

The Home HANDYMAN

March/April 2026 • Vol 36 No 03



SA'S
ORIGINAL
DIY
MAGAZINE

**HOW TO:
INSULATE
YOUR HOME
LIKE A PRO**

- Building a heavy-duty workbench
- Heavy-duty security gate

ADVICE:
ADHESIVES, SEALANTS, AND
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

POWER TOOLS:
TOP 5 POWER SANDERS
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FROM THE WORKBENCH

For many homeowners, a house is far more than bricks and mortar. It's the place where families gather, where weekend projects begin in the garage or backyard, and where small improvements can make a meaningful difference to comfort, safety, and long-term value. This issue is dedicated to practical solutions and creative inspiration that help you care for your home while enjoying the satisfaction that comes from doing it yourself.

Our main feature this month focuses on a topic that affects nearly every household: insulation. With rising energy costs and increasingly unpredictable weather, learning how to insulate your home like a pro is one of the smartest upgrades you can make. In our step-by-step guide, we explain how proper ceiling insulation helps regulate indoor temperatures, reduce electricity use, and keep your home comfortable throughout the year. We also explore energy-saving window treatments and share a quick fix for another common problem - stopping drafts under doors. These simple improvements may seem small, but they can have a surprisingly big impact on comfort and efficiency.

Of course, successful DIY work also depends on using the right materials and tools. That's why this issue includes a clear guide to adhesives and sealants, explaining the important differences between them and when to use each. Paired with this is a practical tutorial on how to use a caulk gun properly, helping you achieve clean, durable seals that last.

For readers who enjoy working with power tools, our Powertool Spotlight reviews the Top 5 Power Sanders for DIY Enthusiasts. Sanding is often the step that determines whether a project looks average or truly professional. Choosing the right sander can save hours of effort while delivering smoother, more consistent results.

Hands-on builders will also find plenty of inspiration in this issue's projects. We show you how to build a heavy-duty workbench; an essential addition to any home workshop. A solid bench becomes the foundation for countless future projects. Alongside this, our DIY Series concludes with the final part of the Heavy-Duty Security Gate, covering installation, finishing, and maintenance.

Maintenance remains just as important as new projects. In this issue we look at routine microwave care, showing how simple cleaning habits can extend the lifespan of a kitchen essential. Our Maintenance section also walks you through basic vehicle servicing, including draining engine oil and replacing oil and air filters safely.

DIY isn't just about saving money; it's about building skills, solving problems, and taking pride in the spaces we live in.

Happy building.

Hannes Lindeque

Publisher



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2026

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Email: subs@homehandyman.co.za

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The Home Handyman is published bi-monthly (6 issues per annum) and is available in hard copy and in digital format

PUBLISHER: BB Publications (Pty) Ltd (2023/818376/07)
Address: #25 Leeuedacht, Welgedacht JR130, Dinokeng, Gauteng, 1000, RSA
Office number: 065.849.3264 (during office hours)
Website: www.homehandyman.co.za

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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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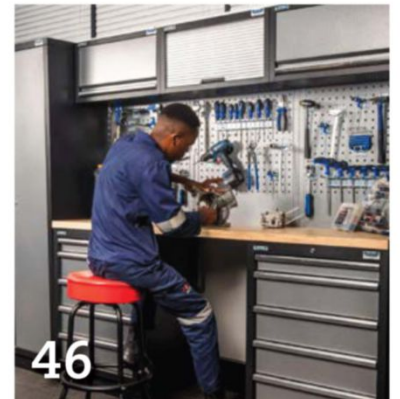
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A practical, homeowner-friendly guide to doing it right the first time.

HOW TO INSULATE YOUR CEILING LIKE A PRO

If your home feels like an oven in summer and an icebox in winter, the problem may be right above your head. Heat rises, and without proper ceiling insulation, it escapes in winter and pours in during summer. The result? Higher energy bills, uncomfortable rooms, and heating and cooling systems working overtime.

In many homes, the ceiling is the single largest surface area through which heat is lost or gained. Properly insulating it can dramatically reduce energy consumption, improve indoor comfort, and even extend the lifespan of your HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) system.

The good news is that ceiling insulation is one of the most achievable and cost-effective DIY upgrades you can tackle, if you understand the basics and avoid common pitfalls.

Understanding how insulation works

Before climbing into the roof space, it's worth understanding what insulation actually does.

Insulation slows down heat transfer. It doesn't create heat; it simply resists the flow of heat from warmer areas to cooler ones. In winter, it keeps warm air inside. In summer, it blocks radiant heat from the roof from entering your living space.

Insulation performance is measured by its R-value. The higher the R-value, the better the material resists heat flow. Choosing the correct R-value for your climate zone is critical. Too low, and you won't see meaningful benefits. Too high without proper ventilation, and you can create moisture problems.

Good insulation is not just about material, it's about correct installation.

Choosing the right insulation material

There are several common ceiling insulation options available to homeowners. Each has its strengths and ideal applications.

- **Fiberglass batts**

Fiberglass batts are pre-cut panels designed to fit between ceiling joists. They're affordable, widely available, and relatively easy to install. For most DIY homeowners, this is the go-to option.

They work best in accessible attic spaces with standard joist spacing. However, they must be installed carefully to avoid gaps and compression.

• **Blown-In (Loose-Fill) Insulation**

Blown-in insulation, often made from cellulose or fiberglass, is ideal for irregular spaces, hard-to-reach corners, and topping up existing insulation.

It requires a blowing machine, which can usually be rented. It provides excellent coverage, but must be installed to the correct depth to achieve the intended R-value.

• **Rigid Foam Boards**

Rigid foam boards offer high insulation value in thinner layers. They are commonly used in specialty applications or where space is limited.

They require precise cutting and sealing, making them slightly more advanced for DIY installation.

Preparing your attic the right way

Professional results start with preparation. First, inspect your attic thoroughly and look for:

- Signs of moisture or leaks
- Mould or damp wood
- Pest infestations
- Exposed electrical wiring
- Damaged ceiling boards

Never install insulation over a roof leak or damp area. Fix structural and moisture issues first.

Next, seal air leaks before insulating. This is one of the biggest mistakes DIY'ers make, adding insulation without sealing gaps.

Warm air can escape through:

- Light fixture openings
- Wiring penetrations
- Plumbing vents
- Access hatches

Use expanding foam or appropriate sealants to close these gaps.

Without air sealing, even the best insulation won't perform properly.



Blown-in insulation

Step-by-step guide

Once prep work is complete, installation becomes straightforward.

• **Installing Fibreglass batts**

Start by measuring the space between your ceiling joists. Most are spaced either 400 to 600mm apart. Purchase batts that match this spacing.

Wear protective clothing: gloves, long sleeves, eye protection, and a dust mask. Fibreglass fibres can irritate skin and lungs.

Place the batts gently between joists. They should fit snugly without being compressed. Never squash insulation to "make it fit." Compression reduces its R-value significantly.

Cut around obstacles like wiring and pipes. Do not place insulation tightly over recessed lights unless they are rated for insulation contact (IC-rated). Non-rated fixtures require clearance to prevent overheating.

If your existing insulation is thin but still in good condition, you can lay new batts perpendicular to the old layer to improve coverage and reduce thermal bridging.

Avoid leaving gaps. Even small uncovered areas can significantly reduce overall efficiency.

• **Installing Blown-In Insulation**

Blown-in insulation offers superior coverage but requires careful depth management.

Before blowing, install rulers or depth markers throughout the attic to monitor coverage thickness. This ensures consistent R-value performance.

Work methodically from the farthest corner toward the attic entrance. Keep the hose moving evenly to avoid mounds and thin spots.

Be cautious not to block soffit vents. These vents allow air to circulate and prevent moisture buildup. Use vent baffles if necessary to maintain airflow pathways.

Proper airflow is essential to prevent mould and roof damage.

• **Don't Forget the Access Hatch**

One of the most overlooked areas is the attic access hatch.

An un-insulated hatch acts like a thermal chimney. Attach rigid foam board insulation to the back of the hatch and install weather stripping around the frame to create a tight seal.

This small step can make a noticeable difference in comfort.

Common DIY mistakes to avoid

Even experienced homeowners make these errors:

- Installing insulation without air sealing first.
- Blocking ventilation pathways.
- Compressing batts to fit tight spaces.
- Ignoring safety around electrical wiring and fixtures.
- Using the wrong R-value for the climate zone.
- Leaving gaps around edges and corners.

Another frequent mistake is walking directly on drywall ceilings while working. Always step on joists or lay temporary boards to distribute weight.

Rushing the job is the fastest way to compromise results.

Moisture, vapour barriers and climate considerations

In colder climates, vapour barriers help prevent indoor moisture from condensing inside insulation layers. These are typically installed on the warm side of the insulation.

In warmer or humid climates, improper vapour barrier placement can trap moisture instead of preventing it.

If you're unsure about vapour barrier requirements in your region, consult local building codes before proceeding.

Safety first: Working in the attic

An attic is the space or room directly below the pitched roof of a house or building. Often referred to as a loft or garret, this area is located between the highest ceiling and the roof, commonly used for storage, housing HVAC systems, or converted into living space. Attic spaces can be dangerous.

Watch for:

- Low head clearance
- Exposed nails
- Extreme heat
- Electrical hazards

Work during cooler parts of the day, stay hydrated, and take regular breaks. Attic temperatures can exceed 49°C in summer.

Always turn off power to circuits near where you are working.



How to know you've done it right

Once completed, you should notice:

- More stable indoor temperatures
- Reduced drafts
- Lower heating and cooling costs
- Quieter interior rooms

A well-insulated ceiling creates consistent comfort throughout the home. Rooms that once felt drastically different in temperature should now feel balanced.

When to call a professional

While most ceiling insulation projects are DIY-friendly, you may want professional help if:

- The attic is difficult to access
- There is significant mould or moisture damage
- Electrical systems need upgrading
- Spray foam insulation is required

Spray foam applications, in particular, require specialized equipment and expertise.

Final thoughts: Invest once, benefit for years

Ceiling insulation is not a cosmetic upgrade, it's a long-term investment in comfort, efficiency, and savings.

Done correctly, it pays for itself through reduced energy costs and increased home value. Done poorly, it becomes a hidden problem that compromises comfort and durability. So, take the time to prepare properly, install carefully, follow best practices, and enjoy the difference every season.

Don't miss the article "Energy-saving window treatments" in this issue.



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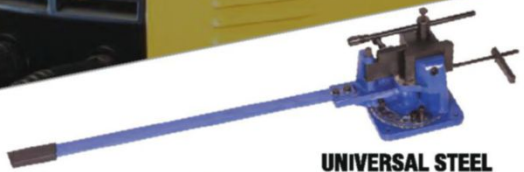
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Adhesives, sealants,
and what's the
difference?

YOU NEED TO KNOW

Walk into any hardware store in South Africa and you'll be met with a wall of tubes, cartridges and tubs all promising to "stick", "bond", "seal" or "fix". For the average homeowner or DIY enthusiast, it can be confusing. Is silicone the same as glue? Can you use adhesive instead of sealant? Why did that skirting board come loose after a few months?

Understanding the difference between adhesives and sealants (and knowing when to use each) can save you time, money and frustration. More importantly, it can mean the difference between a repair that lasts a season and one that lasts years.

What is an adhesive?

An adhesive is designed to bond two surfaces together. Its main job is strength. Whether you are fixing a loose tile, installing skirting boards, laminating timber panels or repairing a broken chair, you want the materials to stay firmly attached.

Adhesives work by creating a mechanical or chemical bond between surfaces. Some cure by drying (water evaporates), others by chemical reaction (two-part epoxies), and some by reacting with moisture in the air (polyurethane adhesives).

Common types you'll find locally include:

- Wood glue (PVA-based)
- Contact adhesive

- Epoxy adhesive
- Polyurethane construction adhesive
- Tile adhesive

Each has a specific purpose. A PVA wood glue works beautifully for indoor timber furniture but will fail outdoors in wet conditions unless it's rated for exterior use. A tile adhesive is formulated to support weight and resist moisture, but it won't remain flexible enough to seal movement joints.

The key point is simple: adhesives are about holding things together.

What is a sealant?

A sealant is designed to close gaps and prevent the passage of air, water, dust or insects. It is about flexibility and protection, not structural strength.

Think of the silicone bead around your bath, the seal around your window frame, or the joint between two sections of countertop. These areas move slightly due to temperature changes, humidity or structural settling. A sealant must stretch and compress without cracking.

Common sealants used in homes include:

- Silicone sealant (acetic or neutral cure)
- Acrylic sealant
- Polyurethane sealant
- Bituminous sealant for roofing
- Fire-rated sealants

Silicone is popular in bathrooms and kitchens because it



resists mould and water. Acrylic sealant is often used indoors for sealing cracks before painting, as it can be painted over once cured. Polyurethane sealants are tougher and used outdoors or in expansion joints.

The key difference is this: sealants fill gaps and stay flexible. They are not meant to carry load.

Why the difference matters

Using the wrong product can cause failure.

If you try to glue two heavy pieces of timber together using silicone, the bond will likely fail under load. Silicone is flexible and not designed to carry weight.

On the other hand, if you use a rigid adhesive to fill a joint between two materials that expand at different rates (for example, aluminium and brick) the joint may crack as temperatures change.

South African homes face unique conditions: high summer heat, coastal humidity, inland dry winters and occasional heavy storms. Materials expand and contract significantly. Choosing the correct product ensures durability in our climate.

Understanding strength vs flexibility

Adhesives are generally strong and rigid once cured. Sealants are generally flexible and elastic.

A simple way to think about it:

If you press two pieces of wood together and they must never move relative to each other, use an adhesive.

If you have a gap between two surfaces that will expand and contract, use a sealant.

There are hybrid products on the market (often labelled as “adhesive sealants”) that offer both bonding strength and flexibility. These are useful for tasks such as fixing mirrors, bonding metal brackets or sealing roof flashings. However, they are not always a perfect substitute for specialised products.

When in doubt, read the technical data sheet rather than relying on the marketing claims on the front of the tube.

Practical guidance for common DIY jobs

When installing skirting boards, a high-quality construction adhesive works well, especially when combined with mechanical fixing such as nails or screws. Using only silicone may result in movement over time.

For bathroom basins and baths, always use a sanitary-grade silicone sealant. Standard acrylic sealant will not withstand constant moisture exposure and may crack or grow mould.

If you are sealing hairline cracks in plaster before painting, an acrylic sealant is ideal because it can be painted over. Silicone cannot be painted and will repel paint, leaving visible patches.

For roof leaks around flashing or corrugated sheeting, a polyurethane or bituminous sealant rated for exterior use is more suitable than standard silicone.

Tile installation requires proper tile adhesive matched to the tile type and substrate. Large-format porcelain tiles need adhesives with higher bond strength and flexibility than small ceramic tiles.

Surface preparation: The hidden secret

Most failures are not caused by the wrong product, but are caused by poor preparation.

Surfaces must be clean, dry and free of dust, oil and loose material. On painted surfaces, ensure the paint is firmly bonded. On smooth materials like glass or metal, cleaning with methylated spirits can improve adhesion.

Applying adhesive to dusty brickwork or sealing over mould in a shower will almost guarantee failure.

Temperature also matters. Extremely hot surfaces can cause products to skin over too quickly. Very cold conditions slow curing times significantly. Always check the recommended application temperature range on the packaging.

Common mistakes to avoid

One of the most frequent errors is using too little product. A thin, starved bead of adhesive will not create a strong bond. Follow the manufacturer’s recommended bead size.

Another common mistake is not allowing proper curing time. Many adhesives may feel dry after a few hours but require 24 to 48 hours to reach full strength. Placing load on the bond too soon can weaken it permanently.

Homeowners also often smooth silicone with a dry finger, introducing contamination and uneven finishes. Instead, use a wet finger dipped in soapy water or a proper finishing tool to achieve a clean bead.

Mixing incompatible products can cause problems. Applying silicone over acrylic sealant or attempting to paint over silicone without a specialist primer leads to peeling and poor finish.

Finally, ignoring movement joints in tiled floors and large surfaces can cause cracking.



Adhesive alone cannot compensate for structural movement; proper joint design and flexible sealants are essential.

Indoor vs outdoor considerations

In much of South Africa, UV exposure is intense. Not all sealants and adhesives are UV stable. Some products yellow or become brittle when exposed to direct sunlight.

If you are sealing exterior joints or bonding materials outdoors, ensure the product is rated for UV resistance and weather exposure. Coastal homes also require products resistant to salt corrosion.

Interior products are generally not designed to withstand prolonged moisture, high temperatures or UV radiation.

Choosing the right product in store

When standing in the hardware aisle, start by asking yourself three questions:

1. Are you bonding two materials together permanently?
2. Are you filling a gap to prevent water or air from entering?
3. Will the joint move?

Once you answer those, you'll narrow your choice significantly.

Do not hesitate to read the back of the packaging carefully. Look for information on curing time, flexibility, paintability,

temperature resistance and suitability for interior or exterior use.

If the label does not clearly state the application you need, it is probably not the correct product.

The bottom line

Adhesives and sealants may look similar in packaging, but they serve different purposes.

Adhesives provide strength and structural bonding. Sealants provide flexibility and protection against the elements. Some hybrid products combine aspects of both, but understanding the fundamentals ensures you choose wisely.

For homeowners and DIY enthusiasts, the right choice means fewer repairs, better finishes and projects that stand up to our demanding climate.

The next time you reach for a tube, pause for a moment and ask: am I trying to stick something together, or am I trying to seal a gap? The answer will guide you to the right product, and a job well done.

Don't miss the article "How to use a caulk gun like a pro" in this issue.

Show off with your project! Send us pictures of your finished DIY project, together with a short write up, and you could be featured in our **Reader's Projects** section! Email your pictures to editorial@homehandyman.co.za and share your project with fellow DIY'ers!



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TileLoc – a smarter way to improve tile adhesion on challenging surfaces.

UPGRADING MADE EASY

When it comes to tiling projects, most DIY enthusiasts focus on choosing the right tiles, colours, and layout. Yet one of the most important factors behind a successful tile installation is something many homeowners rarely think about: surface preparation and adhesion.

Tiles need a strong bond to the surface beneath them. If that bond fails, tiles can loosen, crack, or lift over time. This becomes even more challenging when tiles must be installed onto smooth or non-porous surfaces such as off-shutter concrete, existing ceramic tiles, or vinyl flooring.

This is where TileLoc comes into play. TileLoc is a copolymer latex bonding and waterproofing aid developed specifically for use in the building industry. When added to tile adhesives or cement-based mixtures, it improves bonding strength while also adding valuable water-resistant properties.

For homeowners tackling bathroom renovations, kitchen upgrades, or patio improvements, understanding how TileLoc works can make the difference between a long-lasting installation and one that begins to fail within a few years.

What exactly is TileLoc?

TileLoc is a copolymer latex additive designed to enhance the performance of cement-based tile adhesives, screeds, and bonding mortars.

In simple terms, it acts as a bonding promoter and waterproofing enhancer. When mixed with suitable cement products, it helps the mixture adhere more effectively to difficult surfaces while reducing water penetration.

This is particularly useful when tiling over surfaces that are naturally smooth and non-absorbent. Examples include:

- Off-shutter concrete,

- Existing ceramic tiles,
- Vinyl flooring,
- Smooth cement surfaces, and
- Dense concrete substrates.

These surfaces often present adhesion challenges because traditional cement adhesives rely partly on surface absorption to achieve a strong bond. TileLoc improves this bonding process by introducing flexible polymer particles that strengthen the adhesive layer. The result is improved grip, better durability, and a reduced risk of tile failure.

Why surface bonding matters

The strength of any tiled surface depends on what lies underneath it. Even the most expensive tiles can fail if the adhesive cannot properly bond to the substrate.

Smooth surfaces are particularly problematic because they provide very little texture for the adhesive to grip onto. This can cause tiles to detach over time, especially in areas exposed to moisture, temperature changes, or movement. TileLoc helps overcome these issues by enhancing both mechanical and chemical bonding. The latex polymers form a flexible film within the adhesive mixture, helping it cling to surfaces that would otherwise be difficult to tile. This added flexibility also helps reduce the risk of cracking caused by slight structural movement.

Where TileLoc is most useful in the home

Many DIY renovators assume that old tiles must always be removed before installing new ones. While this is sometimes necessary, there are many cases where tiling over an existing surface is perfectly acceptable, provided the correct preparation and bonding agents are used.

TileLoc can be particularly useful in areas such as bathrooms and kitchens where existing tiles remain firmly bonded but the appearance is outdated. Instead of the messy and time-consuming task of removing the old tiles, homeowners can often tile directly over them using a properly prepared bonding system.

TileLoc is also useful for off-shutter concrete walls, which are common in modern construction. These surfaces are extremely smooth and can be difficult for standard adhesives to grip.

Outdoor areas can benefit as well. Patio surfaces and entertainment areas exposed to rain or cleaning water require adhesives that offer both bonding strength and water resistance.

Preparing the surface correctly

Even though TileLoc improves bonding performance, proper surface preparation remains essential. Skipping this step is one of the most common reasons tiling projects fail.

Start by thoroughly cleaning the surface. Dust, grease, wax, and soap residue can interfere with adhesion. Surfaces should be scrubbed and rinsed so that they are completely clean.

If you are tiling over existing ceramic tiles, ensure they are firmly attached to the wall or floor. Loose tiles must be removed and repaired before installation begins.

Glossy surfaces may also need light abrasion to improve mechanical grip. This can be done using sandpaper or a mechanical grinder to create a slightly roughened surface.

Cracks, holes, or uneven sections should be repaired with a suitable cement-based filler before tiling starts.

Once the surface is clean and stable, the TileLoc mixture can be applied as part of the adhesive or bonding slurry.

Mixing and application tips

TileLoc is typically mixed with cement or tile adhesive according to the manufacturer's instructions. The exact ratio may vary depending on the specific product being used, so always check the recommended mix guidelines.

A common approach is to mix TileLoc with cement to create a bonding slurry that is brushed onto the prepared surface before applying the tile adhesive. This slurry acts as a bonding bridge between the substrate and the adhesive layer.

Once applied, the tile adhesive can be spread using a notched trowel. The tile is then pressed firmly into place, ensuring full contact with the adhesive bed. Large-format tiles may require back-buttering, where a thin layer of adhesive is also applied to the back of the tile to ensure complete coverage.

Allow sufficient curing time before grouting or exposing the area to moisture.



TILELOC

TileLoc has been formulated to provide water resistance and a stronger bond to smooth tiles.

TileLoc works well with ceramic tiles and vinyls.



Common mistakes to avoid

While TileLoc improves bonding performance, it cannot compensate for poor installation practices. One common mistake is applying TileLoc to dirty or contaminated surfaces. Grease, dust, and cleaning chemicals create a barrier that prevents proper bonding.

Another frequent error is incorrect mixing ratios. Adding too much water or too little polymer can weaken the mixture and reduce its effectiveness.

DIY installers sometimes also try to tile over surfaces that are not structurally sound. Loose tiles, crumbling plaster, or unstable substrates must be repaired first.

Rushing the curing process is another problem. Adhesives and bonding slurries require time to fully develop their strength. Walking on newly tiled floors or exposing them to water too soon can compromise the bond.

Finally, remember that waterproofing and bonding are not the same thing. TileLoc improves water resistance, but areas such as showers may still require a dedicated waterproofing system beneath the tiles.



When to call a professional

While many tiling projects are suitable for DIY installation, certain situations may require professional assistance.

Large areas, structural cracks, significant moisture problems, or uneven substrates may need expert evaluation before tiling begins.

Professional tilers also have specialised tools and experience that help ensure perfect alignment, proper adhesive coverage, and long-term durability.

However, for many homeowners tackling kitchen splashbacks, bathroom walls, or patio upgrades, products like TileLoc provide valuable support that improves both bonding and performance.

A stronger foundation for successful tiling

Successful tiling is not just about choosing attractive tiles. It is about building a durable system where each layer (substrate, bonding agent, adhesive, and tile) works together.

TileLoc plays an important role in this system by improving adhesion and adding water resistance to cement-based materials.

For homeowners and DIY enthusiasts, understanding how and when to use bonding aids like TileLoc can help prevent costly failures while producing cleaner, longer-lasting results.

With careful preparation, the right materials, and a little patience, your next tiling project can deliver both professional quality and lasting durability.

Show off with your project! Send us pictures of your finished DIY project, together with a short write up, and you could be featured in our **Reader's Projects** section! Email your pictures to editorial@homehandyman.co.za and share your project with fellow DIY'ers!



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

Do it
yourself

DIY hacks

Picture hook

If you want to hang a picture, a simple cable clip can make the job safer and easier. Clip the cable clip onto a pen or pencil of the right diameter and use that to hold it in place while you tap in the nail. This keeps your fingers well clear of the hammer and helps you position the clip accurately - *Bob Gillies*



Remove pet hair from furniture

Put on a slightly damp rubber glove and wipe the fabric. The hair clings instantly.



Make your own air freshener

Mix baking soda with 10 drops of essential oil in a small jar. Cover with breathable fabric. Odours disappear naturally.



Clean a microwave effortlessly

Heat a bowl of water with lemon slices for 3 minutes. Steam loosens grime and wipe clean with a cloth.



Revive a dull shower head

Fill a zip-lock bag with vinegar, slip it over the shower head, and secure with a rubber band. Leave for 5 minutes, then rinse.



Keep paint cans clean

Wrap a rubber band around the can and wipe your brush on it.



Sharpen scissors quickly

Cut through folded aluminium foil several times. It restores the edge in seconds.



Stop slipping rugs

Use a bead of silicone on the underside.



Top 5 power sanders for DIY enthusiasts.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT SANDER

For many South African homeowners, few tools are as satisfying to use as a power sander. Whether you're restoring an old kiaat dining table, building garage shelves in Pretoria, or repainting bedroom cupboards, sanding is the stage that separates an average finish from a professional-looking result.

Yet choosing the right sander can be confusing. Walk into any hardware store and you'll find orbital sanders, belt sanders, detail sanders and more - each promising smooth results. The truth is that different sanders are designed for different tasks. Using the wrong one can waste time, damage your workpiece, and leave you frustrated.

Here are the five best types of power sanders every DIY enthusiast should know, and when to use them.

1. Random Orbital Sander

If there is one sander every homeowner should own, it's the random orbital sander. This is the all-rounder of the sanding world.

It uses a round sanding disc that spins and oscillates at the same time. This random motion prevents swirl marks and makes it ideal for general-purpose sanding. Whether you're preparing timber for varnish, smoothing filler repairs, or keying painted surfaces before recoating, this machine handles it well.

Most models use 125mm or 150mm discs. For DIY use, 125mm is more than sufficient and easier to control.

Practical tip: Let the machine do the work. Apply only light pressure and move slowly across the surface. Pressing too hard reduces the effectiveness of the sanding motion and can cause uneven spots.

Common mistake to avoid: Many DIY'ers keep the sander in one place



for too long. This creates dips in the timber. Keep it moving in slow, overlapping passes.

2. Belt Sander

When serious material removal is required, the belt sander is king. It uses a continuous loop of sandpaper that rotates between two rollers, making it extremely aggressive.

This is the tool you reach for when flattening warped timber, resizing a solid wooden door, or stripping heavy varnish from hardwood floors. It removes material quickly; sometimes too quickly.

Because of its power, the belt sander demands respect. It's not ideal for beginners unless used carefully.

Practical guidance: Always start the machine before it touches the surface, and keep it moving immediately. If you allow it to rest in one spot, it can gouge deep grooves in seconds.

Use coarse grit (60 to 80) for heavy removal and progressively move to finer grits (120 to 180) to refine the surface before switching to a random orbital sander for final smoothing.

Common mistake to avoid: Skipping grit stages. Jumping from 60 grit straight to 180 grit leaves visible scratches that show through paint or varnish.

3. Detail Sander

Corners, window frames, balustrades and intricate furniture pieces all have one thing in common: they're difficult to sand with larger tools.

The detail sander (often triangular in shape) is designed to reach tight areas where round or rectangular sanders cannot. It's perfect for refurbishing built-in cupboards, sanding between stair rails, or prepping skirting boards before painting.



It's not a heavy material removal tool. Think of it as a precision instrument rather than a workhorse.

Practical tip: Use light, controlled movements and let the pointed tip do the work in corners. Replace worn sanding sheets regularly; small pads wear out faster than larger discs.

Common mistake to avoid: Using a detail sander for large flat surfaces. It will take far too long and may leave uneven patches.



4. Sheet (Finishing) Sander

Often called a finishing sander, the sheet sander uses standard rectangular sandpaper sheets. It vibrates in small orbits and is less aggressive than a random orbital sander.

This tool shines when doing final finishing work on flat surfaces such as cupboard doors, shelves, and tabletops. Because it uses standard sheets, it's economical to operate.

For homeowners repainting interior doors or doing small furniture projects, this sander provides excellent control.

Practical guidance: Secure the sandpaper tightly and ensure it lies flat. Wrinkled paper causes uneven sanding and can tear during use.

Common mistake to avoid: Expecting it to remove thick layers of varnish or paint. It's a finishing tool, not a stripping machine.



5. Drywall (Wall) Sander

For homeowners tackling renovations, especially ceiling repairs or skimmed walls, the drywall sander is invaluable.

These machines usually have a long handle and a round sanding head designed for large vertical and overhead surfaces. Many models include dust extraction ports which are essential, for example; drywall dust spreads everywhere.

If you've ever tried sanding joint compound by hand over a large wall, you'll appreciate how much time and effort this tool saves.

Practical tip: Connect it to a vacuum extractor whenever possible. Even with built-in dust collection, fine particles can quickly fill a room.

Common mistake to avoid: Using too fine a grit too early. Start around 120 grit for joint compound and finish with 180 to 220 grit before painting.



Choosing the right sander for your project

The key to successful DIY sanding isn't owning every tool - it's choosing the right one for the job.

If you're building furniture or doing general woodworking, a random orbital sander is your best investment. If you frequently restore timber or resize doors, add a belt sander. For cabinetry and tight areas, a detail sander makes life easier. For finishing touches, a sheet sander offers precision. And for renovation projects, the drywall sander saves time and your shoulders.

Sanding smarter, not harder

Regardless of which machine you use, always follow a grit progression. Start coarse to remove material, then move gradually to finer grits to refine the surface. Skipping steps almost always leads to visible scratches under stain or paint.

Work in good lighting so imperfections are easy to spot. Always sand with the grain on solid wood during final passes, and remember that dust control is not just about cleanliness, it protects your lungs. Wear a proper dust mask and safety glasses.

In South Africa's often dry climate, static dust can accumulate quickly. Cleaning your workspace between grit changes prevents contamination that can scratch surfaces.

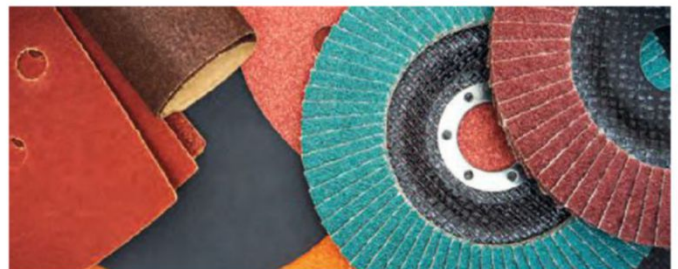
Final thoughts

A good power sander doesn't just save time, it improves results dramatically. Smooth surfaces allow paint to flow evenly, varnish to glow naturally, and joints to fit cleanly.

For the DIY enthusiast, sanding is not the most glamorous part of a project. But it is often the most important.

Choose the right tool, use it correctly, and respect the process. The finish you achieve will reflect the care you put in long before the first coat of paint or varnish ever touches the wood.

Show off with your project! Send us pictures of your finished DIY project, together with a short write up, and you could be featured in our **Reader's Projects** section! Email your pictures to editorial@homehandyman.co.za and share your project with fellow DIY'ers!



Keep this kitchen workhorse running safely, efficiently, and smelling fresh.

ROUTINE CARE FOR MICROWAVE OVENS

The microwave is one of the hardest-working appliances in any modern kitchen. From reheating last night's supper to softening butter in a hurry, it handles daily tasks with the push of a button. Yet, for something we rely on so heavily, it's often one of the most neglected appliances in the home.

Routine care for your microwave isn't complicated, and it doesn't require advanced DIY skills. With a little attention and a few simple habits, you can extend its lifespan, improve its efficiency, and prevent costly breakdowns. Whether you're a hands-on homeowner or someone who simply wants their kitchen to function smoothly, these practical tips will help you keep your microwave in top condition.

Why routine care matters

Microwaves may look simple from the outside, but inside they combine electrical components, a high-voltage system, and a magnetron that generates microwave energy to heat food. When spills, grease, and moisture build up, they can interfere with performance and even create safety risks.

A poorly maintained microwave may:

- Heat food unevenly
- Develop persistent odours
- Spark or arc inside the cavity
- Suffer premature component failure

Regular care prevents small issues from becoming expensive repairs. More importantly, it keeps your appliance safe to use.

Weekly cleaning: The Foundation of care

Routine cleaning is the single most important maintenance task.

Steam-clean the interior

The easiest and safest way to clean the inside is with steam. Place a microwave-safe bowl filled with water and a few slices of lemon (or a tablespoon of white vinegar) inside. Heat on high for three to five minutes until the water boils and steam coats the interior walls.

Leave the door closed for another five minutes. The steam loosens food splatters and grease, making them easy to wipe away with a soft cloth.

Avoid abrasive scouring pads or harsh chemical cleaners. These can scratch the interior coating, which may eventually lead to rust or arcing.

Clean the turntable and roller ring

Remove the glass turntable and wash it in warm, soapy water just like a dinner plate. Wipe down the roller ring and ensure no food debris is lodged underneath.

If the turntable doesn't rotate smoothly, uneven heating can result, and over time, strain on the motor may occur.

Wipe the door and seals

The door seal is critical for proper operation. Wipe the rubber gasket gently with a damp cloth to remove grease or crumbs. A damaged or dirty seal can prevent the door from closing properly and may cause the microwave to stop working.

Never slam the door. It stresses the latch mechanism and safety interlock switches — a common cause of microwave failure.

Monthly checks: Small inspections, big savings

Once a month, take a few minutes to inspect your microwave more closely.

Inspect the waveguide cover

Inside most microwaves is a small rectangular panel (usually cardboard-like or mica material) called the waveguide cover. Its job is to protect internal components from food splatter.

If you notice burn marks, heavy grease, or damage, it should be replaced. Fortunately, this is an inexpensive DIY part for many models, just ensure you buy the correct replacement for your specific unit.

Ignoring a damaged waveguide cover can lead to sparking and internal damage.

Check the power cord

Look for cracks, fraying, or loose plugs. If you notice any damage, stop using the microwave until the cord is replaced. Electrical issues should always be addressed promptly.

Avoid running the cord under rugs or pinching it behind cabinetry, as this can cause overheating.

Proper usage habits that prevent damage

Maintenance isn't only about cleaning, it's also about how you use the appliance.

Always cover your food

A microwave-safe cover prevents splatter, reduces cleaning frequency, and helps food heat more evenly. It's a simple habit that dramatically reduces buildup.

Never run it empty

Running a microwave without food inside can damage the magnetron. The energy needs something to absorb it. Without food or liquid, that energy reflects back into the unit, potentially causing internal damage.

Avoid metal and foil

While small amounts of smooth foil can sometimes be used carefully, most homeowners are better off avoiding metal entirely. Arcing caused by metal objects can damage the interior and create burn spots.

Use microwave-safe containers only

Some plastics warp or release harmful chemicals when heated. Glass, ceramic, and containers clearly marked microwave-safe are your best options.

Managing odours and stains

Even with regular cleaning, strong food smells (think fish, curry, or burnt popcorn) can linger.

After steam-cleaning, wipe the interior with a solution of baking soda and water to neutralize odours. Leaving a small open bowl of baking soda inside overnight also helps absorb smells.

For stubborn stains, avoid scraping aggressively. Instead, repeat the steam process and allow more soaking time.

Ventilation and exterior care

Over-the-range microwaves include ventilation systems that require attention.

Clean or replace filters

Grease filters underneath over-the-range units should be cleaned monthly in warm, soapy water. Charcoal filters (used for re-circulating air) typically need replacement every six to twelve months, depending on usage.

Clogged filters reduce airflow, strain the fan motor, and allow grease build-up inside the appliance.

Keep the exterior clean

Wipe the control panel with a lightly damp cloth. Avoid spraying cleaner directly onto buttons or electronic displays - moisture can seep inside and damage circuitry.

Stainless steel exteriors should be cleaned with a microfiber cloth, wiping in the direction of the grain to prevent streaking.

Common mistakes to avoid

Even well-meaning homeowners sometimes shorten the lifespan of their microwave unintentionally.

One of the biggest mistakes is ignoring small sparks. Occasional arcing from food splatter is often a sign the interior needs cleaning. If sparking continues after cleaning, the waveguide cover or interior paint may be compromised.

Another mistake is overloading the microwave. Heating large quantities for extended periods generates more heat internally. When cooking for longer durations, allow short cooling breaks.

Finally, many people neglect the importance of airflow. Ensure the vents are not blocked by kitchen items or cabinetry. Adequate ventilation prevents overheating.

Microwaves may not be glamorous appliances, but they're essential kitchen companions. Treat yours with the same routine attention you'd give a dishwasher or oven, and it will reward you with years of reliable service.

A few minutes of maintenance each week saves money, prevents frustration, and keeps your kitchen running smoothly. And that's something every homeowner (and every DIY enthusiast) can appreciate.

Miele redefines the holiday kitchen.

A CELEBRATION OF TASTE AND TECHNOLOGY

Blending German precision with South African warmth, Miele's latest cooking range transforms holiday entertaining into an art form – combining performance, sustainability and design excellence for celebrations as vibrant and diverse as the nation itself.

As the South African holiday season approaches, homes around the country fill with family, friends and feasting. Whether you're hosting a Christmas lunch, a Diwali celebration, a New Year's Eve braai, end-of-year holiday meals, or a family reunion under the summer sky, the kitchen is the heart of every celebration.

From braais to banquet dinners, the South African holiday seasons celebrates food, connection and style. Miele captures this spirit with a range of precision cooking appliances that unite innovation, sustainability and timeless design – helping South Africans create unforgettable holiday meals, quickly and effortlessly.

Holiday entertaining made easier

Entertaining in South Africa often means cooking for a crowd – from big Sunday roasts to tables overflowing with sides and desserts. Miele's ovens and steam ovens offer generous capacity, multi-level cooking and intuitive controls, allowing you to prepare multiple dishes simultaneously without compromising on flavour or texture.

"With our steam ovens, you can cook vegetables, fish or desserts on up to three levels without flavour transfer," says

Sicelo Champion, Head of Brand Activation and Own Retail for Miele South Africa. "From perfectly steamed snoek to soft, pillowy dombolo, these appliances bring out the best in local favourites while saving you time for what truly matters – the company."

The magic of MoisturePlus and TasteControl

Whether you're slow-roasting a leg of lamb for the family or keeping the Friday braai meat perfectly warm and juicy while everyone gathers around the fire, Miele's MoisturePlus technology ensures that every bite is tender and full of flavour.



The Wireless Food Probe guarantees precision by automatically monitoring temperature, while TasteControl ends the cooking process at just the right moment – keeping your roast moist and your pastries golden. “Let the oven take care of the details while you cheer for the Proteas’ summer Test series or unwind with a casual game of beach cricket before lunch is served.” adds Champion. “Holiday moments shouldn’t be spent in the kitchen.”

Speed meets precision with Miele induction

South Africans know that entertaining often moves between kitchen and patio – and Miele’s induction hobs are designed to match that rhythm. Whether you’re whipping up chakalaka, searing boerewors or preparing seafood for an outdoor lunch, induction cooking delivers rapid heat-up times, unmatched precision and a sleek, cool surface that’s safe around children and pets.

“Miele’s PowerFlex and TwinBooster functions enable flexible, high-speed heating, perfect when you’ve got a few pans going and friends already knocking at the door,” says Champion. “And with Con@ctivity 3.0, your extractor automatically adjusts to your cooking intensity, so the air stays clean and fresh while the festivities roll on.”

Efficiency that matters – especially in South Africa

In a country where energy efficiency is more than a buzzword, Miele’s hobs and ovens deliver uncompromising performance with intelligent power use – ideal for South Africans balancing rising energy costs and increasingly solar-powered lifestyles. By transferring heat directly to cookware rather than the surrounding air, Miele’s induction technology uses up to 30% less electricity than conventional electrical hobs.

“Efficiency is part of the Miele philosophy,” notes Champion. “It’s intelligent design that saves energy without compromising performance - something that’s increasingly important to South African households.”

Speaking of green credentials, every Miele appliance is tested to simulate 20 years of use, ensuring long-term reliability and reduced waste. This commitment to sustainability delivers more than peace of mind – it means fewer repairs, lower running costs and a smaller environmental footprint for the years ahead.

Practical features for real homes

Miele understands that holiday entertaining doesn’t end when the plates are cleared. With Pyrolytic self-cleaning ovens and PerfectClean non-stick interiors, there’s no need to spend Boxing Day scrubbing dishes. “Let the oven clean itself while you relax with your family or head out for a round of Sunday golf,” says Champion with a smile. “That’s the Miele way – more time for living.”

Induction hobs include child locks, pan detection and residual heat indicators for peace of mind in busy family kitchens. Automatic cooking programmes simplify even the most

complex recipes – from holiday gammon to golden malva pudding.

Design that complements South African living

From sleek apartments in Gauteng, to coastal homes from KZN through the Eastern and Western Cape, and open-plan homesteads inland, Miele appliances are designed to blend seamlessly into modern South African living spaces. Their clean lines and minimalist finishes bring quiet sophistication to any kitchen – whether you prefer bold contrasts or a soft, understated palette.

Available Obsidian Black, Pearl Beige and Clean Steel stainless steel finish – Miele’s built-in cooking range embodies timeless elegance and performance. “Form and function go hand in hand,” says Champion. “Every detail, from how it feels to how it looks, is engineered for beauty that lasts.”

A smarter, more joyful holiday season


Whether you’re hosting an alfresco braai, a formal dinner or a relaxed summer lunch, Miele helps you entertain with confidence and ease. “At Miele, we don’t just build appliances – we design experiences,” says Champion. “Because the holiday season is about people, laughter and connection, not just food.”

With appliances that unite German engineering and South African lifestyle, Miele transforms every kitchen into a space for celebration, creativity and comfort. When the guests arrive, the drinks are chilled and the meal is ready to serve, you’ll know your kitchen was made to keep up.



About Miele

Founded in 1899, Miele is a German family-owned company globally recognised for manufacturing premium domestic appliances for kitchen, laundry and floor care. With its brand promise Immer Besser (“Forever Better”), Miele continues to combine innovation, quality and sustainability. In South Africa, Miele appliances are built to perform, built to last and built for the way South Africans live – from braai culture to summer entertaining. Explore more at www.miele.co.za.



A first-time homeowner's guide to hiring contractors you can trust.

NO LANDLORD TO CALL

Buying your first home is a major milestone, but it also comes with a reality check: *there's no landlord to call anymore*. Every repair, upgrade, or renovation suddenly sits squarely on your shoulders. From leaky taps and faulty plug points to repainting rooms, installing new lighting, or redoing a bathroom or kitchen, new homeowners quickly discover just how long and technical the to-do list can become.

And while DIY suits those who enjoy it, many first-time buyers and young professionals simply don't have the time, tools, or

interest. Whether you're fixing everyday issues or planning a bigger makeover, choosing the right contractor becomes one of the most important decisions you'll make. As Orlando Luis, CEO of Brights Hardware, notes: "A good contractor doesn't just do the job - they help you make informed choices, avoid costly mistakes, and protect the investment you've made in your home."

Here are his practical tips to help first-time homeowners hire the right professionals, and avoid unnecessary stress.

1. Start with a clear plan & know when to call a specialist

Before contacting anyone, be clear on what you need: what must be fixed or changed, the style or materials you prefer, and your budget. Many new homeowners reach out too early, which makes accurate quoting difficult. As Luis explains, "Having a clear idea of the project helps you get realistic quotes and avoid misunderstandings. Even for small tasks, a little clarity goes a long way."

It's also important to know whether the job needs a specialist. A handyman is perfect for everyday fixes like tightening hinges, repairing minor leaks, repainting, or simple installations. But electrical work, major plumbing, waterproofing, tiling, structural changes, geysers, and full kitchen or bathroom renovations should always be handled by qualified professionals. "You don't want a quick fix that becomes a bigger problem later," says Luis. "The right contractor will tell you honestly whether a specialist is needed."

2. Ask around - Personal referrals are gold

One of the best ways to find reliable contractors is through people you trust. Friends, family, neighbours, and colleagues

often know who delivered great work, and who didn't. Referrals can save you from a lot of trial and error.

Bright's Hardware also plays a valuable role here. Their in-store teams speak to homeowners daily about repairs and renovations and see firsthand which contractors consistently provide solid results. Building on this insight, Bright's launched *Trade Plus+*, a regional directory of recommended service providers designed to help customers find trusted contractors in their area. It's especially useful for first-time homeowners who don't yet have a network to draw on.

3. Compare quotes so you know what's reasonable

Getting only one quote makes it difficult to know whether you're overpaying or underestimating the job. Aim for at least two or three quotes so you can compare timelines, pricing, materials, and experience. Comparing quotes gives you a realistic sense of the market and helps you make an informed decision.

Luis cautions against choosing solely on price. "Cheap quotes are tempting, but they often come with compromises - rushed work, cheaper materials, or unexpected extras later. And if a quote is very high, it should come with a clear explanation."

4. Check credentials and experience

When a project involves safety or structural integrity, experience matters. A reputable contractor should be able to show previous work, share references, and, where necessary, present insurance or certifications. This doesn't need to be formal; even a WhatsApp portfolio or photos of completed jobs are useful.

A professional understands that your home is a major investment, so it's perfectly reasonable to ask questions before committing.

5. Look at reviews and completed projects

Most contractors leave a digital footprint. Google reviews, Facebook pages, local WhatsApp groups, and community forums often reveal photos, ratings, and real feedback from past clients.

"Pay attention to workmanship, reliability, and how contractors respond to compliments or complaints," says Luis. "It tells you a lot about their professionalism."

Reviewing past projects also helps you check whether their style aligns with your vision.

6. Talk materials before the job starts

Confusion about materials is one of the most common sources of frustration in home projects. Discuss early on whether the contractor will supply materials or whether you'll purchase them yourself. Many homeowners prefer buying their own items, especially from a trusted retailer like Brights Hardware, where warranties and quality assurances are clear.

Talking about materials upfront ensures everyone has the same expectations before work begins.

7. Put agreements in writing

Even small jobs benefit from clear documentation. This doesn't require a formal contract, a detailed WhatsApp message or emailed quote will do, if it outlines the work, timelines, costs, materials, and any cleanup responsibilities.

"Written agreements help both you and the contractor stay on the same page and prevent misunderstandings later," says Luis.

Professionals welcome clear expectations.

8. Test with a small job first

If you're unsure about committing to a contractor for a major renovation, start with a small task such as repainting a room, installing a light fitting, or repairing a minor issue. This gives you a feel for their communication, punctuality, work quality, and attention to detail. A positive experience on a small job builds confidence for larger projects.

9. Trust your instinct

You can often tell early on whether a contractor is the right fit. If communication is slow, pricing feels vague, there's pressure to pay upfront, or something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts. You'll be working closely with this person, often in your home - comfort and trust matter.

As Luis says, "Your home is your biggest investment. Choose people who take pride in their craft and treat your project with the care it deserves."

10. Understand how to prepare your home for each season

Another important part of homeownership is learning how your home responds to changing seasons. Different regions have different climate patterns, and each one places its own demands on a home.

Cold, wet winters or summer rainstorms often reveal the first signs of leaks, damp patches, blocked gutters, and swollen doors. Warmer, drier months can cause paint to crack, timber to dry out, and outdoor areas to weather more quickly, while windy seasons put extra strain on roofs, boundary walls, and exterior fixtures. Understanding the seasonal rhythm of your area helps you spot problems early, prioritise repairs, and plan maintenance ahead of time, and it also helps you decide when to bring in a contractor, rather than waiting until a small issue becomes a major one.

Luis advises that it's also worth shopping proactively - buying waterproofing products before the rainy season or outdoor sealants before summer, for example - as retailers often run seasonal promotions. "Preparing early not only saves money but also helps ensure your home is ready before the weather shifts." And when you do need professional help, having a trusted contractor on hand means you can address weather-related issues quickly and correctly.

Final thoughts

Homeownership doesn't mean becoming a DIY expert. With careful research, honest conversations, and clear expectations, you'll find dependable contractors who can handle repairs, upgrades, and full renovations with confidence. The right professional makes all the difference, not just in the finished result, but in your peace of mind.

"Our team is always ready to guide homeowners who need support, whether you're looking for trusted service providers, planning a renovation, or navigating everyday repairs. And if you're looking for reliable contractors, pop into your nearest Brights store to learn more about our new Trade Plus+ service - a regional directory linking you with trusted service providers who can assist with virtually any home project, big or small."

Bright's Hardware stores are located in Boston, Blackheath, Langebaan, Mitchells Plain, Richmond Park, Platteklouf, Stonewood, Brackengate, and Sunningdale; with delivery available nationwide and express delivery in Cape Town.

Keep the cold out,
and your heat (and
money) in.

ENERGY-SAVING WINDOW TREATMENTS



Tools:

Depending on which treatments you choose, here are the basic materials and tools you're likely to use:

Cellular (Honeycomb) shades

- Pre-measured shade panels
- Mounting brackets and screws (included)
- Screwdriver or electric drill
- Tape measure
- Level

Optional: Shade lift clips, cordless installation tools

Insulated curtains / drapes

- Insulated curtain panels
- Curtain rod (extendable if needed)
- Finials or decorative hardware
- Wall anchors (for drywall)
- Measuring tape, pencil

Optional: Tiebacks or holdbacks for daytime sun management

Window film kits

- Insulation film kit (clear shrink film or frost film)
- Double-sided tape (included in most kits)

- Scissors
- Hairdryer (for shrink-to-fit types)
- Window cleaner & cloth

Weather stripping / draft sealing

- Foam weather stripping
- Silicone caulk
- Caulk gun
- Scissors / utility knife
- Rags for cleanup

Budget comparison:

For basic winter efficiency upgrades, weather stripping plus film is the most cost-effective. If aesthetics and long-term performance matter, insulated curtains or cellular shades offer far greater comfort.

Winter is coming and for many homeowners, that means higher energy bills, drafts around windows, and chilly rooms that refuse to stay warm. But what if a large portion of that lost heat isn't the furnace, furnace filter, or thermostat... but the windows themselves?

Windows may let in sunshine in summer, but in winter they can also be the biggest conduits for heat loss. Fortunately, with the right energy-saving window treatments, you can

dramatically reduce heat loss, cut energy costs, and make your home more comfortable, without a full window replacement.

This article demystifies how window treatments work, which options are most effective, how to install them properly, and how to avoid the common mistakes that cost homeowners money and comfort.



A draft stopper for uneven floors

Why window treatments matter in winter

Windows serve a dual purpose: they let light in and frame your view, but they're also one of the biggest weaknesses in the building envelope when it comes to thermal performance. Even with double-pane glass, old seals, single glazing, or just poorly fitting frames can let cold air creep through and warm air leak out.

Studies show that untreated windows can account for up to 30% of residential heat loss in winter. That's not just chilly air - that's money literally floating out the window.

Energy-saving window treatments don't just cover a window's surface. They act as thermal barriers, reducing heat transfer and helping maintain a stable indoor temperature.

That's the kind of performance that homeowners love, and DIY'ers can achieve if they understand the options and how to install them right.

How window treatments reduce heat loss

Windows lose heat three main ways:

1. **Radiation:** Warmth escapes through the glass.
2. **Convection:** Air circulates around gaps and poor seals.
3. **Conduction:** Heat moves directly through solid materials, like glass and frames.

Energy-saving treatments work by interrupting those heat flows - adding insulation, stopping air movement, and reflecting radiant heat back into the room.

You can think of them as thermal blankets for windows, the better the blanket, the less heat it lets go.

Types of energy-saving window treatments

While many homeowners think of curtains first, several options outperform traditional drapery when it comes to winter savings:

1. Cellular (Honeycomb)

Cellular shades are one of the most effective DIY options on the market. Their unique honeycomb design traps air within pockets, creating a layer of insulation that slows heat transfer.

They come in single, double, and even triple-cell designs - the more cells, the higher the insulating power.

Pros: High R-value, daylight options available, clean modern look.

Cons: Cost is higher than basic blinds or curtains.

Pro tip: Choose deeper cell shades for the north-facing windows - they lose the most heat.



Cellular shades' unique design traps air within pockets

2. Insulated curtains and drapes

These look like regular curtains but are lined with specialized thermal fabric. Insulated drapes add weight and block both drafts and radiant heat loss through the glass.

They're great for traditional décor and wide windows, and can be hung on existing rods in most cases.

Styling tip: Floor-length panels help trap air near the glass and prevent drafts at the bottom.



Insulated curtains

3. Window films

Window films are transparent sheets applied directly to the glass; either from the inside or outside. Some reflect radiant heat back into the room; others add a thin insulating barrier to slow heat transfer.

Pros: Affordable, nearly invisible, easy installation.

Cons: Lower impact on drafts compared to thicker treatments.

Window films are best when used with shades or curtains, not as a standalone treatment in colder climates.



Window films are transparent sheets

4. Draft proofing and weather stripping

Before investing in layered treatments, don't overlook the simplest, least expensive fix: sealing air leaks.

Drafts often come not from the glass itself, but from gaps between the window frame and the wall, worn weather strips, and poorly seated sashes.

Weather stripping, silicone caulk, and foam sealants (when applied correctly) can reduce drafts immediately.



Foam weather stripping

Installing treatments like a pro

Good window treatments are effective, but poor installation undermines performance.

Here are practical tips for getting it right:

- **Measure carefully**

Don't guess. Measure both width and height precisely, and account for trim, moulding, and any obstructions.

Shades that are even half an inch too narrow can let cold air spill in around the edges.

- **Seal first, treat second**

Always air-seal before installing treatments. Gap-filled and draft-sealed frames make any treatment more effective.

Pro tip: Use foam weather stripping for movable sashes and silicone caulk for stationary frame gaps.

- **Overlap where possible**

Curtains should overlap the sides of the window (and not stop at the edge of the frame) to block drafts, especially near the bottom.

- **Layer for performance**

In very cold areas, combining treatments, such as window film plus cellular shades, yields the best results.

Common mistakes to avoid

Even well-intentioned homeowners make the same errors again and again:

- **Mistake #1: Assuming all curtains are the same**

Just because drapes look heavy doesn't mean they're insulating. Without a thermal lining, they provide little winter performance.

- **Mistake #2: Ignoring ventilation needs**

Windows that are always closed

and sealed can trap moisture and lead to condensation. Use treatments that allow occasional ventilation without sacrificing insulation.

- **Mistake #3: Leaving gaps at the bottom**

Treatments that don't extend low enough let cold air swirl in under the glass; defeating the purpose of insulation.

- **Mistake #4: Not considering window orientation**

South- and west-facing windows gain solar heat in daytime - you may want lighter treatments there to capture passive warmth.

Beyond winter: All-season benefits

While we focus on winter savings, good window treatments pay off year-round. Cellular shades and insulated drapes also help block heat in summer, reducing cooling costs.

For families with children and pets, treatments also improve privacy, sun glare control, and room ambiance.

A final word before winter bites

Energy-saving window treatments offer one of the highest homeowner returns for the least effort and cost. They don't require structural renovation, and most can be installed without hiring a pro.

Whether you choose cellular shades, heavy thermal curtains, or combine several options, your goal is the same: create a barrier that slows heat loss and seals out cold drafts.

Once installed correctly, these treatments work quietly and efficiently all winter long, warmth without waste, cost savings without compromise.



The most effective energy-saving window treatments

A step-by-step installation guide

Materials & tools you'll need

Depending on which treatments you choose, here are the basic materials and tools you're likely to use:

Cellular (Honeycomb) shades

- Pre-measured shade panels
- Mounting brackets and screws (included)
- Screwdriver or electric drill
- Tape measure
- Level

Optional: Shade lift clips, cordless installation tools

Insulated curtains / drapes

- Insulated curtain panels
- Curtain rod (extendable if needed)
- Finials or decorative hardware
- Wall anchors (for drywall)
- Measuring tape, pencil

Optional: Tiebacks or holdbacks for daytime sun management

Window film kits

- Insulation film kit (clear shrink film or frost film)
- Double-sided tape (included in most kits)
- Scissors
- Hairdryer (for shrink-to-fit types)
- Window cleaner & cloth

Weather stripping / draft sealing

- Foam weather stripping
- Silicone caulk
- Caulk gun
- Scissors / utility knife
- Rags for cleanup

Budget comparison:

For basic winter efficiency upgrades, weather stripping plus film is the most cost-effective. If aesthetics and long-term performance matter, insulated curtains or cellular shades offer far greater comfort.

Step-by-step guides

1. Installing cellular shades

Energy performance depends not just on the material, but how snugly the shade fits the window. Here's how to install them correctly:

Step 1: Measure twice

Measure window width across the top, middle, and bottom. Note the narrowest width, shade kits need to fit within that dimension.

Measure height from top of the frame to the sill (inside mount) or to desired drop length (outside mount).

Step 2: Choose mount style

- **Inside mount:** Clean, minimal look; shade sits inside the window frame.
- **Outside mount:** Covering more area improves insulation and hides drafty edges.

Step 3: Install brackets

Mark bracket locations with a pencil, use a level to make sure they're even, and screw them in securely.

Use wall anchors if you're mounting into drywall rather than wood.

Step 4: Snap in shades

Most cellular shades simply snap into the brackets. Test that they raise and lower smoothly.

Quick tip: If shades feel loose or rattle, tighten screws and consider a liner or side channel to block edge air movement.

2. Hanging insulated curtains

Curtains are a bit more forgiving, but still require attention to detail:

Step 1: Select the right rod

A sturdy, adjustable curtain rod lets you mount high and wide, a technique that improves insulation by covering more wall area.

Step 2: Mount above the window frame

Install the rod 100 to 150mm above

the top of the window frame and up to 150mm wider on each side. This reduces light leaks and air ingress around the edges.

Step 3: Add curtain panels

Slide panels onto the rod or use clips/rings. For heavier insulated drapes, choose robust hardware.

Step 4: Let them hang low

Floor-length panels work best because they trap air at the bottom and reduce drafts.

3. Applying window insulation film

This is one of the most budget-friendly winter upgrades, and with the right method it delivers solid insulation.

Step 1: Clean the glass

Use a window cleaner and lint-free cloth. Dust and grease reduce film adhesion.

Step 2: Apply double-sided tape

Place the supplied tape around the window frame, keeping it close but not overlapping the glass edge.

Step 3: Mount the film

Stick the film to the taped frame, letting the excess hang loose.

Step 4: Shrink to fit

Use a hairdryer on low heat. As the film warms, it will pull taut and create a nearly invisible, sealed air barrier.

Pro tip: Take it slow because overheating causes wrinkles and bubbles.

4. Weather stripping and draft sealing

This is a quick win often overlooked by DIY'ers:

Step 1: Identify gaps

Close the window and feel for drafts with your hand. Small gaps will feel cooler.

Step 2: Foam weather stripping for sashes

Peel and stick foam tape along sashes where the window meets the frame. Choose the thickness that matches the gap.

Step 3: Silicone caulk for fixed frames

Caulk gaps between the interior trim and wall frame.

Don't use caulk where parts need to move (like sashes) - foam or V-strip works better there.

Common installation pitfalls and how to avoid them

• Not accounting for window operation

If a shade or curtain rubs awkwardly against a crank handle or sash, it will wear out quickly. Measure around handles and latches before installing.

• Choosing style over function

Heavy but beautiful drapes look great, but if they don't block drafts at the bottom or sides, their thermal performance is weak.

• Ignoring room use

In bedrooms, you may prefer blackout cellular shades. In living rooms, layered curtains over honeycomb can balance insulation with daylight.

• Skipping seasonal adjustments

Treatments aren't "set-and-forget." In winter, close them early and open them midday on sunny days to capture passive heat.

Whether your budget is limited, or you're planning a full upgrade with custom shades, the key to success is *sealing, fitting, and layering where appropriate.*



How to drain oil and replace oil & air filters.

BASIC HOME SERVICE



Tools:

To perform a safe and proper basic service at home, you'll need a small arsenal of basic tools:

- Good quality socket set (including the correct size for your oil drain plug)
- Adjustable spanner
- Oil filter wrench (sometimes specific to your vehicle)
- Jack and axle stands (or strong ramps)
- Torque wrench (optional but recommended)
- Funnel
- Drain pan (capacity \geq 4 to 5 litres)
- Work gloves
- Shop rags

Having the right tools makes the job easier and avoids stripped bolts or spills.

Materials:

You'll also need these consumables:

- The correct engine oil for your vehicle (check owner's manual - South Africa uses 15W-40 or 10W-30 in many petrol/diesel engines depending on age and climate)

- New oil filter specified for your car model
- New air filter specified for your car model
- A fresh washer for the drain plug (if required)
- A container to hold used oil (don't pour it down the drain!)

Always use filters and oil meeting OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) specs; cheap knock-offs can hurt engine life.

Why you should learn this skill

Oil is the lifeblood of your engine. As it circulates, it lubricates metal parts, reduces friction, cools hot components, and traps contaminants. Over time, oil breaks down and becomes less effective. Running old, dirty oil accelerates wear and can shorten the life of your engine.

The air filter keeps dust, dirt and debris from entering the engine. A clogged filter reduces power and fuel economy.

Together, fresh oil, a clean oil filter, and a good air filter keep your engine running smoothly, and a DIY service saves you money on workshop labour.

Service your own vehicle is one of the most empowering and cost-saving maintenance skills you can learn. Changing the oil, replacing the oil filter and swapping out the air filter are basic tasks you can safely do at home with a few simple tools and a bit of confidence.

This step-by-step guide explains everything in plain language, walks you through the process, highlights common mistakes to avoid, and gives you practical tips so your car stays healthy and dependable.

Who should do this at home

This guide is for everyday passenger vehicles (sedans, hatchbacks, small SUVs) with accessible drain plugs and filters. If you have a heavy-duty 4x4 with complex underbody panels or you're unsure where the components are, take your owner's manual with you or visit a workshop, there's no shame in seeking guidance.

Always work on level ground with the handbrake on, and never crawl under a car supported only by a jack - always use axle stands.



Use 15W-40 in many petrol/diesel engines depending on age and climate

Step-by-step guide

Step 1

Warm up the engine

Start the car and let it idle for 5 to 10 minutes. Warm oil flows better and drains more completely. Then switch off the engine and allow it to sit for a couple of minutes so it's warm but not scalding.

Note: Never work on a very hot engine and protect your skin.

Step 2

Position the vehicle safely

Park on a flat driveway or level ground. Engage the handbrake, place wheel chocks behind the rear wheels, and raise the front of the vehicle using a jack.

Then, secure the car on axle stands and never rely on the jack alone. Ramps are an alternative, but stands are safer when you need to reach under the car.

Step 3

Locate the oil drain plug

Locate the oil filler cap under the bonnet and remove it. Then crawl under the car with your drain pan. The oil pan is usually at the bottom of the engine block called the sump which has a hex bolt or plug.

Tip: Check your owner's manual for the exact location if you're unsure.

Place the drain pan under the plug - positioned to catch the oil once you loosen it.

Step 4

Remove the oil drain plug

Use the correct socket and turn the plug anti-clockwise*. If it's stubborn, apply steady, controlled force.

Oil will start to gush out once it breaks free and stand clear of the stream to avoid burns.

Let the oil drain completely. This may take several minutes until only slow drips remain.



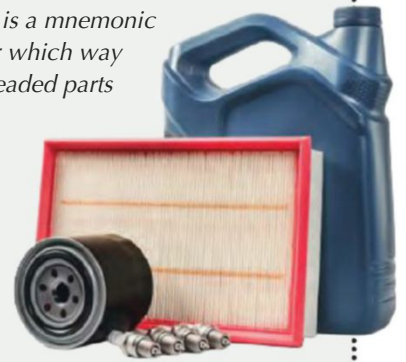
Routine oil changes are the single most important thing you can do

*"Righty-tighty-lefty-loosey" is a mnemonic for helping people remember which way to turn a screw and other threaded parts to tighten or loosen them.

Step 5

Remove the old oil filter

While oil drains, go back up top and locate the oil filter. Some cars have it on the side of the engine; others under the vehicle.



Use a filter wrench to loosen it anti-clockwise. Be prepared - old filters have oil trapped inside them.

Pull the old filter down and place it in the drain pan. Wipe the area clean.

Common mistake: Not placing the pan properly and spilling oil onto driveways or splash guards. Always double-check placement.

Step 6

Prepare the new oil filter

Before fitting the new filter, dip your finger in fresh oil and lightly coat the rubber seal on the new filter. This ensures a good seal and makes future removal easier.

Install the new filter by hand by screwing it clockwise until the seal contacts the base, then give it a quarter to half turn more.

Note: Do NOT over-tighten - hand-tight is sufficient.

Step 7

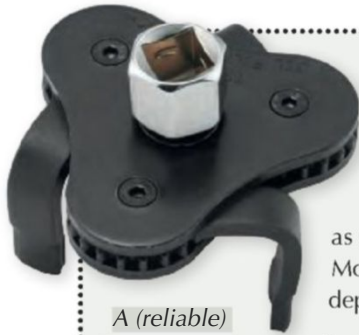
Refit the drain plug

Once the oil has slowed to a drip, replace the drain plug. If your vehicle specifies a new washer, fit it now.

Tighten snugly with a socket and be careful of over-tightening the drain plug as you can strip threads!



Dip your finger in fresh oil and lightly coat the rubber seal on the new filter



A (reliable) three jaw oil filter wrench

Step 8

Refill with fresh oil

Lower the vehicle safely back to the ground. Using a funnel, pour in the correct amount of fresh oil as specified in your owner's manual. Most small cars take 3.5 to 5 litres depending on engine size.

Replace the oil filler cap, wipe any spills, and start the engine briefly. Let it idle for a minute, then switch off and check the oil level with the dipstick. Add more if needed.

Step 9

Replace the air filter

Open the air filter housing which is usually clipped or bolted on. Remove the old filter and discard it responsibly.

Clean out any leaves or debris with a rag or vacuum and fit the new air filter, ensuring it sits correctly in the housing. Close and secure the cover.

A clogged air filter reduces performance and increases fuel consumption, so don't skip this step.



A dirty air filter (left) compared to a new filter (right)

Step 10

Clean up and dispose of waste oil properly

Collect all used oil and filters in their containers. In South Africa, many motor parts shops and service centres accept waste oil and filters for recycling. Do NOT pour oil down drains, onto the ground, or into refuse bins.

Clean your tools and workspace. Wipe up any spills immediately.

Practical tips and common mistakes to avoid

Never start the vehicle's engine without oil in the engine

Oil is necessary to prevent the internal moving engine parts (specifically the pistons, crankshaft, and bearings) to seize due to extreme heat, lack of oil lubrication, or water ingestion.

Never flush the vehicle engine with gasoline

Flushing a vehicle engine with gasoline or diesel is highly dangerous and can cause severe, immediate, or long-term engine damage.

Never tighten bolts by "feel" alone

If a drain plug feels like it's bottoming out before sealing, stop - you might be cross-threading it.

Don't skip warming the engine

Cold oil drains slowly and leaves more residue behind.

Use the correct grade of oil

Modern engines have tight tolerances - the wrong viscosity can reduce protection.

Don't discard old parts irresponsibly

Waste oil harms soil and water systems; recycle it.

Keep a spill kit on hand

Old rags and absorbent material save messy clean-ups.

Final Advice

Servicing your own car builds confidence and saves money, but safety comes first. Always use axle stands or ramps, work with care, and consult your vehicle's manual when in doubt.

With practice, what feels like a big job becomes a regular weekend task and your car rewards you with smooth operation and longer life.



Secure the car on axle stands and never rely on the jack alone

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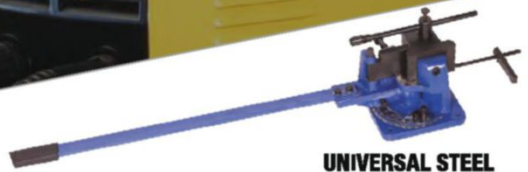
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Because of non-compliant electrical products.

CONSUMERS AT RISK

South Africa has no reliable national statistics on electrical product compliance, with independent industry testing consistently showing high failure rates, says voluntary electrical safety association, Safehouse. Most South Africans trust that if a product is being sold in a store, it must be safe because it is assumed that the retailer has vetted the product. Unfortunately, that isn't always true.

Many products available on our shelves fail to meet basic safety requirements. And while non-compliant electrical products are not always immediately dangerous or seen upfront to be dangerous, they can pose significant risks. More concerning is the systemic threat of South Africa's illicit electrical goods trade and the far-reaching consequences it has on consumer safety, economic stability and industrial sustainability.

Safehouse was founded in 2014 in response to ineffective regulation and the lack of robust market oversight under the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS), which relies primarily on administrative approvals and single

type-test reports. Without ongoing quality control, the risk of undetected non-compliance increases significantly, creating a system that can be exploited by certain importers and unscrupulous local manufacturers to sell a wide range of products under a single approval certificate. Compounding the problem is the NRCS's refusal to publicly disclose non-compliant products, a practice that leaves all consumers exposed to unnecessary risk.

The South Africa Illicit Economy 2.0 Report, launched by the Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade (TRACIT) in conjunction with Business Unity South Africa (Busa) earlier this year, states that South Africa's illicit trade is estimated at R100 billion, or about 1.5% of our GDP*. This figure barely captures the wider damage it inflicts on lawful manufacturers, retailers, employees, and tax revenue. And while the NRCS is making some effort to control non-compliant and illicit products across sectors including building materials, automotive components, chemicals and electrical products, its overall enforcement reaches less than 0.5% of South Africa's illicit trade.

“Robust processes are being put in place thanks to our members’ continued commitment to product safety and regulatory compliance.

Consumers can now make more informed and reliable choices by selecting products bearing the Safehouse mark and checking the Safehouse website to verify suppliers and businesses that are accredited members,” says Safehouse’s Technical Lead and Chairperson, Connie Jonker.

According to South African civil society organisation, Tax Justice South Africa, the influx of cheap, non-compliant electrical products into South Africa, many entering through porous borders or online channels, poses serious risks to consumer safety and local industry, with surveys showing that nearly 80% of electro-technical companies are highly concerned about this growing problem.

Jonker says that no one can determine compliance through visual inspection alone. He says that tests, which can cost several thousand rand each, involve the assessment of dimensions, flammability of materials, insulation, and tripping currents of circuit breakers. These can only be conducted in proper laboratories. “Even experienced people cannot reliably identify a compliant product on a shelf.”

Connie Jonker, part of Safehouse’s management team who brings over 50 years’ electrical industry experience to the organisation, says that the compliance situation in South Africa is a disaster. “A lot of non-compliant products are entering the country without proper control. We can only advise, we cannot force products off shelves. We send test results to companies and urge them to fix issues, and if not, we report to the NRCS. But not much happens after that. It is also virtually impossible to track what action, if any, the NRCS takes on any compliance issues raised,” he says.

“Different products carry different risks. If a circuit breaker doesn’t trip when needed, you could have a fire or an electrical shock. Other issues, such as incorrect marking, may not be immediately dangerous but can lead to products being used incorrectly,” says Jonker. “Buying very cheap products increases the risk of serious non-compliance”, and the consumer must be aware that buying cheap poses its own risks even when done by a third party and signed off via CoC.

The accountability for the safety of electrical products being sold in South Africa also lies with the retailers, who Safehouse says have a fundamental responsibility to protect consumers by carefully verifying test reports and Letters of Authority (LOAs) before listing products.

“Retailers need to understand exactly what they are selling, and act as the first line of defense against unsafe or non-compliant goods,” says O’Leary. “Too often, retailers rely blindly on documentation that should be rigorously scrutinized, particularly when prices seem too good to be true.”

As a result, Safehouse is urging both consumers and retailers to learn more about their mission to remove nefarious suppliers

of unsafe electrical products and services and to eradicate dangerous products from the market. They also want to make electrical safety information understandable and accessible.

While many compliant products are still updating their packaging, consumers can start identifying trusted items by the Safehouse mark on electrical appliances and other products. Consumers can also visit the Safehouse website to see which companies have committed to producing compliant products and protecting lives and livelihoods across South Africa.

Safehouse, which operates on a peer-review model with members funding laboratory testing and committing to a strict code of conduct, has become the go-to platform to support ethical compliance, conduct credible independent testing, and encourage higher standards across the sector. The association wants to partner with authorities, not replace them, by providing technical insight and evidence-based recommendations.

“You can’t see electrical safety with the naked eye. Two products may look identical on a shelf, yet one can meet every requirement while the other fails critical safety tests. That’s why ongoing compliance testing matters, and why consumers and retailers need a way to know who is doing things properly,” says Jonker.

“This is a sector where safety should never be optional. A more informed marketplace, from sales floors to boardrooms, will drive demand for compliant products and improve national safety standards,” he says.

** Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the total monetary or market value of all finished goods and services produced within a country’s borders in a specific time period (typically quarterly or annually). It includes all private and public consumption, government outlays, investments, and exports minus imports, however it does not account for the underground economy, non-market production (e.g., unpaid housework), or overall well-being. The GDP index serves as a comprehensive scorecard of a given country’s economic health and size.*

For more information, go to www.safehousesa.co.za



Reinforcing and assembling for strength.



HEAVY-DUTY SECURITY GATE

In the previous sections, you built the foundation of your gate: the solid frame, bracing, and infill that make it tough enough for South African conditions. Now comes the final phase namely installation, finishing, and maintenance. This stage transforms your hard work into a fully functional, weatherproof, and crime-resistant security barrier that will serve you for decades.

South Africans know too well that a gate isn't just a piece of metal - it's your first line of defence. A properly installed and well-maintained security gate doesn't just deter intruders; it also enhances your property's appearance and peace of mind.

Step-by-step guide

Step 1

Installing the hinges

Strong hinges are critical to a gate that both swings smoothly and resists attack. Poor hinge alignment is one of the most common causes of gate failure, so precision matters here.

- a. **Mark the hinge positions:** Measure and mark on the post and gate frame where the hinges will attach. The top hinge should sit roughly 150mm from the top of the gate, and the bottom hinge about 150mm from the bottom. If your gate is particularly

heavy or wide, add a third hinge in the centre for extra support.

- b. **Clean the surfaces:** Grind away any primer, paint, or rust where you'll weld the hinges - bare, clean metal ensures a strong bond.



Strong hinges are critical

- c. **Align carefully:** Use clamps to hold the gate in its correct position between the posts. Leave a 5mm gap on the latch side and about 5mm under the gate for ground clearance.
- d. **Tack-weld the hinges:** With the gate held square and level, tack the hinges in place. Test-swing the gate to check for smooth movement and alignment.
- e. **Full weld:** Once satisfied, run full weld beads around each hinge. Work carefully to avoid heat distortion.

If you're using bolt-on hinges instead of weld-on types, drill matching holes through the posts and gate frame. Use high-tensile bolts and lock nuts, then weld over the nuts on the inside to prevent tampering.

Tip: For extra security, weld small anti-lift tabs above and below the hinge barrels - these stop thieves from lifting the gate off its hinges.

Step 2

Hanging and adjusting the gate

With your hinges fixed, test the gate's swing. It should open and close smoothly without scraping the ground or binding at any point.

- a. **Use shims for fine-tuning:** If the gate rubs, insert thin metal shims behind the hinge plates to adjust alignment.
- b. **Check the level:** The top rail of the gate should be perfectly horizontal. If it dips, adjust the hinge positions slightly until it's even.
- c. **Lubricate hinges:** Apply a light layer of grease or multipurpose lubricant



A high-security gate lock

to the hinge pins. This prevents squeaking and reduces wear.

A well-aligned gate feels solid and swings easily, giving a sense of quality craftsmanship, and more importantly, reliability under pressure.

Step 3

Installing the lock and latch

The locking system is the heart of your security gate. In high-crime areas, a standard latch or simple padlock isn't enough. A dual-cylinder deadbolt or high-security gate lock provides far better protection.

- a. **Position the lock:** The lock should sit at a comfortable height, about 1.2m to 1.4m from the ground. Mark where the latch or bolt will meet the post.
- b. **Drill the openings:** Use a metal drill bit sized for your lock's components. Take care not to weaken the tubing with oversized holes.
- c. **Fit and test:** Install the lock mechanism, insert the bolt, and ensure it slides smoothly into the latch plate or strike box on the post.
- d. **Add reinforcement:** To prevent prying attacks, weld a small 5mm steel plate around the latch area, this spreads force and makes it nearly impossible to bend or break the locking point.
- e. **Install a ground anchor (optional):** For swing gates that open outward, a locking ground anchor adds another layer of protection. Once closed, the



Choose anti-tamper bolts where possible

gate can be pinned or locked to the ground for complete immobilisation.

For an extra touch of professionalism, install a latch cover or shield over the locking area. This prevents tampering and makes your gate look neat and finished.

Step 4

Protecting the hardware

Criminals often target the gate's mounting hardware rather than the lock itself. Bolts or screws that can be undone from the outside are weak points.

To counter this:

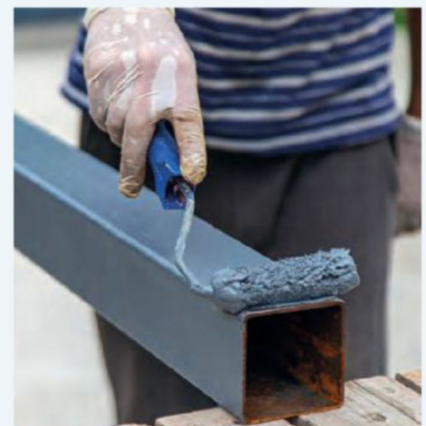
- Use threaded rods that pass through the post and gate frame completely, with nuts welded on the inside.
- Weld small plates over nut ends so they cannot be loosened.
- Choose anti-tamper bolts where possible.

This step may seem small, but it's crucial because hardened criminals look for the easiest access point, and hidden, welded hardware removes that opportunity entirely.

Step 5

Applying the finish

Now that the metalwork is done, it's time to protect your gate from the elements. South Africa's weather can be brutal, especially coastal salt air, summer heat, and Highveld thunderstorms all accelerate corrosion.



Proper finishing ensures your hard work doesn't rust away.

- a. **Clean thoroughly:** Wipe the entire gate with acetone or a degreasing solvent to remove dust, oil, and metal residue.
- b. **Apply primer:** Use a rust-inhibiting metal primer. Two thin coats are better than one thick one. Allow full drying time between coats.
- c. **Paint with quality exterior metal paint:** Choose a weatherproof enamel or polyurethane paint designed for outdoor steel structures. Darker colours absorb more heat, so if the gate faces full sun, lighter shades will last longer.
- d. **Optional galvanising:** For coastal regions, a layer of cold galvanising compound beneath your paint adds superior protection against salt corrosion.

Let the paint cure fully before exposing the gate to rain or heavy use.

Step 6

Testing and final inspection

Before you declare the project complete, perform a thorough inspection.

- Open and close the gate repeatedly to confirm smooth operation.
- Lock and unlock the latch several times to ensure alignment.
- Check clearances on all sides.
- Inspect welds for cracks or pinholes that could trap moisture.

Fix any issues now rather than later because small adjustments made early will save major repairs down the road.

Step 7

Long-term maintenance

Even the best-built gate needs routine care to stay secure and rust-free. Make a habit of checking your gate at least twice a year; once before the rainy season and again before summer.

- a. **Lubricate hinges and locks:** Use silicone spray or graphite lubricant, not heavy grease, which attracts dust.
- b. **Inspect for rust:** Light surface rust can be sanded away and repainted before it spreads.
- c. **Tighten hardware:** Over time, bolts and welds can loosen slightly due to vibration. Tighten or re-weld where necessary.

- d. **Repaint every few years:** Exposure to UV rays and moisture gradually degrades paint. A quick touch-up keeps your gate looking new and protected.

For maximum longevity, consider applying a wax-based rust inhibitor to the hinges and latch area, especially if you live near the coast or in high-humidity regions.

Step 8

Security enhancements (Optional but recommended)

To further fortify your gate:

- Add spikes or finials to the top rail to discourage climbing.
- Install a secondary locking point midway up the frame for extra strength.
- Integrate with your home security system; a magnetic contact switch linked to your alarm alerts you if the gate is opened unexpectedly.
- Install motion sensor lights (and buzzers) above or near the gate. Light alone is often enough to deter unwanted visitors.

These additions cost little compared to their security value.

Safety reminder

Throughout this project, remember that working with steel, welders, and power tools involves risks. Always wear safety goggles, gloves, and sturdy footwear. Keep a fire extinguisher nearby when welding or grinding, and never work alone if possible. Safety isn't an afterthought - it's as vital as the gate itself.

The payoff: Strength, security, and pride

Once the final coat of paint dries and your lock clicks into place, take a moment to appreciate what you've built. You haven't just created a security gate, you've constructed a custom-engineered barrier that reflects your skill, determination, and care for your family's safety.

This DIY project saves thousands compared to commercial installation, and because it's built to your exact measurements and standards, it will fit better, last longer, and resist tampering more effectively than most store-bought models.

More importantly, every time that solid steel gate swings shut, you'll know it was built by your own hands; strong, precise, and ready to stand guard for years to come.

Show off with your project! Send us pictures of your finished DIY project, together with a short write up, and you could be featured in our **Reader's Projects** section! Email your pictures to editorial@homehandyman.co.za and share your project with fellow DIY'ers!





How to enjoy your break without worrying about break-ins.

WHEN CRIMINALS ARE ACTIVE



Wynand van Vuuren

The festive season is meant for celebration and relaxation, not stress. But, it comes with risks if you're not going to be home. Housebreakings remains the most common household crime, with around 1.5 million incidents reported to the SA Police Service between August 2024 and August 2025, and data from King Price Insurance shows that buildings and home contents claims spike

over the holiday period.

In the below, Wynand van Vuuren, client experience partner at King Price, shares tips on how to enjoy the festive season without stressing about what could go wrong.

Plan for the worst

Planning is key and security starts with the basics. Lock all your doors and windows, even those that aren't used often, and shut all your security gates, both internal and external. Alarms and electric fences can deter would-be intruders. As long as they're in proper working condition. Solar panels, gate motors, and gas bottles are the most-commonly stolen high-value items and should be secured or locked away.

Neighbourhood vigilance also plays a role. "Let trusted neighbours or your security company know if you're not going to be home for an extended period. Ask them to keep an eye on your property and do extra patrols if possible," Van Vuuren suggests. House and pet-sitters should have clear instructions and limited access to valuables. Creating the illusion that someone is home is another effective tactic, and timers for lights and televisions can make a house appear occupied.

And, while it's tempting to share holiday plans on social media, Van Vuuren cautions against it: "Announcing that you're away

could be sending an open invitation to criminals. Keep your travel plans private until you return."

Security at your destination

Theft of personal property is nearly as widespread as domestic break-ins, affecting 1.2 million South Africans in the same reporting period. Just as you would do at home, it's important to keep your handbag, phone, tablet, and things like expensive sunglasses, securely tucked away while you're on holiday. Make sure that you only book holiday accommodation with secure, off-street parking.

Protecting against floods and storms

Residents in the eastern parts of the country also face potential flood risks during the holiday period but, again, simple preventative measures can save the day. Van Vuuren recommends clearing gutters and downpipes of blockages, inspecting roofs for loose tiles or leaks, and ensuring proper drainage away from the house.

And, because some water damage is 'man-made', double check that your taps are closed, water connections are leak-free, and geyser is switched off.

Insurance is your essential safety net

While prevention is crucial, insurance helps ensure that you're financially protected if disaster strikes. "Check that your buildings, home contents, cars, and portable possessions are adequately insured," Van Vuuren says. Proactive communication with your insurer before going away can clarify cover limits and avoid surprises if you need to claim.

Ultimately, festive season security combines vigilance, preparation, and sensible risk management. "The holidays are a time to wind down, not worry. Proper security, home maintenance, and updated insurance all help to ensure peace of mind while you're away," Van Vuuren concludes.

5 creative projects to transform your home.

FRESH SEASON, FRESH HOME

It is a new season, and the perfect excuse to refresh your home. With just a few weekend projects, you can transform both indoor and outdoor spaces - making them more inviting and warm-weather entertaining.

"There's no better time to tackle projects that bring light, energy, and joy into the home," says Orlando Luis, CEO of

1. Create a vertical herb wall

Instead of cluttering your kitchen counter with pots, turn an unused wall or balcony corner into a living herb wall. It's a vibrant, space-saving way to add greenery while keeping fresh herbs at arm's reach for your spring cooking.

How to do it:

- Fix a pallet, shelving unit, or pegboard securely to a sunny wall.
- Attach small planters, empty tins (labels on or off), or old jars using brackets, hooks, or cable ties.
- Fill with soil and plant herbs of your choice.
- Add plant markers for a polished finish.

"People love this project because it's both decorative and practical—you get a feature wall and fresh flavour for your meals," says Luis. "Even a few small planters with basil, mint, or parsley can transform a kitchen corner."



Brights Hardware. "We find customers are looking for quick, impactful ideas they can do themselves - without spending a fortune or calling in a contractor. The key is choosing simple upgrades that don't take weeks of effort but still deliver that 'wow' factor."

Here are five easy projects to try this year:

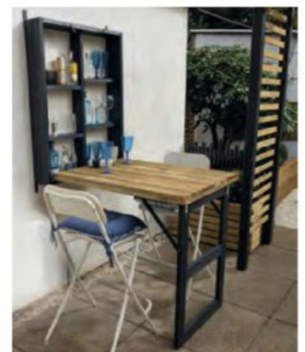
2. Build a fold-down balcony or garden bar

Outdoor entertaining calls for clever use of space. A simple fold-down bar attached to a wall or fence creates the perfect spot for evening drinks without cluttering the garden - or, if you live in an apartment, it works just as well on a balcony. Add hooks for glasses and shelves for mixers, and when you're done, fold it flat to save space. It's the ultimate weekend project to impress guests this season.

How to do it:

- Cut a treated timber board to size for the countertop.
- Fix it to a sturdy wall, balcony railing, or fence with heavy-duty hinges.
- Use a chain or folding bracket to support the counter when open.
- Add a shelf or hooks above for glasses and bottles.
- Sand and seal the wood to weatherproof it or paint it a colour of your choice.

"This is one of my favourite spring DIY ideas because it's so simple yet so effective," says Luis. "Whether you've got a garden, patio, or just a small balcony, a fold-down bar instantly creates an entertaining spot. With just a board, hinges, and some screws, you can build something that feels custom-made for your space."



3. Transform your bathroom into a spa nook

Bathrooms often get overlooked when it comes to DIY, but with a few clever touches you can turn yours into a spa-like retreat. The beauty of this idea is that it works no matter the size of your bathroom: in a compact space, a slim wall-mounted cabinet keeps things neat, while in a larger room you can upcycle a small free-standing unit or old cupboard. Painted in a calming shade and stocked with spa essentials, it becomes a personal sanctuary.

How to do it:

- Choose your base: a new or second-hand wall cabinet for smaller bathrooms, or a free-standing piece like a side table or cupboard for larger spaces.
- Sand, prime, and paint it in a calming colour pale grey, white, or pastel green are great spa tones.
- Line the shelves with decorative adhesive vinyl or waterproof paper for a clean finish.
- Stock with spa must-haves: candles, bath salts, scented oils, rolled towels.
- Add a battery-powered LED light or waterproof Bluetooth speaker to set the mood.

“Bathrooms don’t usually get much DIY attention, but small changes can make them feel luxurious,” says Luis. “Whether it’s a compact wall-mounted cabinet in a tiny flat or a free-standing piece in a bigger bathroom, creating a spa nook is affordable, quick, and makes everyday routines feel indulgent.”



4. Give interior doors a spring makeover

Doors are often overlooked, but refreshing them can instantly transform a room. A pop of seasonal colour, textured moulding, or new handles adds character and makes interiors feel updated without replacing the doors entirely.

How to do it:

- Lightly sand and wipe down the door.
- Apply stick-on moulding, beadboard, or wallpaper panels for detail.
- Prime and paint in a fresh colour such as sage green, pastel blue, or sunny yellow.
- Replace handles with a modern or statement design.

“Updating your doors is one of the most affordable ways to give

a whole room a lift,” says Luis. “A tin of paint and a new handle can completely change the look, and it’s a project you can finish in a single weekend. It’s those kinds of changes that make people fall back in love with their homes.”

5. Create a DIY cinema experience

Celebrate longer evenings with a cinema setup - whether in your garden, on your patio, or right in your living room. Outdoors, it’s a magical way to enjoy films under the stars; indoors, it’s the perfect way to turn an ordinary evening into a fun family night. All you need is a blank wall or a simple screen, a projector, and a little imagination.

How to do it:

- For outdoors: build a wooden frame or repurpose a flat surface like a garage wall, and stretch a clean white sheet or canvas drop cloth tightly across it.
- For indoors: choose a blank wall or hang a white sheet securely.
- Set up a projector a few metres away (or connect a laptop to a mini projector).
- Add string lights, lanterns, or fairy lights for ambience, as well as cosy throws and cushions for comfort and warmth.


“This one is always a hit with families,” says Luis. “You don’t need a big garden - or even a garden at all - to create the experience. Indoors, a blank wall works just as well, and outdoors, a simple frame and projector can make an evening feel special. Add snacks and drinks, as well as good company, and suddenly your space feels like a private cinema.”



Fresh season, fresh home

“These projects are achievable in a single weekend, but the results last all season,” says Luis. “Whether it’s enjoying fresh herbs, a colourful new doorway, or a starlit cinema evening, they show that DIY isn’t just about repairs - it’s about creating joy in your home.”

Brights Hardware stores are located in Boston, Blackheath, Langebaan, Mitchells Plain, Richmond Park, Platteklouf, Stonewood, Brackengate, and Sunningdale; with delivery available nationwide and express delivery in Cape Town.



How to use them like a pro.

CAULK GUNS

Few DIY tools are as simple (or as misunderstood) as the caulk gun. Whether you're sealing a bath, closing gaps around window frames or finishing off new skirting boards, knowing how to use a caulk gun properly can mean the difference between a clean, professional finish and a messy, frustrating job.

For many homeowners, applying sealant feels intimidating. The truth is, once you understand how the tool works and how to control it, it becomes one of the most useful skills in your DIY toolkit.

What does a caulk gun actually do?

A caulk gun is designed to dispense sealants or adhesive from a cartridge in a controlled manner. The trigger mechanism pushes a plunger forward, which in turn pushes the product out through the nozzle.

The gun itself doesn't determine the quality of your finish - your preparation, control and technique do.

Most DIY'ers will be working with standard 280ml or 300ml cartridges. These fit into a manual caulk gun, which is perfectly suitable for household jobs. Heavier-duty users may prefer a dripless model, which reduces unwanted oozing when you release the trigger.



#1: Preparation is everything

Before you even load the cartridge, inspect the area you're sealing.

The surface must be clean, dry and free of dust, loose paint, old silicone or grease. In bathrooms and kitchens, remove any mould completely. Applying fresh sealant over contamination will cause premature failure.

If you're replacing old silicone around a bath or basin, remove it fully using a scraper or utility knife. Any residue left behind will prevent the new sealant from bonding properly.

Masking tape can help you achieve straight, neat lines. Apply tape along both sides of the joint, leaving the exact width of the seal you want exposed. This small step makes a significant difference in the final result.

Loading the cartridge correctly

Pull the plunger rod fully back and place the cartridge into the frame of the caulk gun. Ensure the base of the cartridge sits firmly against the back of the gun.

#2: Cut the nozzle

This step is often done incorrectly.

Cut the nozzle at a 45-degree angle. The size of the opening determines how much product flows out. Start small - you can always enlarge the hole, but you cannot make it smaller.

For most household sealing jobs, an opening of about 3mm to 5mm is sufficient. Cutting too much off the nozzle is one of the most common beginner mistakes and leads to excessive product flow and messy joints.

After cutting the tip, insert a long nail or thin screwdriver into the nozzle to pierce the inner seal of the cartridge. Without piercing this seal, nothing will come out when you pull the trigger.

#3: Holding and positioning the gun

Hold the caulk gun at roughly a 45-degree angle to the joint. The angled nozzle should sit comfortably in the gap you are sealing.

There are two techniques: pushing and pulling.

Many professionals prefer pulling the gun towards themselves, allowing the nozzle to force the sealant into the joint. This often results in better penetration and fewer air gaps. Pushing can work too, but it sometimes leaves voids behind the bead.

Whichever method you use, keep your movement steady and consistent. Avoid stopping and starting unnecessarily.

#4: Applying the sealant smoothly

Gently squeeze the trigger and begin moving along the joint in one smooth motion. Apply consistent pressure. Squeezing too hard forces out too much product; squeezing too lightly causes uneven flow.

Work in manageable sections. For example, when sealing around a bath, complete one edge at a time rather than trying to rush the entire perimeter.

If you are sealing a wide gap, ensure the bead fully contacts both sides of the joint. The goal is adhesion to both surfaces, not just filling the middle.

If the trigger becomes difficult to squeeze, pause briefly rather than forcing it. Forcing the mechanism can cause sudden bursts of excess sealant.

When you reach the end of a run, release the pressure by pressing the release lever at the back of the gun. This prevents continued oozing.

#5: Smoothing and finishing

Immediately after applying the bead, smooth it before it begins to skin over.

Dip your finger in soapy water and gently run it along the bead with light, even pressure. This pushes the sealant into the joint and creates a smooth finish.

Alternatively, use a dedicated caulking tool for a more uniform profile.

Remove masking tape while the sealant is still wet. Pull it away carefully at a slight angle to avoid disturbing the bead.

Avoid repeatedly going over the same section. Overworking the sealant can create ridges and an uneven appearance.

#6: Curing time matters

Sealant may feel dry to the touch within an hour, but full curing can take 24 hours or longer depending on humidity and temperature.

In humid coastal regions, curing may happen faster. In dry inland areas, it may take longer.

Avoid exposing the joint to water until the sealant has fully cured. Using a shower too soon after resealing is one of the most common reasons for failure.

Always check the manufacturer's curing recommendations on the cartridge.

Common mistakes to avoid

Cutting the nozzle too wide is probably the most frequent error. Start small and test on a scrap surface if necessary.

Another mistake is applying sealant to damp surfaces. Even small amounts of trapped moisture can prevent proper adhesion.

Many DIY'ers also apply too much product, assuming more is better. Excess sealant doesn't increase performance - it simply creates more mess and waste.

Stopping halfway through a joint and returning later can create visible seams. Plan your work so each section is completed in one continuous pass.

Finally, failing to clean the nozzle after use can make future applications difficult. Wipe the tip clean and store the cartridge upright with a small nail or screw inserted into the opening to reduce air exposure.

When to replace the cartridge

If the sealant inside the nozzle has hardened or separated, it's best not to use it for critical work. Expired cartridges may not cure correctly.

Check the expiry date before purchasing, especially if the cartridge looks dusty or has been on the shelf for a long time.

Building confidence through practice

Like most DIY skills, mastering a caulk gun takes practice. Before tackling a visible area such as a bathroom renovation, practise on scrap material or in a less noticeable location.

Once you develop a steady hand and understand the flow of the product, sealing joints becomes quick and satisfying.

A properly applied bead not only improves appearance but also protects your home from moisture damage, draughts and pests.

With the right preparation, careful control and patience, you can achieve clean, professional results and no contractor required.

Don't miss the article "Adhesives, Sealants, and What's the Difference?" in this issue.



Seal the heart of the home

A timber floor built to withstand daily life

A wooden kitchen floor adds warmth and character to the heart of the home, but it also faces daily punishment from foot traffic, spills, chair movement and constant cleaning. Protecting it properly is essential. Woodoc Water-Borne FLOOR Interior Wood Sealer offers a durable, low-odour solution designed specifically for interior wooden floors, making it ideal for busy kitchen environments.

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Deep Sanding - The key to a professional finish

Preparation determines performance. If the floor has been previously sealed, painted or is unevenly worn, begin with a deep sand using an industrial floor sander. This removes old coatings, levels the surface and exposes clean, fresh timber.

Work progressively through sanding grits, finishing with a fine grit to achieve a smooth surface. Use an edge sander for corners and along kick plates to ensure a uniform result throughout the kitchen.

Once sanding is complete, vacuum thoroughly to remove all dust.

Step 2: Cleaning with methylated spirits

Even fine dust can affect adhesion. After vacuuming, wipe the floor with a clean, lint-free cloth lightly dampened with methylated spirits. This removes remaining dust and surface contaminants and evaporates quickly without raising the grain. Allow the floor to dry fully before applying the sealer.

Step 3: Applying Woodoc Water-Borne FLOOR Interior Wood Sealer

Stir the product gently - never shake. Application should always be done with a good-quality brush or floor applicator, working along the grain of the wood. Avoid rollers, which can introduce bubbles and uneven film build.

Apply thin, even coats, maintaining a consistent wet edge. Allow each coat to dry according to the manufacturer's instructions. Once dry, lightly abrade the surface with fine sandpaper to promote intercoat adhesion, then vacuum and wipe down again with methylated spirits.

Note: Do not sand after the third coat.

For a kitchen floor, a minimum of three coats is essential to ensure proper film build and long-term durability in this high-traffic area. For best results, always follow the application instructions printed on the product container. If in doubt, contact Woodoc Customer Service Toll-Free 0800 411 200, or on WhatsApp +27 66 302 4702 or email information@woodoc.com

The Result

When correctly prepared and sealed, a wooden kitchen floor retains its natural grain and warmth while gaining a tough, moisture-resistant protective layer. With careful sanding, meticulous cleaning and a minimum three-coat application using the right tools, Woodoc Water-Borne FLOOR delivers a finish that is both beautiful and built to withstand daily life in one of the busiest rooms in the home.



Enjoy the luxury of wooden floors

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




Tough and Durable

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

Woodoc Customer Care: For friendly, personal assistance and advice, phone Toll-Free 0800 411 200, during office hours. Visit www.woodoc.com Facebook Woodoc WhatsApp +27 66 302 4702



Stop drafts
under doors.

Quick Fix

There's nothing quite as frustrating as a persistent draft sneaking under your doors. That chill creeping across the floor in winter, or the hot gusts in summer, can make your home uncomfortable and push your energy bills up. Fortunately, fixing drafts is easier than many homeowners think, and with the right approach, you can seal your doors effectively without calling in a professional.

Why door drafts matter

Door drafts aren't just a nuisance, they affect your home's energy efficiency. Even a small gap of a few millimetres under a door can allow a steady stream of air to pass through. Over time, this airflow can make heating or cooling systems work harder, increasing electricity or gas bills. In addition, drafts can let in dust, insects, and noise.

The good news is that most door drafts can be solved quickly using inexpensive tools and materials, often in under an hour.

Identify the problem

Before tackling the draft, you need to pinpoint its source. Check for gaps by placing a thin strip of paper under the door and closing it. If you can pull the paper through easily, there's a noticeable gap. Alternatively, on a windy day, a candle or incense stick can help: hold it near the door bottom and watch the flame or smoke flicker, this will reveal airflow you can't see.

Door gaps usually fall into three categories:

1. **Small gaps (1 to 5mm):** Often found in well-maintained doors where minor shrinking or warping has occurred.
2. **Medium gaps (5 to 10mm):** Common in older doors or wooden doors exposed to seasonal expansion and contraction.
3. **Large gaps (10mm+):** May require more permanent solutions, such as door sweeps or threshold adjustments.

Quick DIY solutions

1. Draft excluder strips

One of the simplest fixes is a self-adhesive or rubber draft excluder strip. These are available at most hardware stores and can be cut to size for a snug fit. Clean the bottom edge of the door, peel the backing, and press the strip firmly in place.

Pro tip: “Make sure the strip makes contact with the floor evenly. Uneven application can leave small pockets for air to slip through.”



Rubber draft excluder strip

2. Adjustable thresholds

For larger gaps, an adjustable threshold can be fitted on the floor beneath the door. These allow you to fine-tune the height to seal the gap completely. Many thresholds also double as weather stripping, preventing water or dust from entering during storms.

Pro tip: If your door drags after installing a threshold, you may need to plane the bottom slightly. Always measure twice before cutting.



Adjustable threshold

3. Door sweeps

Door sweeps are durable solutions for medium to large gaps. They attach to the door's bottom edge and come in metal, rubber, or bristle varieties. Some are designed to brush along the floor, while others form a tight seal without touching the surface.

Installation is usually straightforward: measure the door width, cut the sweep to size, and screw or stick it in place. For wooden floors, a softer sweep may prevent scratches.

Common mistake: Avoid leaving screws too tight, which can bend the sweep and reduce effectiveness.



Door sweep

4. Temporary stop-gaps

When a permanent fix isn't possible immediately, temporary solutions like door draft snakes or rolled towels can help. Simply place them against the bottom of the door. While not visually elegant, they offer instant relief during particularly cold nights or hot afternoons.



Door draft snakes

Common pitfalls to avoid

- **Ignoring the floor type:** Carpets, tiles, and wooden floors all affect how much clearance you need. A sweep that's too low can drag and wear out quickly.
- **Over-tight sealing:** Pressing a rubber strip too firmly against the floor may cause the door to stick, making it hard to open and close.
- **Skipping regular maintenance:** Over time, strips and sweeps can wear out, warp, or peel. Inspect them periodically and replace as needed.

Extra tips for energy efficiency

- **Combine sealing with insulation:** Door draft fixes work best when windows and other leaks are addressed as well.
- **Use appropriate materials:** Silicone-based or rubber products are ideal for South Africa's variable climate. They remain flexible through seasonal temperature changes.
- **Check for uneven floors:** Sometimes the problem isn't the door, but the floor slope. Minor levelling may be required for a perfect seal.

Conclusion

Stopping drafts under doors doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. Whether you choose a simple strip, a sturdy door sweep, or an adjustable threshold, the key is measuring accurately and selecting materials suited to your door type. Regular inspection and maintenance will keep your doors sealed and your home comfortable year-round.

By taking these quick DIY steps, homeowners can reduce energy bills, protect interiors, and enjoy a more pleasant indoor climate without the stress of a big renovation.

Don't miss the article **Energy-Saving Window Treatments** in this issue.



A practical guide to building a heavy-duty workbench.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT WORKBENCH



Tools:

- Circular saw or mitre saw
- Power drill/driver
- 3mm and 5mm drill bits
- Countersink bit
- Clamps (minimum two 600mm clamps)
- Measuring tape
- Carpenter's square
- Spirit level
- Orbital sander
- Safety glasses and hearing protection

Materials:

- Structural pine 38 x 89mm
- Exterior or structural plywood (18mm)
- Wood glue (exterior grade)
- Optional hardwood edging (19 x 40mm)

Hardware & Supplies:

- 100mm wood screws
- 65mm wood screws
- 50mm wood screws
- 8mm coach bolts with washers and nuts (optional for extra rigidity)
- Wood filler
- Sandpaper (80, 120, 220 grit)
- Wood sealer or polyurethane

Common planning mistakes to avoid

- Do not underestimate the height. A mismatch of even 50mm can cause back strain over long sessions.
- Avoid thin tops; anything less than 36mm total thickness will flex over time.
- Never rely only on screws without glue, the structure will loosen within a year of heavy use.

CUT LIST AND PARTS

Frame (38 x 89mm pine)

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| 4 x Legs | 860mm |
| 4 x Long top rails | 1720mm |
| 4 x Short top rails | 662mm |
| 4 x Long lower rails | 1720mm |
| 4 x Short lower rails | 662mm |
| 3 x Top stretchers | 662mm |

Top

| | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| 2 x Plywood sheets | 1800 x 750mm |
|--------------------|--------------|

Shelf (Optional)

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1 x Plywood | 1720 x 662mm |
|-------------|--------------|

Finished dimensions

| | |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| Length | 1800mm |
| Width | 750mm |
| Height | 900mm |
| Top thickness | 36mm (double 18mm plywood) |

This size suits most garage workshops and fits standard sheet material efficiently.

A well-built workbench is the heart of any workshop. Whether you're repairing household items in your garage, building cabinets, or tackling weekend DIY projects, the right bench makes work safer, more accurate, and far more enjoyable.

In this practical three-page project guide, we'll help you choose the right design and then walk you through building a Heavy-Duty Workbench - a strong, affordable, and adaptable bench that is ideal for most home workshops. One of the key advantages of building your own workbench is the ability to customise it to suit your specific needs, workspace, and preferred way of working.



Planning your workbench

Understanding your needs

Before building, decide what your bench must do.

- If you mainly use hand tools, your bench needs weight and rigidity. A lightweight bench will slide or rack when planing. A finished weight above 90kg is ideal for serious woodworking.
- If you primarily use power tools, height and vibration control matter more. A solid top at the correct

ergonomic height reduces fatigue and improves accuracy.

- For most DIY homeowners, a garage workshop bench at 900mm high works well. If you do fine assembly work, consider 950 to 1000mm.

DIY tip: A good test is to stand upright and let your knuckles rest on the surface, that height is ideal for general work. Allow at least 900mm clearance around working sides of the bench for safe operation.



A traditional hardwood workbench

Popular bench types (A quick overview)

• Simple workbench

A simple workbench is one of the most common designs for home workshops. It is affordable, strong, and beginner-friendly, making it an excellent choice for garages, hobby rooms, or multipurpose spaces. Most simple benches are built using construction timber and plywood, which keeps costs low while still providing a sturdy working surface.

This type of bench is versatile enough for everyday DIY tasks such as repairs, assembling projects, sanding, and light woodworking. With basic maintenance, such as keeping it dry, tightening bolts when needed, and occasionally replacing the top if it becomes worn, a well-built simple workbench can easily last 10 to 15 years or more.

• Traditional hardwood workbench

A traditional hardwood workbench is the classic choice for serious woodworking enthusiasts. Built from dense hardwoods such as maple, beech, or oak, these benches are heavy, extremely durable, and designed to stay firmly in place while you work. Their weight and solid construction make them ideal for hand-tool woodworking, planing, chiselling, and other tasks that require stability.

However, this style of bench usually requires more advanced joinery techniques, such as mortise-and-tenon joints and a higher investment in materials. While they take more time and skill to build, hardwood benches can last several decades if properly maintained, often becoming a permanent fixture in a workshop.

• Wall-mounted folding bench

For homeowners with limited space, a wall-mounted folding bench can be a smart solution. As the name suggests, the bench is attached to a wall and can be folded down when needed and folded back up when the space must be cleared. This makes it ideal for small garages, garden sheds, or utility rooms where floor space is limited.

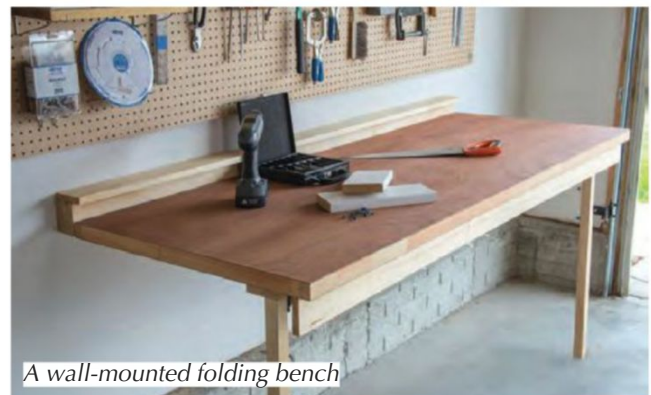
Although convenient, folding benches are typically less rigid than fixed benches because they rely on wall brackets and hinges for support. They are best suited for light to moderate tasks, such as small repairs, hobby work, or occasional DIY projects.

• An alternative option: modular garage systems

Another option to consider is a complete garage cabinet and storage system, which is available commercially from many tool and equipment suppliers. These systems combine a work surface with integrated cabinets, drawers, and storage solutions, creating an organized and professional-looking workspace.

For example, the MAC AFRIC Complete Garage Cabinet and Storage System is designed to improve both functionality and organization in a garage workshop. These modular systems typically feature durable worktops, lockable cabinets, and wall-mounted storage units that help keep tools neatly arranged and easily accessible.

While these systems cost more than a DIY bench, they offer a ready-made solution for homeowners who want a clean, efficient workspace without the time and effort required to build their own bench.



A wall-mounted folding bench

Step-by-step guide

Step 1

Build the top frames

Construct two identical rectangular frames using the 1720mm and 662mm pieces.

Apply glue at joints. Clamp square. Fasten with 100mm screws.

Check diagonals, they must match for squareness.

Step 2

Attach the legs

Stand the top frame upright and fix legs inside each corner using glue and 100mm screws.

Ensure legs are perfectly vertical using a spirit level.

Repeat for lower rail height at 150mm from floor.

Step 3

Install lower frame

Attach lower long and short rails between legs. This prevents racking and adds major strength.

For extra rigidity, drill through joints and secure with 8mm coach bolts.

Step 4

Install top stretchers

Fit three internal stretchers across the top frame. These support the plywood and prevent sagging.

Spacing: one centered, two evenly spaced on either side.

Step 5

Attach the top

Glue the first plywood sheet to the frame. Screw every 200mm using 50mm screws.

Glue and screw the second sheet on top, staggering screw pattern.

Clamp tightly during fastening to avoid gaps.

Step 6

Fit shelf (Optional)

Install lower plywood shelf onto bottom frame. This adds storage and increases bench mass, improving stability.

Step 7

Sand and finish

Round over sharp edges slightly by sanding it progressively from 80 to 220 grit.

Seal all surfaces, including underside, to prevent moisture movement.

DIY tip: In humid coastal areas, sealing is critical. Unsealed plywood can delaminate if exposed to moisture levels above 60%.

Step 8

Critical safety check

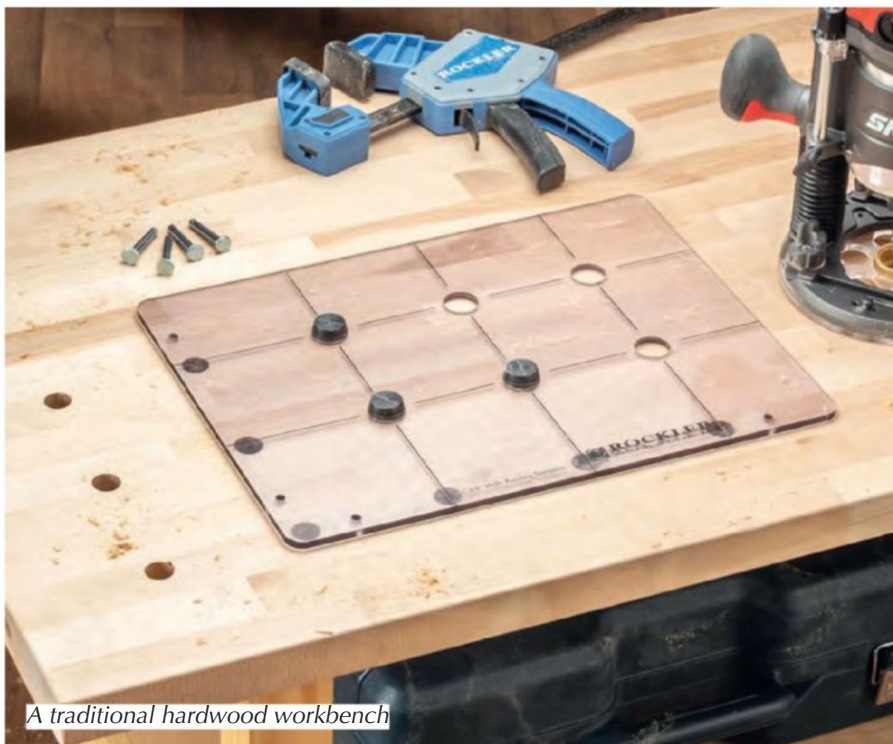
Push the bench from each side. If movement occurs, reinforce joints immediately. A wobbling bench is unsafe for power tools.

Optional upgrades

Install a front vice later by adding blocking between stretchers.

Drill 19mm dog holes spaced 100mm apart for bench dogs.

Add locking casters if mobility is needed and ensure they are rated for minimum 150kg combined load.



A traditional hardwood workbench

Final thoughts

Choose a bench that matches your current skill level. A simple, well-built bench will outperform a poorly constructed “fancy” hardwood bench every time. The key is to build it strong, build it square and seal it properly.

A good workbench doesn't just support your projects, it improves them.

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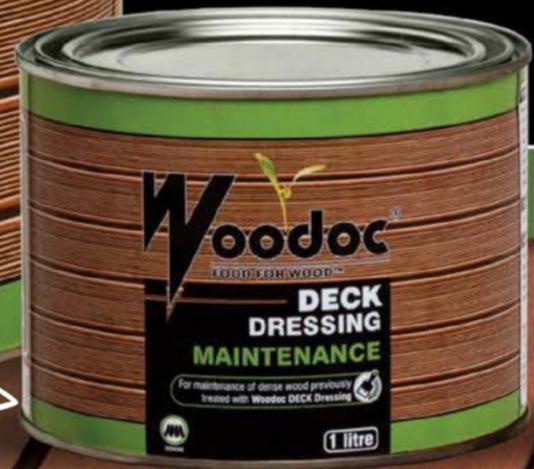
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