense of satisfaction. With preparation, patience, and consistency, your garden will reward you with colour, life, and joy throughout the season. So step outside, spade in hand, and embrace the simple pleasure of summer gardening because there is no better canvas than the one nature provides.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Here's a some mistakes and how to avoid them:

Planting too early

Eagerly planting frost-sensitive plants before the danger of frost has passed can lead to stunted growth or even plant death. Start seeds indoors or in a greenhouse to get a head start. Wait until mid-to-late August (or later for colder areas) to transplant frost-sensitive plants outdoors. Use frost cloths to protect seedlings if needed.

Improper watering

Both overwatering and under-watering can be detrimental to plant health. Overwatering can lead to root rot, while under-watering can cause stress and stunted growth.

Water deeply and less frequently, allowing the soil to dry out slightly between waterings. Adjust watering frequency based on weather conditions and plant needs.

Note: Outdoor landscaping accounts for a significant portion of summer water usage, so proper watering practices are essential to avoid water waste.

Neglecting soil preparation

Planting in compacted or nutrient-poor soil can hinder root development and overall plant health. Amend the soil with compost, manure, or other organic matter before planting. Conduct a soil test to determine nutrient deficiencies and pH levels.

Not planning ahead

Failing to plan for future seasons can lead to gaps in your garden's production and missed opportunities for succession planting. Start seeds indoors for later crops, sow winter bedding plants, and plan for next year's displays. Consider taking cuttings to create new plants for later.

Planting too much

Overcrowding plants can lead to poor air circulation, increased disease pressure, and reduced yields. Space plants according to their mature size. Consider using trellises or other supports to maximize space and airflow.

Ignoring pests and diseases

Ignoring pests and diseases can quickly decimate a garden, especially during the summer months. Regularly inspect plants for signs of pests or diseases. Take preventative measures like using neem oil, companion planting, or diatomaceous earth.

Not deadheading flowers

Not removing spent flowers can prevent plants from producing new blooms and can make the garden look untidy. Deadhead flowers regularly to encourage continuous blooming.



Here are 5-minute DIY hacks you can try at home.



DIY hacks

Freshen up a room with citrus spray

Slice a lemon or orange, drop the pieces into a spray bottle filled with water, and shake well. Use it as a natural air freshener that instantly brightens up your home with a clean, citrusy scent.

**Fix a sticking zipper**

If your zipper is stuck, rub a candle or a crayon gently along the teeth. The wax helps it glide smoothly again in seconds.

**No-slip rugs**

If your rugs keep sliding, apply a few lines of hot glue to the underside, let it dry, and place it back down. The glue grips the floor and keeps the rug in place.

**Quick cord organizer**

Use empty toilet paper rolls to keep cables and chargers tangle-free. Just slip them inside, label each roll with a marker, and store neatly in a drawer.

**Instant drawer freshener**

Place a few cotton balls soaked in vanilla essence or essential oil into your drawers. They'll keep clothes smelling fresh without the need for store-bought sachets.

**Mason jar herb garden**

Fill an empty mason jar with soil, plant a sprig of mint, basil, or parsley, and place it on a sunny windowsill. You'll have fresh herbs within reach whenever you cook.





BENCH OR PICNIC TABLE?

>> Difficulty: Advanced

This is a dual purpose picnic table. Not only is this picnic table great for outdoor eating, but it easily converts into two cute garden benches. The picnic table's top folds down to create the back of the bench, for a relaxing seat.



What you will need

Tools:

- 8 Miter saw
- Table saw
- Tape measure
- Drill
- Screw driver
- Sander

Material:

- 4x Boards: 38mm x 152mm x 3050mm

- 2x Boards: 38mm x 152mm x 2440mm
- 3x Boards: 38mm x 76mm x 3050mm
- 3x Boards: 38mm x 76mm x 2440mm

- Hardware & Supplies:**
- 4x 75mm Utility Hinges

CUT LIST AND PARTS

8x Wide Top – 38 mm x 140 mm x 1525 mm

8x Leg – 38 mm x 140 mm x 460 mm (with 15° miters)

4x Narrow Top – 38 mm x 89 mm x 1525 mm

2x Stretcher – 38 mm x 89 mm x 1345 mm

4x Table Top Support – 38 mm x 89 mm x 410 mm (with 15° bevels)

4x Arm Rest – 38 mm x 89 mm x 305 mm (with 15° bevel)

4x Bench Top Support – 38 mm x 89 mm x 350 mm (with two 15° bevels)

4x Riser – 38 mm x 89 mm x 171 mm (with two 15° bevels)

4x Arm Support – 38 mm x 89 mm x 152 mm (with two 15° bevels)

4x Leg Spacer A – 38 mm x 89 mm x 220 mm (with two 15° miters)

4x Leg Spacer B – 38 mm x 89 mm x 89 mm (with two 15° miters)

- 1x Wood Glue
- 4x Sandpaper
- 1x Stain (Varathane Vintage Aqua)
- 1x Outdoor Polyurethane
- 65mm Screws

Step-by-step guide

Step 1:

Step 1 - Assemble the legs

All pocket holes for this project are for 38mm material.

Drill pocket holes in the leg support A and leg support B pieces. Mark 105mm up from the bottom of the legs for the placement of leg support A. Use wood glue and 60mm screws to attach the leg support pieces to the legs. Repeat to make four leg sets.

Step 2:

Attach stretcher

Drill pocket holes in both ends of the stretcher. Mark the centre of the leg support A pieces. Use wood glue and 65mm screws to attach the stretcher to the leg support A centres. Repeat for other leg set and stretcher.

Step 3:

Assemble the bench top

Drill pocket holes in the bench top support pieces to attach to the legs later. Lay out wide top, narrow top and wide top boards with a 5mm gap between the boards. Mark over 75mm

from each end and 25mm from the sides of the wide top boards. Glue the bench top support pieces (narrow side down) to the top boards. Use 65mm screws to secure the bench top support pieces to the top boards (minimum 2 screws for each board). Repeat for other bench top assembly.

Note: it may be useful to cut four pieces of scrap wood 5mm wide to use as a spacer for the top boards.

Step 4:

Attach table legs to top

Turn the leg assembly upside down; use wood glue and 65mm screws to attach the bench top to the legs. Repeat the process for the second bench.

Step 5:

Assemble the arms

Drill pocket holes in one end of the arm support pieces and the riser pieces. Mark over 170mm from the narrow side of the arm rest pieces. Use wood glue and 65mm screws to attach the arm support pieces to the arm rest pieces. Use wood glue and 65mm screws to attach the riser pieces to the arm support pieces.

Step 6:

Assemble the arm and support

(Note: The cut list includes optional lap joints on the table top supports to keep the picnic table top together. If the lap joints are not desired, cut the table top supports down to 385mm long instead of 410mm.)



On the long side of the table support pieces, mark at 5mm and 200mm up from the bottom. Pre-drill countersink holes in the narrow side of the table top support pieces to attach the riser and arm rest. Use wood glue and 65mm to attach the arm rest and riser through the table support pieces. Repeat for each arm assembly.

Step 7:

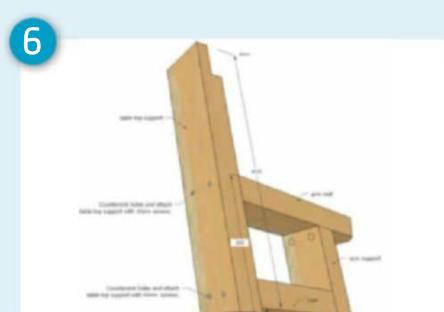
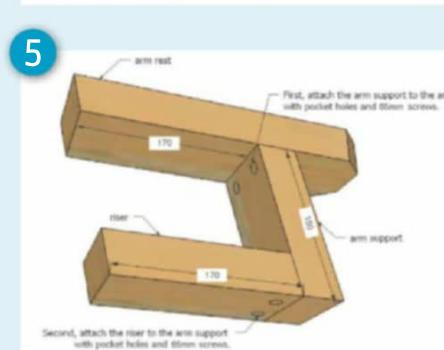
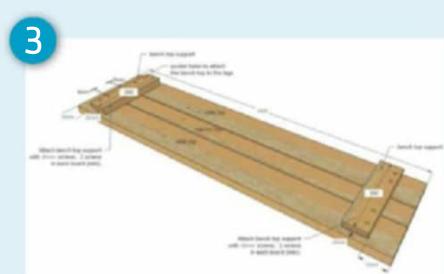
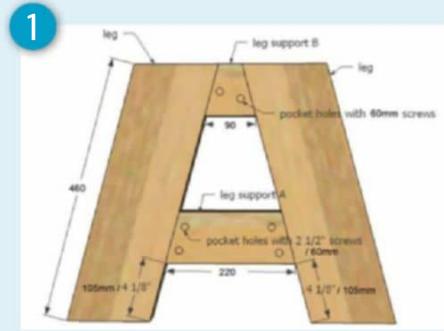
Assemble the table top

Lay out wide top, narrow top and wide top boards with a 5mm gap between the boards. Mark over 25mm from each end and 25mm from the top of the table top support pieces. Glue the table top support pieces (narrow side down) to the top boards. Use 65mm screws to secure the table top support pieces to the top boards (2 to 4 screws for each board). Repeat for other table top assembly.

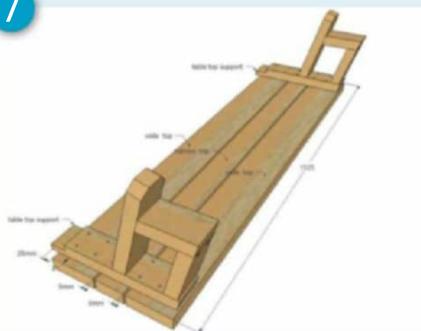
Step 8:

Attach table top to bench

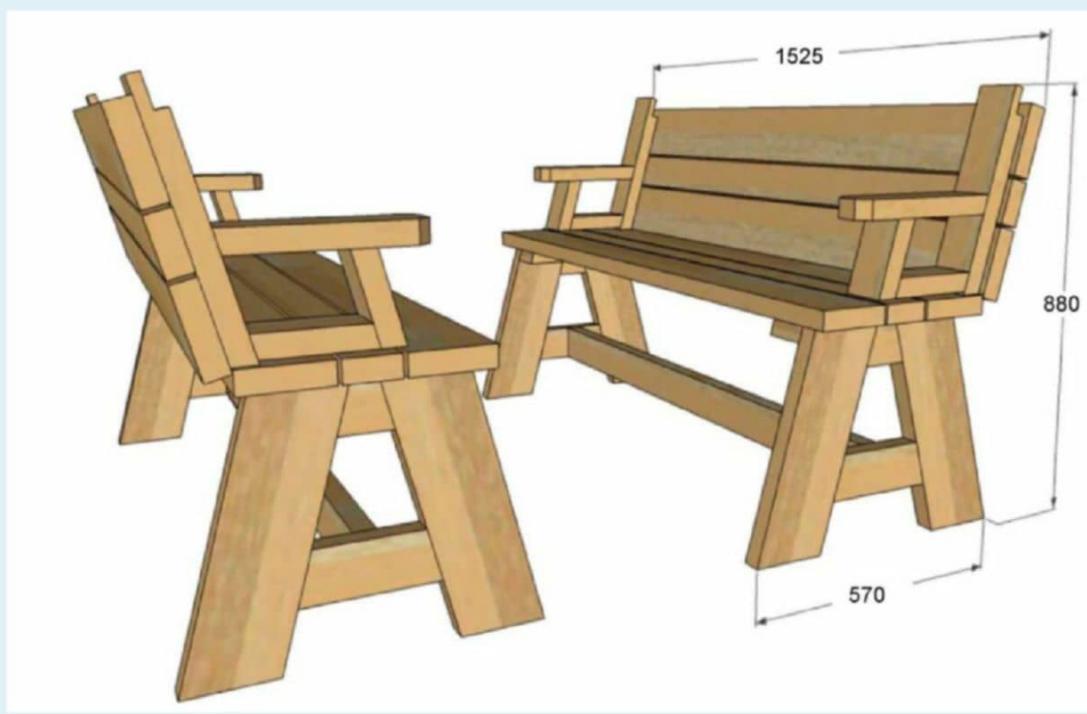
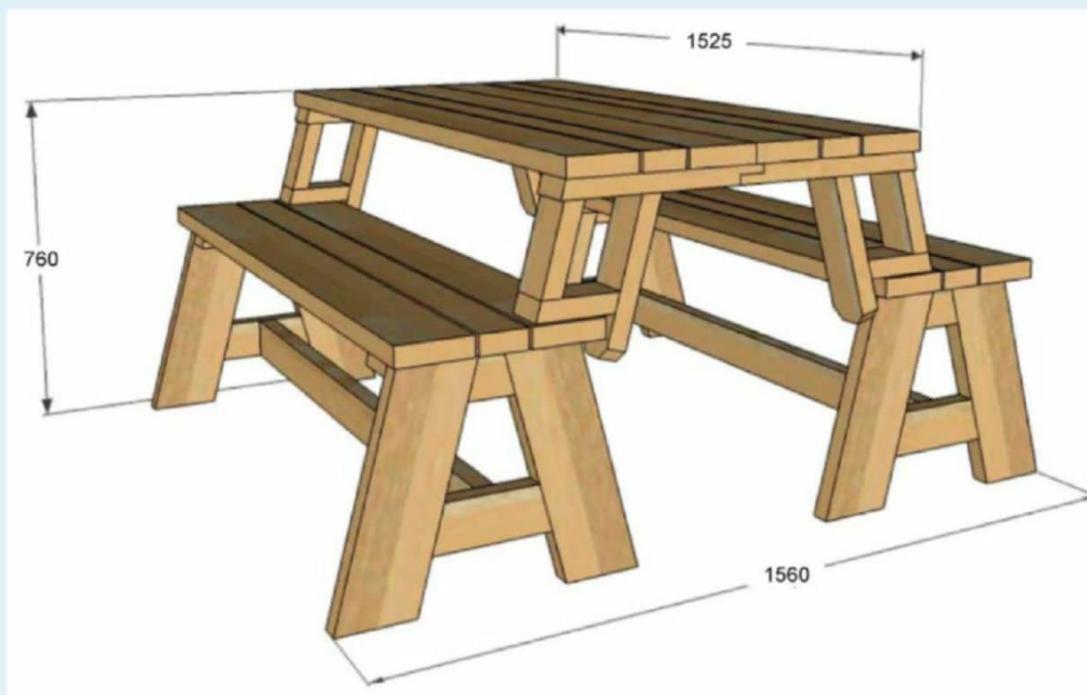
Mark approximately 250mm from the backside of the bench. Place the table top assembly on the bench, placing the end of the arm support at the 250mm mark. Mark the hinge attachment holes, pre-drill holes for the screws. Attach the hinges to the bench and arm supports. Make adjustments as necessary. Sand the picnic table/bench wood. Apply stain or paint to the table to protect the wood. Apply an outdoor polyurethane as desired.



7



8



BAD BISCUIT JOINTS

Common mistakes when using a biscuit joiner include: not planning biscuit placement, cutting slots inaccurately, using incorrect biscuit sizes, not applying enough glue, and failing to clamp the pieces properly. These errors can lead to weak joints, misaligned pieces, and visible defects.

MISTAKES and HOW to AVOID THEM:

1. Poor planning of biscuit placement

The problem: Not considering the biscuit location in relation to the edge or end of the workpiece can result in the biscuit being visible after machining, or even being cut into when creating a profile.

The solution: Plan ahead and position biscuits far enough from edges and ends to avoid exposure or cutting into them.

Example: When edge-joining boards, ensure biscuits are far enough from the edge to prevent them from being exposed after the joint is machined.

2. Inaccurate slot cutting

The problem: Misaligned joiner, improper depth settings, or using excessive force can lead to crooked or unsquare slots, compromising joint strength.

The solution: Ensure the joiner's fence is flat against the surface and the tool is perpendicular to the wood. Use test cuts on scrap wood to dial in the correct depth and fence settings.

Example: If the fence isn't properly aligned, the slots might be off-centre, causing the joint to be weak and misaligned.

3. Incorrect biscuit size

The problem: Using biscuits that are too large or too small can negatively impact the joint's strength and alignment.

The solution: Ensure you are using the correct size and type of biscuit for your project.

Example: Using a #20 biscuit when a #10 is specified can result in a loose or weak joint.

4. Inadequate glue application

The problem: Insufficient glue in the slots or on the biscuits will weaken the joint.

The solution: Apply a generous amount of glue to both the biscuit and the slot.

Example: Not applying enough glue can result in a joint that fails easily under stress.

5. Improper clamping

The problem: Insufficient clamping pressure or misalignment during clamping can prevent the joint from being properly secured.

The solution: Use clamps to apply even pressure and ensure the joint is aligned correctly while the glue dries.

Example: Over-tightening clamps can damage the wood, while under-tightening may not provide adequate pressure.

6. Tear out

The problem: The blade of the biscuit joiner can chip or tear out wood fibres, especially on the edges of the workpiece, preventing the boards from sitting flush when joined.

The solution: Use a sharp blade, make test cuts on scrap wood, and consider using a backer board to minimize tear out.

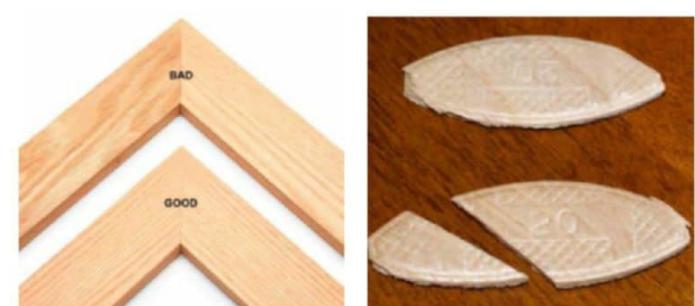
Example: If tear out occurs, you may need to carefully trim the affected areas with a sharp knife to ensure a flush fit.

7. Telegraphing

The problem: When the biscuit expands slightly after glue is applied, it can create a visible depression or "telegraph" through the surface of the wood.

The solution: Consider setting the biscuit joiner slightly deeper, about 10mm from the top of the board to the top of the biscuit, or avoid using glue on the biscuits, especially with thinner boards.

Example: If you are using thin boards, a biscuit that expands can cause a slight depression on the surface of the wood, visible after the joint is assembled.



The difference between a good and bad joint

Biscuits can break



UNTYING THE PROPERTY KNOT

Marriage and homeownership are two significant life milestones, and they're often closely linked. But as relationships evolve, circumstances can change and when two people who co-own a property decide to go their separate ways, it raises various financial and legal considerations.

"It's not something most people consider when they first take out a home loan, but with the average loan term spanning 20-years, jointly owned property often becomes a major factor when dividing assets and ensuring that ongoing financial responsibilities are handled fairly," says Gavin Lomberg, CEO of Ooba Home Loans.

Lomberg clarifies that while this scenario is commonly associated with separation and divorce, it may also be applicable to business partners, friends or even amicable partners who simply want to clarify their individual responsibilities.

Every Co-Ownership Agreement Needs a Formal Contract

"While asset division is usually addressed in a marriage con-

tract, individuals entering into joint ownership agreements (outside of marriage) should also seek legal advice and have a formal contract in place to safeguard their interests," advises Lomberg.

He recommends that the agreement include the following key elements:

- The shared objective behind purchasing the property.
- Provisions for what happens if one co-owner wishes to sell their share.
- How decisions related to the property's management will be made.
- Designation of responsibility for day-to-day property management.
- Each party's financial contribution.
- Terms regarding the home loan, including access to the bond.
- A well-defined exit strategy.

When it comes to a contractual agreement between a legally married couple, the type of marriage contract plays a key role

in determining how property is dealt with and who remains responsible for the home loan on the property. Lomberg unpacks the three types of marriage contracts, and their impact on property ownership, as follows:

1. In Community of Property

This is the default marital setting in South Africa when no ante nuptial contract is signed. All assets and debts acquired before and during the marriage are shared equally. Under this contract, both partners remain equally liable for the repayment of any outstanding home loan/s after divorce, regardless of who stays in the property.

2. Out of Community of Property (Without Accrual)

Each spouse retains ownership of the assets and liabilities they bring into - or accumulate - over the course of the marriage. If only one spouse is named as the legal owner of the property, they bear sole responsibility for the home loan after divorce. However, if both are listed as co-owners, they're jointly liable, even after the relationship ends.

3. Out of Community of Property (With Accrual)

This hybrid system protects assets acquired before the marriage but shares those gained during the marriage equally. If a home was purchased jointly after marriage, it's considered part of the shared estate, and both parties are responsible for the home loan.

"Depending on your marriage contract and the agreement that you have in place, you may choose to sell the property and split the profits accordingly, or alternatively, one co-owner may choose to buy the other co-owner out and have property solely transferred into their name," says Lomberg.

"Important to note is that in the case of Out of Community of Property (With Accrual) contracts, in a case of death or divorce, the spouse who has accrued less net worth in assets during the course of the marriage can claim against the spouse who has accrued the greater amount, for 50% of the difference."

In rare cases, one of the parties may in fact be entitled to the property (as per a contractual agreement or court order) and the property will need to be transferred into their name.

What Happens If You Choose Not to Sell

If one of the parties chooses not to sell but rather to retain the bonded property in their name, then the now solo applicant will need to apply for a 'Substitution of Debtor'. "When reapplying, the bank that holds the home loan will need to reassess



Gavin Lomberg,
CEO of Ooba Home Loans

the applicant by re-examining their affordability and checking their credit score prior to re-approving the home loan," explains Lomberg.

"If the bank is not confident that the applicant can manage the home loan independently, the request may be declined. Therefore, prior to applying, it's strongly advised that one makes use of a free online tool like the Ooba Bond Indicator to gain a clearer picture into their affordability."

If the home loan takeover is approved, the property must be legally transferred into the sole applicant's name. "This requires the assistance of a conveyance attorney to cancel the existing title deed, register a new one and update the records at the Deeds Office," explains Lomberg. "It's also worth noting that

while transfer duties may be waived if the transfer forms part of a divorce order, the applicant will still be responsible for legal fees and bond registration costs."

In amicable separations, Lomberg adds that some couples may want to continue co-owning the property if the market conditions aren't favourable or if neither party is in a position to enter into a buy-out.

What Happens If You Choose to Sell

If the decision is made to sell the property, both parties remain jointly liable for the home loan until it is fully settled. "The proceeds from the sale will first be used to settle the outstanding home loan, followed by costs such as the estate agent's commission, compliance certificates, legal fees and, in some cases, capital gains tax," explains Lomberg.

"After all the costs and debts are paid, the net proceeds are then divided according to the settlement agreement or court order."

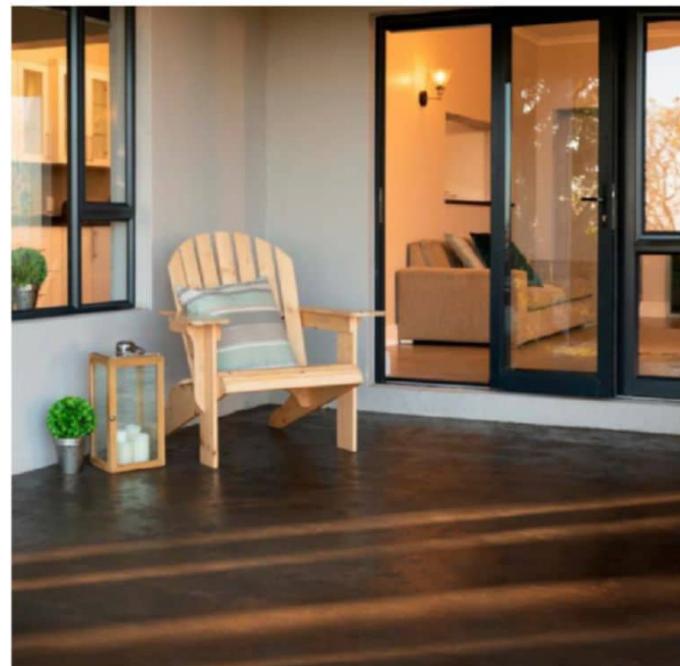
Regardless of the final decision, understanding how different marriage contracts and agreements affect homeownership will help navigate this process with more clarity and less conflict. "Whether you're entering into a marriage, co-owning a home with someone or facing a separation, expert advice is key to protecting your future," concludes Lomberg.

About ooba Home Loans

Imagine finding the perfect place to build your dreams, with a home loan that has the best interest rate for you. ooba Home Loans help you find the best home loan by exploring options with multiple banks, including yours. Best of all - it's free, and you can even get pre-approved online.

For more information visit www.ooba.co.za





Woodoc Water-Borne MARINE

Wood exposed to sea air and damp coastal conditions needs specialized protection. Constant exposure to damp, salt-laden air combined with fierce UV-radiation during the day and cool temperatures at night contribute to accelerated weathering of exposed wood. That is why Woodoc has a product to protect wood in these demanding conditions: Woodoc Water-Borne MARINE Wood Sealer - Exterior.

It is a clear, exterior water-borne sealer for application to exterior wooden surfaces like garage doors, window frames or patio furniture. Woodoc Water-Borne MARINE is suitable for application to all types of wood and is available in matt/gloss.

Woodoc Water-Borne MARINE creates a matt/gloss, clear finish and offers the following unique characteristics:

- Excellent protection against wind, water, pollution and salt spray.
- Quick-drying and easy to apply.
- Low odour on application.
- Suitable for all types of wood.
- Non-toxic once dry.
- Biodegrades at the end of its lifespan.
- Complete how-to-use instructions on label.

Durable, tough and flexible, it provides excellent UV-protection and water repellence. Like the other Woodoc Water-Borne Products, Woodoc Water-Borne MARINE is quick-drying, easy to apply and hardly has any odour on application. The product is non-toxic when dry. The high film-build characteristic ensures a smooth and attractive matt/gloss finish. It penetrates the wood, binds with it and lends a flexible yet strong and resistant surface finish.

Step-by-step guide

Woodoc Water-Borne MARINE is easy to apply :

Apply the product to bare, dry, clean and smooth wood. Stir well with a flat paddle before, as well as during application. The product should not be shaken or diluted. Apply three proper coats, saturating the wood on the first. Sand lightly with fine sandpaper between coats. Be careful not to sand down the coat. Do not sand after the last coat.

When it is time to do maintenance, sand the surface lightly with sandpaper to key it and to ensure proper binding between the old and new layers. Remove the dust and apply a new coat of Woodoc Water-Borne MARINE.

Woodoc Water-Borne MARINE is completely compatible with Woodoc's revolutionary Water-Borne Plus-Life PRIMER which will extend the life of the Water-Borne MARINE significantly. Apply one coat of the primer and three coats of the sealer.

Woodoc Colours (Wood Shades, Fashion Shades and Brights) may be added to the Woodoc Water-Borne MARINE to add some colour to your exterior wood.



Please send enquiries by e-mail to information@woodoc.com, or contact us on our Toll-Free Line 0800 411 200, or send a WhatsApp to 066 302 4720.



First store to open in Pretoria, South Africa.

MR. DIY EXPANDS GLOBAL FOOTPRINT

Mr D.I.Y., Southeast Asia's favourite home improvement store, has announced its entry into a new continent, Africa, with its first expansion into South Africa. The retailer will open its first store in the country in Pretoria at the end of June.

Mr D.I.Y., an iconic Malaysian retail brand, has grown from its first hardware store in 2005 to having nearly 5,000 stores across Asia and Europe. Today, it has a global footprint in Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, and Bangladesh, as well as Turkey, Spain, and Poland. South Africa becomes the 14th country in MR D.I.Y.'s global network and marks its latest continental expansion into Africa.

Anchored on its promise of offering everyday essentials in convenient locations and at "Always Low Prices", the retailer carries a broad range of more than 17,000 types of products, including hardware, household items, electrical goods, stationery, toys, and more, offering an enjoyable shopping experience for the whole family. Mr D.I.Y.'s first store in South Africa opened its doors at Menlyn Park Shopping Centre in the heart of Pretoria in June 2025.

Commenting on its entry into South Africa, Mr D.I.Y. South Africa's Head of Business Development Jamie Williams said, "We are thrilled to expand our global presence into South Africa, representing our first expansion into the African continent. South Africa is a dynamic and growing market, with increasing demand for affordable, high-quality household and lifestyle products. As consumers become more value-conscious, our business model, built on a broad product range, 'Always

Low Prices' promise, and a convenient shopping experience, is well-positioned to meet their needs. With a strong global presence, Mr D.I.Y. is known for delivering value, operational excellence, and a commitment to customers. We look forward to bringing this same commitment to South African shoppers and contributing to the country's evolving retail landscape."

Jamie also announced that MR D.I.Y. aims to have a total of six stores across the country by the end of 2025. "This expansion will provide customers with a wider range of value-driven options and generate new job opportunities, creating a lasting benefit on local economies, demonstrating our dedication to making a meaningful impact in every community we serve," said Jamie.



For more information about Mr D.I.Y. visit its website www.mrdiy.com/za and follow its social media on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

The Woodoc Way



Woodoc Water-Borne FLOOR Clear Matt was used to seal and protect this beautiful pine wood floor. This modern sealer for interior wooden floors is as tough and durable as it is good looking. Also available in Gloss.



Non-Yellowing



Low Odour



Fast Drying



Easy Cleanup



ough and Durable



Scan the code for full details about
Woodoc's Range of Floor Sealers
and "how-to-do" advice.