

Before & After Makeovers ✱ High-Style Storage System

# workbench

MY HOME MY STYLE

Three  
Fabulous  
Front Entry  
Facelifts  
page 19

Make  
Your  
Home  
Your  
Own!

Display until November 24, 2009

\$4.99 US

105



A Publication of August Home Publishing

Plus!

- ✓ Creative Photo Display Ideas
- ✓ Eye-Popping Paint Techniques
- ✓ Backyard Fire Pit on a Budget

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Your home should be a reflection of your personality, your tastes, and your style. Unfortunately, many of the houses we live in — with their similar styling and off-the-shelf components — don't necessarily live up to that seemingly simple goal. They often reflect more about the builder or the plans he used than they do about the residents.

Thankfully, there are a whole lot of us out there who aren't content to just sit back and let someone else's vision (or lack thereof) define the places we live. On weekends and evenings we arm ourselves with paint brushes, power tools, fabric samples, and forthright determination and endeavor to turn our houses into our homes. We do it ourselves not just because it saves us money, but because it allows us to infuse our own ideas, styles, and personalities into the process.

Of course, as we embark on these DIY adventures, most of us can use a little help along the way. And that's exactly what this magazine is here to offer. Whether you just need a bit of inspiration or you crave step-by-step instruction, you'll find every page filled with ideas that you can use and projects that you can achieve.

So fire up that do-it-yourself spirit and be confident that regardless of how much time, skill, or money you have, you can make your home reflect who you are.

DAVE

VOLUME 30, NO. 5, ISSUE 1573

### PUBLISHER

Donald B. Peschke

MANAGING EDITOR David Stone

SENIOR EDITOR Wyatt Myers

ASSISTANT EDITORS Louise Ritchhart,

Alyssa McNabb, Catherine Seiner

EDITORIAL INTERN Brianna Nelson

ART DIRECTOR Kim Downing

ASSISTANT ART DIRECTORS Kurt Schultz,

Doug Appleby

SENIOR ILLUSTRATOR Erich Lage

SENIOR WEB DESIGNER/ILLUSTRATOR Matt Scott

CREATIVE DIRECTOR Ted Kralicek

SENIOR PROJECT DESIGNERS James R. Downing,

Ken Munkel, Kent Walsh, Chris Fitch,

Mike Donovan

PROJECT DESIGNER/BUILDER John Doyle

SHOP CRAFTSMEN Steve Curtis, Steve Johnson

EDITORIAL MEDIA DIRECTOR Terry J. Strohman

EXECUTIVE ART DIRECTOR Todd Lambirth

SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHERS Crayola England,

Dennis Kennedy

SENIOR ELECTRONIC IMAGE SPECIALIST Allan Hufnagle

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT Minnie Johnson

ASSOCIATE STYLE DIRECTOR Rebecca Cunningham

CUSTOMER SERVICE ONLINE

Web: bestCustomerService.com

• VIEW your account information

• RENEW your subscription

• CHECK on a subscription payment

• PAY your bill

• CHANGE your mailing or email address

• VIEW/RENEW your gift subscription

• TELL us if you've missed an issue

CUSTOMER SERVICE PHONE (800) 311-3991

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Workbench Customer Service

PO Box 847

Des Moines, IA 50304-0847

Subscriptions@AugustHomes.com

### EDITORIAL

Workbench Magazine

2200 Grand Ave.

Des Moines, IA 50317

Editor@Workbenchmag.com



August Home  
of Creations

WORKBENCH (ISSN 0890-4611) is published bi-monthly (May, April/June, Aug., Oct., Dec.) by August Home Publishing Company, 2200 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50317. Workbench is a trademark of August Home Publishing. Copyright ©2009 August Home Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

Subscription rates: Single copy, \$4.95. One year volume rate (12 issues), \$59.95. Canadian rate, add \$10 per year. Distribution postage paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Workbench, PO Box 87275, Ames, IA 50017-0275. Canadian Subscriptions: Canada Post Agreement No. 400163. Send change of address information to: PO Box 991, Station Blue, Markham, ON L3P 9B9, Canada. GST Reg. #R123127737. Printed in U.S.A.





## FEATURES



[PAGE 19]

### 3 Fabulous Front-Entry Facelifts

Make your home your own with three economical style makeovers that transform an average entry.

[PAGE 20]

### Reinvent Your Laundry Room

Use these budget-friendly ideas to bring serious function and fantastic looks to your laundry room.

[PAGE 25]

### Fold-Down Clothes Drying Rack

Save space in your laundry room and use less energy, too, with this clever wall-mounted drying rack.

[PAGE 30]

### Cool New Laundry Products

Learn how today's high-tech appliances make caring for your clothes easier than ever before.

[PAGE 40]

### A Better Backyard Fire Pit

Create this inviting outdoor entertainment area in one day for less than \$300.

[PAGE 48]

### Simple Photo Display Shelf

Show off your precious family photos in a unique way with this easy-to-build wall shelf.

[PAGE 52]

### Photo Framing Tips & Tricks

Turn an eclectic collection of mismatched frames into a cool, coordinated photo display.

[PAGE 56]

### High-Style Storage Wall

Kill family room clutter and inject a shot of style with this one-of-a-kind storage system.

## DEPARTMENTS

### IN EVERY ISSUE

**4** Close to Home

**8** DIY Gear

**14** Tools & Products

**62** Instant Makeovers

**63** Resources

### 10 Questions & Answers

Easy lawn mower tune-up, simple security lighting, wood flooring explained, and much more.

### 16 DIY Tips

Quick cabinet upgrade, drink cooler to go, a great grill idea, easy wall repairs, plus more reader tips.

### 44 Paint Power: Super Circles

Put a new spin on wall decor with our simple technique for painting circles. It's easy!





If you want to make a bold style statement, the "Avatar" palette provides the opportunity to do it with a mix of funky, futuristic colors.



This modern color palette, "Indie," actually has traditional roots. The combination was inspired by colors associated with agriculture and early industry and is meant to invoke thoughts of fine craftsmanship and simpler times.

## Tracking Color Trends

Paint can transform everything from photo frames to entire rooms, but it won't do you any good if you can't choose a color. If you get stuck at this step, you can turn to a color trend forecast for inspiration. The Voice of Color (VoiceofColor.com), a design system that provides online color selection tools, and Pittsburgh Paints have come up with four palettes to reflect the trends. For 2009 and 2010, the theme is Surreal/Real, and the palettes show the contrast between down-to-earth and dreamy styles.

The "Wonderland" palette is made up of soft, romantic colors that make a room look comfortable and elegant at the same time.



Earthy colors in decor are nothing new, but they can be truly inspiring when combined in a fresh and interesting way. The "Journey" palette puts several warm tones together and looks great when accented by nature-inspired patterns.



## PROTECT YOUR HEALTH BY

# Removing Radon

Some of the dangers in your home are invisible to the eye, but they can have serious consequences. Radon, a radioactive gas, is one of those dangers. If you haven't given radon much thought, consider this: It's the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking.

Radon is released into the air when uranium breaks down in water, rock, or soil. It can come into buildings from the soil through cracks in the walls and flooring and through gaps around service pipes.

Radon intrusion is no small problem. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, nearly one in 15 homes has an elevated radon level. Fortunately, you can take action.

First, you'll need to purchase a radon testing kit from a home center or an online retailer. If the test shows an elevated level of radon, the first step is to consult a radon mitigation professional. Mitigation systems vary based on your foundation and the material under your house.

Installing a radon mitigation system isn't cheap, but it's a small price to pay for your health. You can find more information about radon mitigation in your state by visiting [EPA.gov/iaq/whereyoulive.html](http://EPA.gov/iaq/whereyoulive.html).



One form of radon mitigation involves installing a vent pipe to pull this harmful radioactive gas out of your home.

## Thrifty DIY: Rent Tools Online!

Some of the best ideas are born from everyday frustrations, and the online rental company Zilok ([US.Zilok.com](http://US.Zilok.com)) is no exception. The company was created to match people who want to put their items up for rent with people who are looking for items to rent.



The concept for Zilok came about when its founders needed a drill but didn't want to buy a new one that they would rarely use. They wanted a way to easily arrange to rent one from a neighbor, and Zilok was the result.

It's free to create an account and begin searching for your rental items. From the company's home page, you can search for available items by category or use the search function to type in your location and the name of the item you're looking for.

All of the item listings provide the item's location and its rental cost. If you find an item you'd like to rent, you can reserve it, pay a retainer fee, and arrange to meet the owner. If you'd like to list your own items, the company even provides a sample contract agreement, or you can upload your own. Zilok's Web site will walk you through the rest of the rental process.

### HOMEWORK'S Buying a Home

**ABSTRACT:** A compilation of a home's ownership history.

**CLOSING:** The meeting at which the property is legally transferred from the seller to the buyer.

**CONTINGENCY:** A condition, such as the successful completion of a home inspection, which must be met for the contract to be binding.

**DISCLOSURE:** A document on which the seller lists known problems with a home, such as the presence of lead paint.

**EARNEST MONEY:** A deposit that the potential buyer puts down upon making an offer on a property.

**FAIR MARKET VALUE:** The amount of money that a willing buyer and seller could agree upon for a real estate transaction.

**TITLE:** A legal document that proves ownership of a property.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a yellow t-shirt, blue jeans, and a green cap, is seen from behind. She is holding a yellow tape measure against a white-framed window. A pair of scissors is tucked into her back pocket. In the foreground, there are several rolls of fabric or wallpaper with different patterns: a green and white leaf pattern, a white and green pattern, and an orange and white plaid pattern.

COOL  
TOOLS  
THAT  
MEASURE  
UP



**Y**ou won't get far on your DIY to-do list if you don't measure accurately — just ask anyone who ever cut a part the wrong size. Fortunately, no matter what project you're working on, you'll find a measuring tool that will go the distance.

Folding wood rules (a) have been around for a long time but are still useful today. Many people choose these handy tools because they're simple, durable, and inexpensive.

Tape measures like these (b) are also go-to DIY measuring tools for many projects, and it's not hard to see why. They're compact and come in many lengths. Generally, longer tape measures have wider blades, so they can reach farther without collapsing when you extend them. And even basic models will automatically retract their blades at just the touch of a button.

If your measuring needs go beyond the basics, though, you can buy tape measures with extra features. This model (c) not only automatically retracts, but also automatically extends. That way, you'll have a free hand to take measurements.

A tape measure with a built-in laser (d) is another tool that allows you to multitask. The laser provides a perpendicular guide, so you can mark a straight line as you take your measurement.

Lasers can also come in handy if you need to measure a space that isn't easily accessible. Sonic laser measuring tools (e) use lasers to target a location and then measure the distance. They're not as accurate as tape measures but are convenient for taking rough measurements.

Although the tools we've mentioned so far will be suitable for many projects, you may encounter a project that requires you to cover more ground. For less than \$20, you can get a reel tape (f) that will measure up to 100 feet. Or you can purchase a measuring wheel (g) that gets pushed around to measure even larger areas.

When all of your measuring is done, you may still need to convert your measurements to buy supplies or prepare project components. A material estimator (h) will make that step much easier. Use it to convert measurement units and determine how much material you'll need, so you won't waste supplies or come up short. (See page 63 for product resources.)





A FEW SIMPLE STEPS MAKE IT EASY TO

## Revive a Rusty Shovel

*Q: I have an old shovel that's rusty and has a beat-up wood handle. But it's heavy-duty and well made, so I hate to pitch it. Is there anything I can do to clean it up and make it useful again?*

Mary Perkins  
Albany, NY

*A:* A good-quality shovel can be expensive these days. Replacing one like you have could cost \$50 or more. So yours is definitely well worth saving. In fact, there's really nothing wrong with your old shovel other than the effects of neglect.

Thankfully, it's easy to bring an old rusty shovel or any similar garden tool back into good working

condition so that it can provide many more years of great service.

Start by scrubbing the entire shovel with water to remove caked-on dirt. Then let it dry.

Next, it's time to get rid of the rust. Use a wire brush or 60-grit sandpaper to remove as much of it as you can. You don't have to get to gleaming metal, but remove as much rust as possible. You'll find this process to be much easier if you clamp the shovel in a vise.

Now sharpen the shovel tip using a file (*Photo, right*). This takes a bit of work, but you'll be amazed by how much better a shovel with a sharp business end works.

With the blade clean and sharp, use steel wool to rub oil into the

steel. Any light household oil, such as 3-In-One oil, works fine. Work the oil in thoroughly, let it sit for a while, and then wipe off any excess.

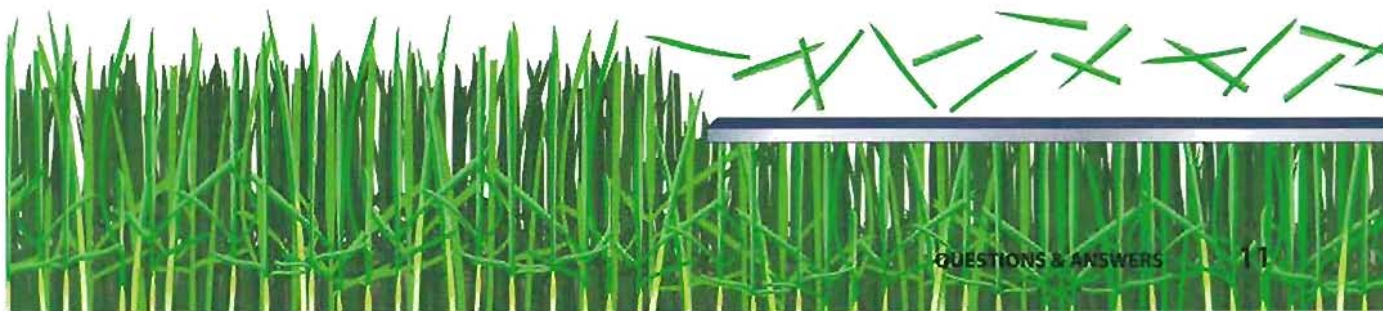
Now you can pay attention to that handle. Start by sanding it with medium-grit sandpaper (120- or 150-grit). Then wipe on a coat of boiled linseed oil (available at the hardware store). Apply several coats, if necessary, until the handle stops absorbing the oil. Then wipe off any excess oil.



To sharpen a shovel, start by placing it in a vise. Then use a fine-tooth file to sharpen the edge. Hold the file with both hands, and swipe it downward across the edge at the same angle as the existing bevel on the shovel blade.

It doesn't need to be razor sharp: just file until the blunt edge is gone.

**3"** What is the ideal height to cut grass? Shorter can "scalp" the lawn; leaving it longer could cause the grass to lay over and look unsightly.







## EASY SECURITY LIGHTING UPGRADES

*Q: I'd like to add some security lighting outside my home, but my current lights aren't equipped for this. I'd hate to have to replace all the fixtures. Do I have any other options?*

Jane Lonsdale  
Duluth, MN

*A:* Outdoor lighting is one of the best ways to beef up security, as well as convenience, around your home. Photocells that turn lights on at dusk make it look like you're home, even if you're not. Motion detectors turn lights on automatically if any large object moves through their detection area.

Adding these types of fixtures used to be an expensive process because you had to buy fixtures with the features built in. These days, though, you'll find a good selection of add-on photocells and motion detectors as close as your local home center.

Screw-in photocells, like those in the *Photos* above, are simple to install. Just unscrew the bulb and screw them in. Many will work with incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs.

Screw-in motion detectors are available, too. They require wires from the fixture to the sensor but are still unobtrusive and easy to install.

### True or False?

*Do-it-yourself carpet cleaners that you can rent will ruin your carpet.*

**False.** Rental carpet cleaners can be very effective. What causes problems is the amount of soap that most of them recommend using. The cleaners don't always have enough power to suck up all the soap, which leaves a residue that attracts dirt. Cut the soap quantity at least in half, and then clean away!

#### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

## Engineered vs. Laminate Flooring

Engineered flooring and laminate flooring are both commonly used these days as substitutes for solid-wood flooring. They look similar on the surface but are quite different from one another and from solid wood.

Solid-wood flooring is, as the name implies, made up of planks that are wood throughout. As wood floors have made a resurgence in recent years, manufacturers have worked to develop realistic alternatives. Laminate and engineered floors have been the result.

Laminate flooring consists of a man-made core covered by paper imprinted with a photographic image of a wood plank. The photo makes the floor look very realistic, and a finish layer on top protects the image and makes the floor durable.

This construction gives laminate flooring a few highly desirable attributes. First, laminate is far less expensive than real wood. Plus, it's available in styles that replicate the look of almost any wood, including rare exotic species. And it's very easy for a homeowner to install. On the downside, laminate isn't real wood, so it can't be refinished. Once it's worn, it has to be replaced.

Engineered flooring also starts with a man-made core, usually plywood. But it's topped with a thin layer (about 1/8" thick) of real wood. It also comes pre-finished, which means it's ready to use as soon as it's installed.

There are a couple advantages with engineered flooring. First, what you see and feel is real wood. Second, the wood layer is thick enough that it can be sanded and refinished at least once, maybe twice, before having to be replaced. One disadvantage is that engineered flooring costs more than laminate. Still, it's more economical than solid wood.



On the surface, laminate flooring looks like real wood. But underneath the protective wear layer, it's really just a photo image of a wood plank that's bonded to a core of man-made material.



Engineered flooring has a top layer made of solid wood that has been bonded to a plywood core. This gives it the look and feel of a solid-wood floor, but at a lower cost.

## HEAVY-DUTY PICTURE HANGER

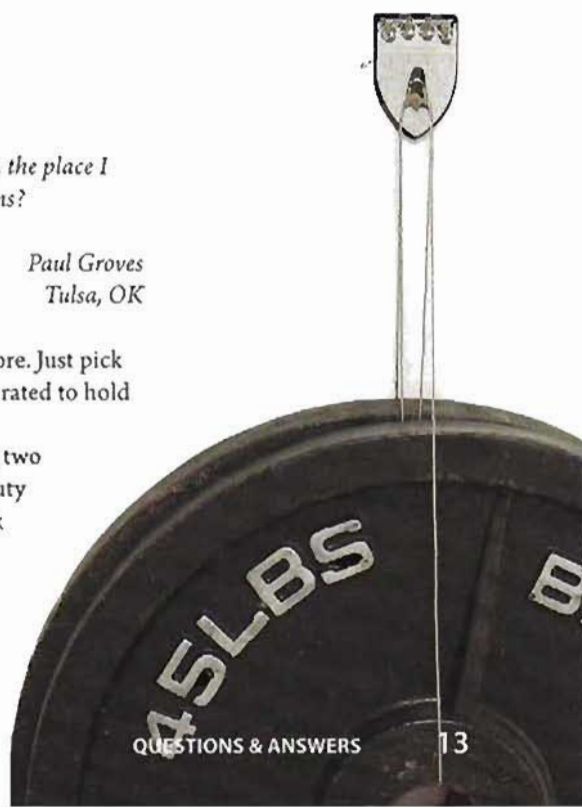
**Q:** I have a very heavy (about 80 pound) framed print I'd like to hang. Of course, the place I want it doesn't align with a wall stud, so I can't use a big nail. What are my options?

Paul Groves  
Tulsa, OK

**A:** The answer to your problem lies as close as your local home center or art store. Just pick up a professional-quality heavy-duty picture hanger. You'll find models that are rated to hold up to 100 pounds even when just driven into drywall.

To perform such amazing feats of strength (yes, this one is really supporting two 45-pound barbell plates without problem), the hangers are made from heavy-duty metal, not cheap brass or lightweight materials. That prevents the hanger's hook from bending, which can happen with lightweight versions.

These hangers get mounted using multiple small nails — also made of high-strength steel — to spread the load out over a larger area. That prevents the nails from tearing through the drywall.







### This Ball's on the Level

The modern level has changed very little since it was introduced in the 1920s — until now. The Precision Ball Level from C.H. Hanson is a three-in-one tool that features a 360-degree, aviation-style ball compass design. Its bold display clearly shows if a surface area is level or plumb. Users can also see if surfaces are level on both planes by laying the level on its side and utilizing the crosshairs on the display. Along with clearly printed markings, the crosshairs also allow the Precision Ball Level to measure angles and pitches.

PRICE: \$50

LEARN MORE: [CHHanson.com](http://CHHanson.com)  
or 800-827-3398

### Cutting-Edge Home Comfort Control

Touch-screen technology comes to home heating and cooling with the Honeywell Prestige HD. This high-definition, full-color programmable thermostat displays information about your home's "zones" in an intuitive format. Your schedule and comfort preferences are programmed by the installer in a patented, interview-based setup process. When used as directed, Honeywell estimates that homeowners can cut annual heating and cooling costs by an average of \$200 per year.

PRICE: \$200-\$700 installed (varies with home size)  
LEARN MORE: [YourHome.Honeywell.com](http://YourHome.Honeywell.com)  
or 800-328-5111





### Itchy Trigger Finger?

Now the same WD-40 formula you've used for years comes in a non-aerosol, ergonomic can. WD-40 Trigger Pro has a multi-action nozzle, so you can apply just the right amount, exactly where you need it. The heavy-duty spray trigger is leak-resistant and has an "off" position, so you won't find an oily mess in your storage cabinet or tool box. Plus, unlike aerosols, you can toss the can in your recycling bin when it's empty.

**PRICE:** \$12 (20-oz. can)  
**LEARN MORE:** [WD40.com](http://WD40.com)  
 or 888-324-7596



### EXOTIC, DISTINCTIVE DECKING

Now you can extend the popular look of interior exotic hardwood floors all the way to your deck. Fiberon Tropica composite decking is available in three patterns that mimic the beauty of rare hardwoods but have the strength and durability of composites. It resists termites, splinters, and decay; never needs sanding, staining, or sealing; and is backed by a 20-year limited warranty.

**PRICE:** Around \$3 per linear foot  
**LEARN MORE:** [FiberonDecking.com](http://FiberonDecking.com)  
 or 800-573-8841



### TWISTED END TO DRIED-UP TUBES

Lee Valley's Twist-n-Seal Stopper, a clever reusable tube plug, helps partially used tubes of glue and caulk last longer. Made from a tough plastic composite, its screw-like threads form an airtight seal in plastic nozzles from 1/8" to 1/2" in diameter.

**PRICE:** \$3.20 for five stoppers  
**LEARN MORE:** [LeeValley.com](http://LeeValley.com)  
 or 800-267-8735



CONQUER KITCHEN CLUTTER WITH

# Pull-Out Baskets

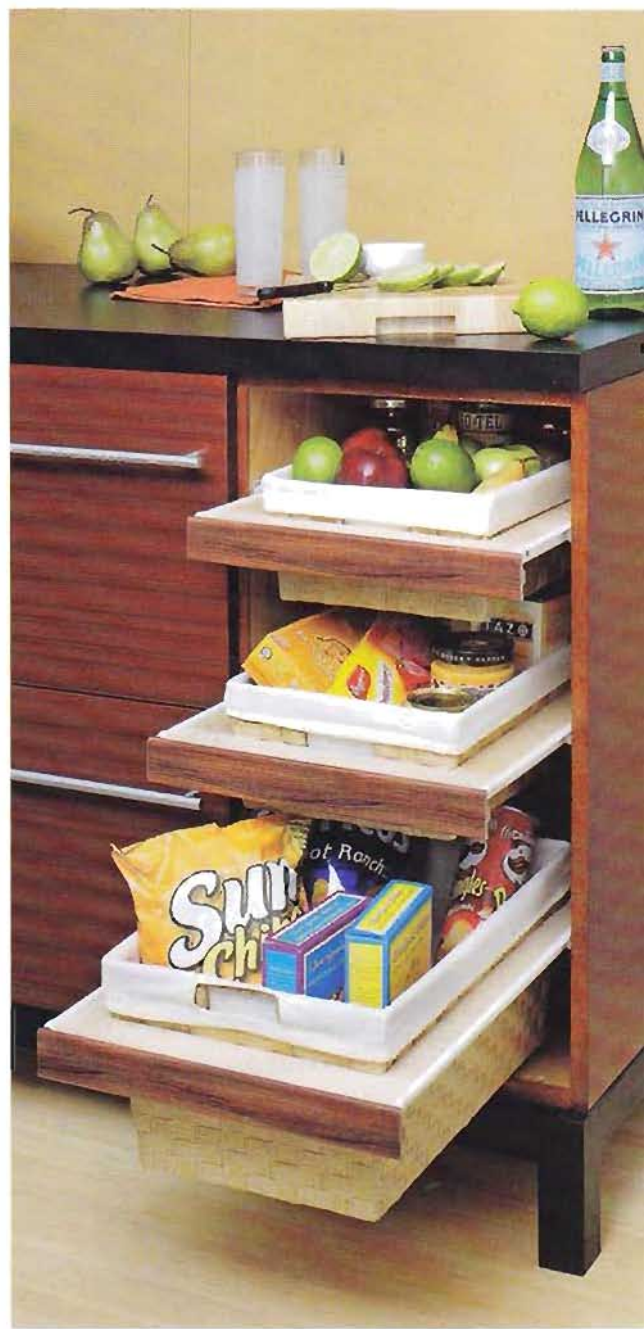
Make an always-inconvenient lower kitchen cabinet easier to use with the addition of a set of these stylish, functional, and simple-to-build storage units.

Most kitchens have “that one” cabinet. You know the one I’m talking about — the cabinet that’s so low to the ground or so close to the corner that you’d rather just leave it closed than stoop down to look inside.

Luckily, Ryan Baller of Lincoln, Nebraska, came up with a simple way to make that cabinet a lot more functional. All you have to do is remove the door and then build this set of pull-out storage units. The units extend out of the cabinet for easier access (*right*), and you can even remove the baskets themselves and set them on the counter if desired.

Each unit consists of a plywood frame that’s built to fit the width of the cabinet and mounted to a pair of drawer glides. The opening in the frame is sized to fit a basket of your choice. (These came from Target.) Then you can add a wood handle to the front that’s stained to match your cabinets’ finish.

Just measure your cabinet, and then choose baskets that fill the space nicely. For example, we used a tall basket on the bottom with two shorter baskets on top.



The sky’s the limit when it comes to basket sizes and styles for these pull-out kitchen storage units. You can choose baskets with a clean, contemporary look or more traditional rope-twist baskets. The options shown at left are from Target and Bed Bath & Beyond.

## BEST TIP PRIZE WINNER!

For this issue’s award-winning tip, Ryan Baller wins a Bostitch six-gallon air compressor (Model #CAP2000P-OF) valued at over \$180!

### SEND US YOUR TIPS

#### Mail:

Do-It-Yourself Tips  
2200 Grand Ave.  
Des Moines, IA  
50312

#### Email:

[DIYTips@augusthome.com](mailto:DIYTips@augusthome.com)



## Quick & Easy Tips

### » Close Lids with Leverage.

Mike Larson of Wake Forest, North Carolina, got tired of splattering paint everywhere while trying to close paint can lids with a mallet. Then he realized that an 18" scrap board would work just as well. He just presses firmly on the board with one hand where it rests over the paint can lid and creates leverage with his other hand by pushing down on the end of the board to close the lid tightly.

### » Super Seal.

Glad Press'n Seal plastic wrap is handy not only in the kitchen, but also for home improvement. Charles Parrish of Bridgeview, Illinois, found that the wrap worked great for sealing off a bathtub from dust and debris while doing a bathroom remodel.

### » Helpful Hose.

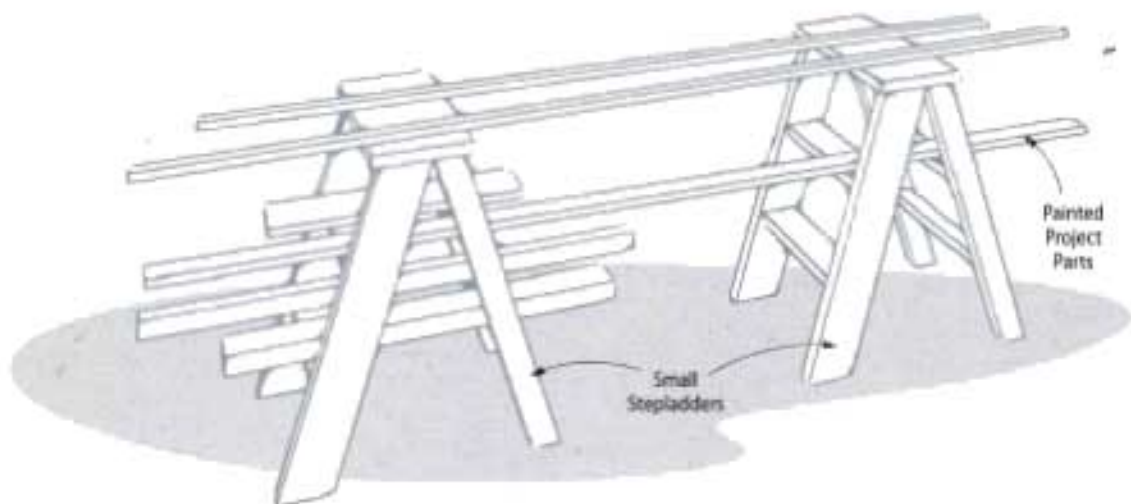
The filters that come with most shop vacuums tend to get dirty in a hurry. To prolong its useful life and make it easier to clean, Josh Shirey of York, Pennsylvania, pulls a length of old panty hose over the filter before he uses it.



### WHEELBARROW

## Drink Holder

Want to add a conversation starter to your next outdoor gathering? Arthur Lee of Santa Cruz, California, recommends ditching the standard cooler in favor of a more interesting drink holder — a steel wheelbarrow. Fill it with colorful beers or sodas, and then sit back and let the good times roll.



### MULTI-PART DRYING RACK

When he has a lot of project parts to paint or finish, John Brower of Phoenix, Arizona, relies on the rungs of his portable stepladders as temporary drying racks. You can use

one ladder to safely support shorter pieces. For longer pieces, just set up two stepladders side by side to hold the boards as they dry.



## GREATER Grill Table

If you have an old gas grill with wood slats on the side, those slats might be looking flimsy by now. For about \$5 of materials, you can cover the slats with this simple solution from Ryan Baller of Lincoln, Nebraska. It's just a 12" tile framed with mitered cedar boards and mounted above the existing table with exterior adhesive. Just mount the cedar frame a safe distance from the edge of the grill. The tile even serves as a hot plate.



### SIMPLE MITERED MEASURING TIP

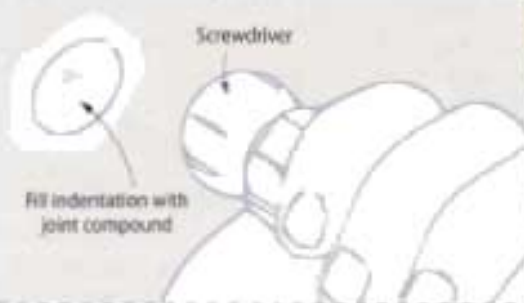
It's never easy to get an accurate measurement from the inside of a mitered or beveled corner. But Cory Hoehn of Jeffersonville, Indiana, discovered that it becomes a lot easier if you align that corner with the edge of a work surface. Then you can just measure from the edge of the work surface to get a precise dimension.

### 3 WONDERFUL WALL REPAIRS

Working with drywall can be frustrating, but these readers came through with a few five-minute fixes:

- Small nicks and scratches in drywall sometimes won't easily accept joint compound when you need to repair them. Kyle Schulte of Knoxville, Iowa, "dimples" these imperfections with the rounded end of a screwdriver handle first (illustration, right). This makes an impression that readily accepts the compound.
- Drywall joints can be tricky to get flat, which is why Mike Schott of Ankeny, Iowa, checks his work with the edge of a credit card. If the card rocks against the wall, more sanding is needed for a flat joint.

- Not sure how to get that joint compound off your putty knife? Josh Shirey of York, Pennsylvania, slit an old coffee can down the side and slides the knife through it to clean off the compound.



# three fabulous facelifts for your front entry

Everyone wants their home to make a good first impression. But when homeowners ponder how to amp up style around the house, the front entry is often overlooked. That's a shame, because nothing beats a stylish entry area at giving guests and family members a warm welcome. If you're ready to take your front entry from boring to beautiful, check out these budget-friendly makeovers. We started with an entry that looked pretty much like everyone else's ("Before" Photo) and dramatically transformed it in three different ways. By choosing individual elements that stayed true to each design style, we achieved cohesive looks. As you peruse the next few pages, think about which style would work best for your own home. Then implement your favorite updates, referring to the *Resources* on page 63 for specific buying information.



## [20] cottage

Charming, imperfect, and casual, cottage-style entryways are favored by lovers of recycled accessories.



## [22] craftsman

This traditional style, with its earthy palette, timeless patterns, and classic shapes, is still popular today.



## [24] contemporary

Those who like to keep current with trends enjoy the sleek, simple sophistication of contemporary design.

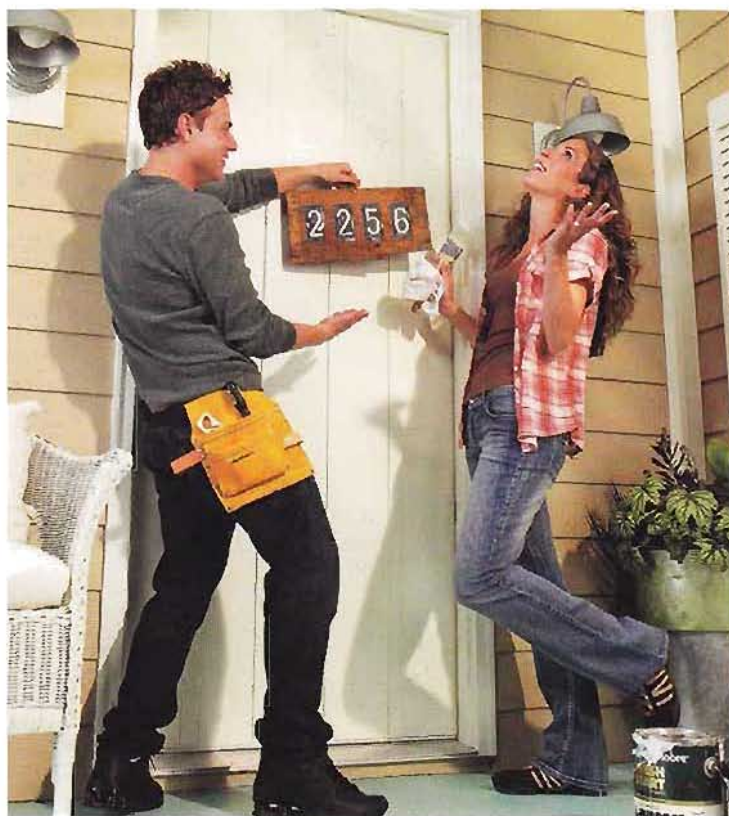


# fresh, youthful cottage

Cottage style is to decorating what mulligan stew is to cooking: Anything goes.

What could be better, in these tough economic times, than a design style that actually embraces cast-offs and flea market finds? Cottage style was born in America's summer cabins and cottages. Rejected furnishings from a family's "real home" made their way to the cottage, and no one cared if nothing matched or things looked a little shabby.

Nowadays, cottage style is sought-after thanks to its appealing blend of light colors, casual fabrics, and fun vintage accessories. It's perfect for today's informal lifestyles, and it can work in many kinds of homes, not just cottages. Just remember that any odd or imperfect item can enhance this style, as long as it helps make the space charming, comfortable, and truly individual.



**1] "DRESS DOWN" THE DOOR**  
To give the standard entry door a rustic board-and-batten look befitting a beach cottage, we attached some  $\frac{3}{4}$ " x  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " wood strips to a flat door with construction adhesive.

**2] GO "OLD" WITH LIGHTING**  
These lakeshore-style metal porch lights, mounted on backer boards painted the same shade as the door, do a great job of muting the original entry's suburban feel.

**3] MAKE NIFTY NUMBERS**  
To create a unique address plaque with a time-worn feel, we scuffed up purchased metal house numbers with sandpaper and mounted them on an imperfect, weathered board.

**4] ADD A VINTAGE MAILBOX**  
While there are plenty of reproduction mailboxes on the market, we decided to visit a local salvage store and pick up the real thing to give our cottage-style entry authenticity.

**5] PAINT THE CONCRETE**  
Cottage style often has a light and breezy feel, like a day at the shore, so we gave the concrete stoop two coats of semi-gloss concrete paint in a soft aqua hue.

**6] TACK ON A SHUTTER**  
This is a style that welcomes unexpected touches, like an old shutter hung where shutters wouldn't normally be. If it's recycled or reimagined, it can fit into a cottage-style scheme.











# traditional- style Craftsman



Today's traditional style is classic without being ostentatious.

If you think "traditional" means staid and stuffy, you'll be glad to know that the new traditional style is understated, unfussy, and functional. Like the updated entry shown here, traditional style strives for a homey ambience that can be adapted to many styles of houses, from Colonials to Victorians to bungalows. Wood is usually finished in warm shades, and colors often come from the mid-range of tones, although it's fine to use dark and light accent colors. Patterns are prominent, but in an orderly and calming sort of way.

Today's traditional style has a casual sense of balance, as seen in the two different-sized planters framing the door. Traditional spaces crave predictability, so you wouldn't want to mix in eclectic modern or antique accessories.

**1] REPLACE THE DOOR** This pre-finished Craftsman-style entry door is constructed from fiberglass for energy efficiency. It features a realistic wood-grain look, as well as a striking leaded glass window.

**2] REPLACE THE HANDLESET** Don't overlook the impact of a stylish handleset: This hefty oil-rubbed bronze model looks great and complements the new door's Craftsman style.

**3] NAIL ON NUMBERS** Adding four-inch-high pewter house numbers that cost just \$4 each beside the door proves that even inexpensive changes can make a big impact on front entry style.

**4] SWITCH OUT THE MAILBOX** Our entry's original mailbox was too shiny to fit in a traditional space, but this brushed copper model has just the right warm color and linear look.

**5] STAIN THE CONCRETE** It only took a few cans of spray-on concrete stain from the home center to give the original gray concrete slab an attractive earthy tone that complements the entire entry area.

**6] UPDATE THE PORCH LIGHTS** Our pair of Craftsman-style lamps picks up the pattern of the new door's leaded glass window and adds symmetry and balance to the area.

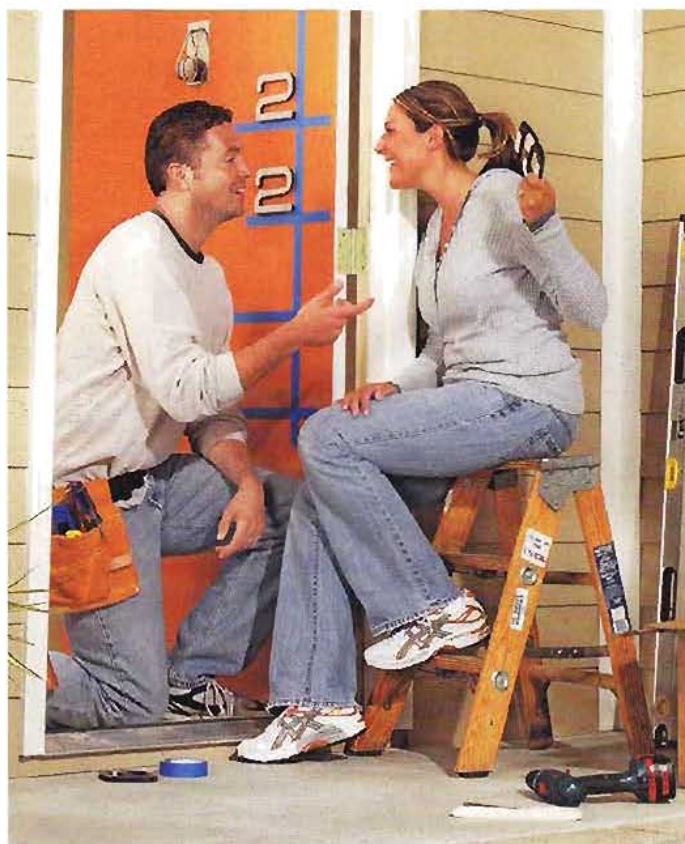


# cool, clean contemporary

Those who choose contemporary style appreciate its clean, uncluttered vibe.

The underlying simplicity of contemporary design often plays out in monochromatic color schemes punched up with a pop of color. That's why this front entry's modern makeover features lots of stainless steel accessories located on and around a bright orange door. Straight lines and dramatic geometric shapes are also hallmarks of contemporary design, as exemplified with the updated porch lights, mailbox, and planters.

Contemporary style is defined by texture, as well. Brushed metal, chrome, and glass are staple materials, with natural accents like wood and stone worked in for textural interest and contrast. And while today's contemporary style remains minimalist, it can offer the feel of a comfortable retreat. It's equally appropriate for urban lofts, suburban homes, or any space where subtle sophistication is the goal.



**1] PUMP UP THE DOOR** We brushed a bold hue on the entry door and installed a satin chrome handleset. A knocker made with a real stone adds texture.

**2] REPLACE THE PORCH LIGHTS** Mounted on both sides of the door are aluminum-and-glass wall lamps in a cylindrical shape that make an unmistakably modern statement.

**3] ATTACH NEW NUMBERS** Stainless steel, mid-century modern house numbers now grace the door. Industrial-strength, peel-and-stick adhesive ensures they stay put.

**4] ADD POP WITH COOL PLANTERS** Galvanized steel planters in an interesting shape beef up the contemporary effect and make eye-catching vessels for low-maintenance yucca plants.

**5] SWAP THE MAILBOX** This eye-catching, oversized mailbox with a frosted glass front makes it easy to see when you've got mail, and its stainless steel body will never rust.

**6] ADD SOMETHING UNDERFOOT** Smooth natural stones in a pebble mat provide a welcome contrast to all the stainless steel and glass and do a good job keeping shoes clean.













FROM  
WASHED  
UP TO

# Wow!

*reinvent your laundry room*

The laundry room is one of those places where you have to spend a lot of time. But chances are it's not a place where you actually want to spend time. That was certainly the case with this basement laundry room (*Before Photo*). It was cluttered, dreary, and far from functional. Clothes hung from water pipes overhead to dry, while others were draped on collapsible drying racks that gobbled up most of the floor space. Other than a few ineffective shelves, the room offered little storage. There wasn't even a sink for rinsing and hand-washing clothes.

The room wasn't very inviting, either. The block wall behind the washer and dryer was shabby and peeling, with the wires and water pipes that feed the appliances in plain sight. In other words, this laundry room wasn't that much different than a lot of others — maybe even yours.

Take a look at the *After Photo*, though, and you can clearly see that even this loser of a laundry room could be transformed into one that not only works a lot better, but also looks great. That means you can transform yours, too.

To simplify this room reinvention, most of the components were pulled right off the shelves of the local home center. That includes the shelving and cabinet that add much-needed storage, as well as the countertop that we used to create a sorting and folding area and the big utility sink that fits into the counter. To

provide space for air-drying clothes, we scratch-built a pair of clever wall-mounted drying racks (which we'll show you how to build starting on page 33).

Read on for a complete guide to what we did to transform this washed-up laundry room and to learn how you can do the same.





## A NEW LOOK FOR TIRED OLD WALLS

Like a lot of unfinished basement walls, the wall behind the washer and dryer in this laundry room left a lot to be desired. For one, it was ugly. The concrete block wall had layers of peeling paint. Plus, all the pipes and wires that ran to the appliances were exposed. And, being a concrete block wall, it always retained a cold, clammy feeling.

To remedy that, we finished out this wall. The *Illustration* on page 29 shows how you can do the same to bring a much more appealing look to any basement wall.

**Prepare the Block** — Before you tackle a basement wall finishing project, first take care of any moisture issues that might exist. Make sure that gutters outside are in good shape and that the ground slopes away from the house, so water can't find its way in.

Next, check the basement wall thoroughly and fill any holes and gaps between the blocks with repair mortar. You can buy it at any home center in the concrete-supply aisle. It's a dry powder that gets mixed with water and then applied with a small trowel. It sets up fast, so you can quickly get on to the next step.

Even if your basement is free of leaks and moisture, it's a good idea to coat the block wall with waterproofing paint before moving on. I used WaterTite-LX, a latex-based product from Zinsser (see page 63).

**Add Furring Strips** — With everything sealed up, you can turn a bare basement wall into a finished interior wall. That's done by attaching 2x2 studs known as furring strips to the wall. Space them 16" on center, just like conventional wall studs. You can see them in the *Illustration* on page 29. You'll also need to "box in" the areas around the water supply valves and drain for the washer to allow access.



To keep the room warm, fill in between the furring strips with rigid foam insulation. A few dabs of construction adhesive will hold each piece in place.

**Put On a Good Face** — With that done, you can add the finished wallboard. Instead of drywall, we chose beadboard plywood. It comes in 4x8 sheets with the beadboard pattern cut into it. That means once it's in place, all it needs is a coat of paint — no taping, mudding, or sanding like drywall. The only challenge is cutting holes where needed for outlets and other access areas. You'll need to do this before the beadboard gets installed.

First, carefully measure and lay out each opening. Next, drill holes at the corners, so you can slip in a jigsaw blade. Then cut out the openings.

One side of this room is defined by the basement stairway, which had been partially walled in and filled with a couple of useless shelves that had become a catchall for junk. We decided the best solution was to tear out the old wall completely and frame in a new one that reached all the way to the floor. This process is really easier than it sounds. Just





Banishing an ugly block wall is surprisingly easy. Thin studs called furring strips provide the structure, and beadboard tops it off. Items that can't be hidden, like the dryer vent and washer supply valves, can be disguised with a coat of paint.

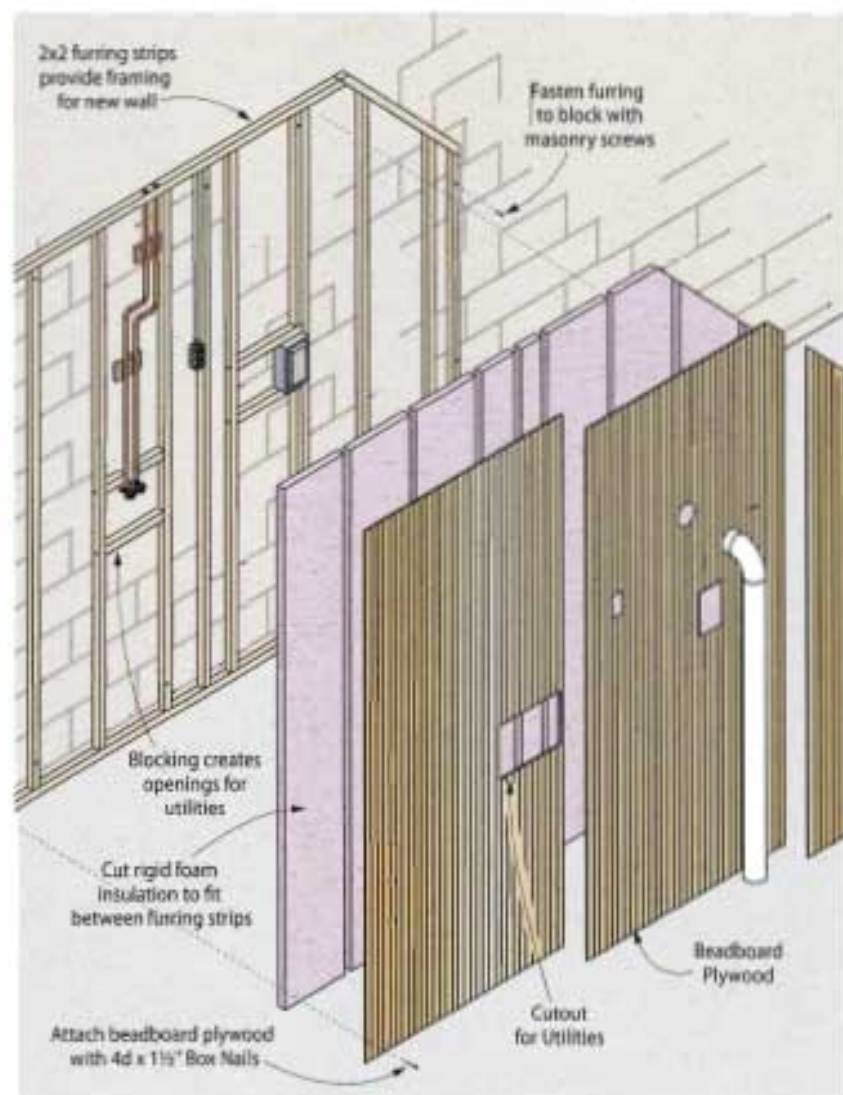
nailed 2x4 studs to a top and bottom plate, stand the assembly in place, and then fasten it. In a basement, you can use masonry screws to attach the bottom plate to the concrete floor. Nails will attach the top plate to the joists overhead.

That done, we capped the wall studs with more beadboard to match the other new wall and to provide a sturdy mounting place for the clothes drying racks that will be added later. A door encloses the rest of the area under the stairs to turn this space into a convenient closet.

After that, we painted all the walls. White paint on the beadboard makes the room bright. Bold teal on the other two walls adds some style and a much-needed pop of color. See page 63 for paint colors.



1. Bright white beadboard turns what was a wall of rickety shelves into a clean, crisp backdrop for this newly restyled room. A pair of drying racks (see page 33) make this wall functional, as well.





Adding a countertop is a fantastic way to amp up the function of a laundry room. It provides ample space for folding, mending, and many other chores. A drop-in utility sink adds a lot of convenience, too, without taking the floor space of a freestanding model. Wire shelves help keep the counter free of clutter.



## A WELL-DESIGNED WORK AREA

In the old laundry room layout, there wasn't a place for folding clothes. That meant they all got carried upstairs and folded on a table or bed. A long countertop in the reinvented laundry room remedies that. It provides plenty of space for folding and makes a great staging area for all kinds of laundry chores.

The top was easy to install. It's just a post-formed kitchen countertop picked up at the home center for less than \$75. Rather than resting on top of cabinets, it gets mounted to the wall on heavy-duty brackets (*Illustration*).

That leaves the area underneath open. This preserves floor space and provides a place to stash a rolling laundry-sorting bin. It holds clothes without causing clutter.

The countertop is made even more useful with the addition of a drop-in utility sink. This one is like the big freestanding utility sinks found in many laundry rooms, but it's designed to fit into a countertop. We purchased the sink as a kit, complete with the faucet and plumbing parts, for just \$125 (see page 63).

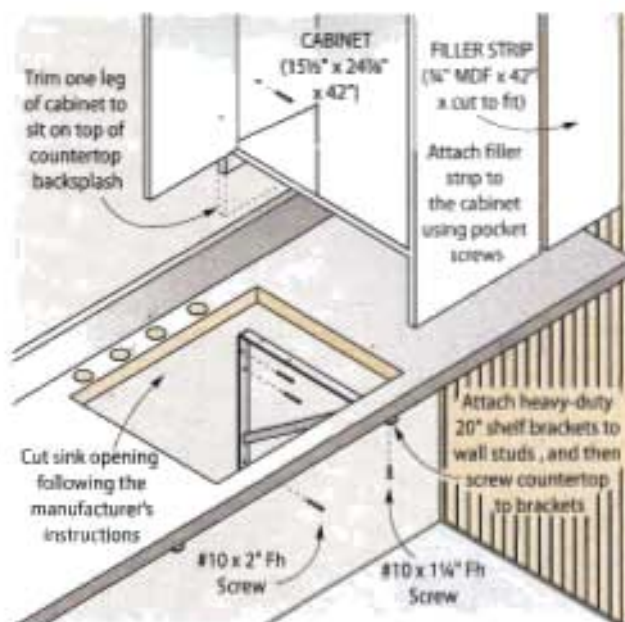
To install the sink, lay out its location on the countertop. Drill holes near the corners, and then cut the opening with a jigsaw. If you're not experienced with plumbing, you can call in a plumber to get everything hooked up. We topped one end of the countertop with a large cabinet (actually a



closet base unit) that keeps soap and other laundry supplies within easy reach but out of sight. It's spaced away from the wall to make access easier and to clear a plumbing pipe on the wall (*Top View*).

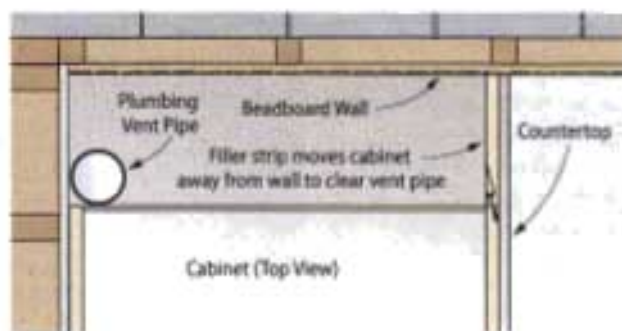
To add even more storage, mount a set of shelves above the countertop. Ventilated wire shelves from the closet aisle work great here. They don't collect the lint that inevitably flies around a laundry room and lands on every flat surface.

The shelves are easy to install. Just mount a horizontal rail on the wall, and then hang shelf standards from it. You'll find the standards in a variety of lengths. Shelf brackets lock into the standards without tools. Then slip on the shelves, and you're set. If you can't find shelves in the lengths you need, you can cut them to length with a backsaw or bolt cutters.



### ADD WALL RACKS

Some of the big space-eaters in the original laundry room were the racks used to air-dry clothes. Though functional, they were always in the way. A pair of wall-mounted drying racks allow easy air-drying without gobbling up floor space. Turn to page 33 to see how easy it is to make one of these racks yourself. And check out page 32 for more great accessories that will make any laundry room more useful.







#### Shelving:

White wire shelves above the countertop work great and look good, to boot. Where there was no storage before, there's now lots of easily accessible space for all kinds of laundry supplies. Baskets help keep things tidy.

## STYLE WITH SUBSTANCE

Making this room functional was the primary goal of this redo. A laundry room is a work room, after all. Because this room has built-in work space, though, it's definitely going to be a place where you'll spend more time folding and ironing. That means it's important that the room be comfortable and inviting. To that end, we accessorized it carefully.

—Written by David Stone, illustrated by Erich Lage, project designed by James R. Downing

#### Laundry Sorter:

A rolling laundry sorting bin provides an easy way to ensure that laundry gets properly sorted by load type. The one we chose is only 30" tall, meaning it can easily slip underneath a countertop. Plus, this one even offers a bit of style but still costs only \$40 (see page 63).



#### Lighting:

Fluorescent fixtures are great for handling the main lighting load in a laundry room. A three-light pendant above the washer and dryer, though, adds task lighting and a touch of style.



#### Flooring:

Carpet squares are comfortable underfoot, attractive, and easy to replace if an area ever gets stained or damaged. Just pull up the affected ones, and leave the rest in place.



#### Rolling Cart:

This laundry cart is perfect for holding freshly folded items, wet clothes on their way to the drying racks, or air-dried clothes waiting to be fluffed. Designed for commercial use, it won't ever wear out in a home, and its industrial-chic styling complements the rolling laundry sorters, too.



#### Ironing Board Holder:

An inexpensive ironing board holder keeps the board out of the way and even stores the iron and a can of spray starch. It's a handy, simple-to-add addition to the room.



## FOLD-DOWN DRYING Rack

Save money, save energy, and save your clothes by air-drying them. This clever wall-mounted drying rack holds a lot of garments and folds neatly away when it's not in use.

Air-drying is a great way to make your clothes last longer and your energy dollar go further. But clothes drying racks that sit on the floor eat up lots of space, and they're notoriously flimsy.

This drying rack solves both of those problems. It mounts to the wall and can be folded flat when not in use. When you need it, the rack offers close to 20 feet of hanging space without taking up any floor space. But perhaps the best part is that you can make one yourself in a just few hours for less money than you'd spend to buy one.





[1] Stick the arms together using double-faced tape, and then drill all the holes. That way, the holes will be aligned in both arms.

Before you start building the rack, look over the *Illustrations* on page 35. They show how simple this project really is.

The arms are made from  $\frac{3}{4}$ "-thick oak boards. Rails made from aluminum tubing span between the arms at the front and back to create a sturdy structure. Then plastic-coated clothesline gets woven through the arms, pulled tight, and tacked in place. Finally, the whole assembly hangs on nylon straps that just get screwed to the wall and to the drying rack arms.

In use, the nylon straps hold the drying rack horizontal, so garments can hang freely from the lines. When you want to stow the rack away, all you have to do is pivot it up and hang it on a couple of hooks that get mounted to the wall.



[2] Clamp the clothesline to hold it taut, and then secure it with a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " staple.

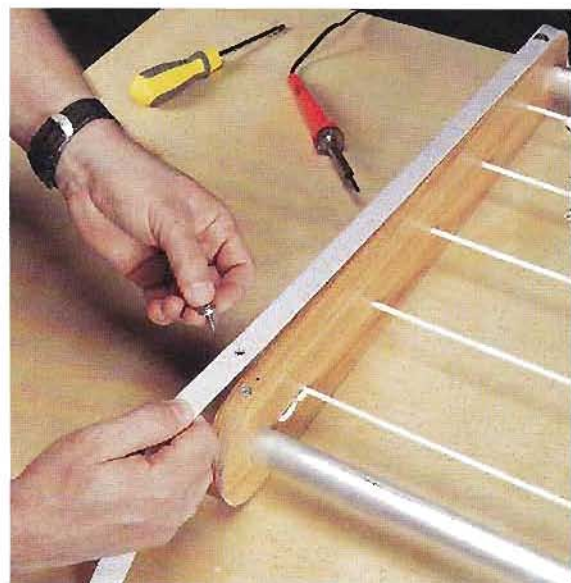
**Start with the Arms** — Now you can start by cutting the arms to length, and then using a jigsaw to shape the rounded ends. Then lay out and drill  $\frac{1}{4}$ " holes where shown for the clothesline cord. Switch to a spade bit, and then drill holes for the aluminum rails (see *Fig. 1*). That done, you can sand the sharp edges, and then coat the arms with polyurethane finish.

**Rails Come Next** — Next, cut two 4-ft. long pieces of aluminum tubing. You can do that easily with a hacksaw or with a pipe cutter.

Now you can assemble the rack. Start by flipping one arm end for end. This positions the double holes used for securing the clothesline at the front of one arm and the back of the other. Slip the arms onto the rails so the ends of the tubes sit flush with the outside face of each arm, and then pin the rails in place by drilling holes and driving in screws.

With those assembled, it's time to add the clothesline. To do that, first loosely weave the line through the holes. Now, secure one end by driving a staple into the inside face of one arm. Next, pull the line taut one section at a time. As you pull one section tight, use a clamp to hold the line taut. When you get to the end, pull the line back inside the arm and staple it in place (*Fig. 2*).

Now you can add the nylon straps that suspend the rack. You can purchase this type of strap by the foot at a fabric store or from the source on page 63. Cut two pieces of strap to length, and then lay out the holes where shown for screws that will secure the straps to the arms. Then make holes for the screws



[3] Attach the straps to the arms using screws and finish washers.

by burning through the straps with the tip of a soldering iron.

You'll also need to drill holes in the lower edge of each arm. Then you can install the straps (*Fig. 3*). You'll want to drive in a small brad where the strap wraps around the front edge of each arm. This prevents the strap from slipping off the front of the arm when you raise or lower it.

**Rack 'Em Up** — Finally, you can install the rack. To do that, lay out its position on the wall, and place screw-in wall anchors in the wallboard. Then drive in the lower mounting screws. Raise the rack, bring the strap ends together at the upper mounting point, and drive in those screws.

To complete the project, drive a couple of hooks into the wall (again using hollow wall anchors if necessary). These hold the front rail when the rack is folded against the wall.

—Written by David Stone, illustrated by Erich Lage, project designed by James R. Downing









# Clean Machines

If doing laundry is your least favorite chore, you're not alone. But new laundry appliances offer features that eliminate some of the things we hate most about this tedious task. We'll show you some washers and dryers that make the process faster, easier, and more efficient.

People often include laundry among their most dreaded household jobs. One of the reasons that it's such an unpleasant task is that laundry rooms are usually unattractive and dungeon-like, which you can fix with ideas from our laundry room makeover on page 26. But your laundry appliances could also be doing much more to ease the chore of cleaning your clothing. Luckily, washer and dryer manufacturers have added a number of convenient features to address some of the most annoying aspects of laundry day. For example, large-capacity washers and dryers will reduce the number of trips you'll make to and from the laundry area. Plus, some models offer intermittent tumbling after the normal cycle has ended, so you won't have to rush to get clothes out of the dryer before they wrinkle.



Features like these are available in appliances that have sleek, stylish appearances. The washers and dryers also give you the peace of mind of knowing that your appliances can help you protect your clothing — and in some cases, the environment. On the next few pages, we'll show you some washers and dryers that make doing laundry a less distasteful task. For more information about the models shown, turn to page 63.

**SOPHISTICATED STYLE.** When it comes to washers and dryers, it's what's inside that counts. But it's also hard to ignore the updated look of the newest laundry appliances. Their rounded shapes, shiny finishes, and convenient controls make them much more

appealing. This is good news since it's becoming more common for laundry rooms to be located closer to the main living spaces in homes. When your appliances are placed in a more visible area, you'll want them to add to your home's style rather than detract from it.

Many washer and dryer models offer beyond-basic color options, too. The colors range from the vibrant green of Electrolux's front-load washer and dryer (*shown on page 39*) to the sophisticated champagne hue of the GE Profile "colossal capacity" front-load washer. Of course, you can still choose white if you prefer a classic look.

**CUSTOMIZABLE SETUP.** You're no longer limited to placing your washer and dryer side by side. With

proper ventilation, many models can be stacked to fit narrow spaces. You can also get washers and dryers with storage pedestals underneath. Some of these pedestals, like the SmartDispense pedestal available for the GE Profile front-load washer, even have dispensers inside that automatically release the amount of detergent that's appropriate for your load.

If you want to take sleek, stylish appliances a step further, consider a washer and dryer that are fully integrated into your laundry area. Asko has created the UltraCare integrated washer and dryer (*shown opposite*), which blend seamlessly into the room by fitting under countertops or inside closets. The appliances' doors can



This GE Profile washer and dryer pair offers steam technology for extra cleaning options. Plus, you can purchase matching pedestals.

The Samsung front-load washer pictured here can sanitize clothing, and its matching dryer automatically adjusts the load's drying time.







When you're short on space, Fagor's combination washer and dryer may be exactly what you're looking for.



Whirlpool's Duet washer will detect how much water a load needs, and the dryer offers a cycle for bulky items.



From quiet operation to steam cleaning, the Performance Series washer and dryer by Maytag are loaded with features.

be covered with accessory panels in stainless steel, white, or black to match your decor. Customers may also use their own custom panels to match their cabinetry. And since the manufacturer has set the appliances' life expectancy at 20 years, they probably won't wear out before you're ready to remodel.

**FRONT-LOADING FEATURE.** A nice appearance alone isn't enough to make most people upgrade their washer and dryer. But the convenient features offered by these washers and dryers merit a closer look.

The most noticeable difference in today's top-of-the-line washers is that many of them are front-loading. These front-loading washers use less water because they don't have to fill up completely like top-loading models do. Their design also lets you fit more clothes into the washer since they don't have the central agitator found in top-loading models.

**SIZED TO FIT.** Washer and dryer capacity has increased, as well. This will save a lot of time, especially for families that have to do a lot of laundry. Large-capacity washing machines offer more than four cubic feet of space inside, and some dryers have room for more than seven cubic feet of laundry.

If you have a small space, though, a large washer and dryer pair might not



be in the cards. You could, of course, buy a compact washer and dryer. But Fagor has created an appliance that combines washing and drying in one machine. The appliance has 16 programs and lets you choose to wash, dry, or do both.

**QUIETER CLEANING.** Placing your washer and dryer within your living space used to bring concern about noise and vibrations. Manufacturers have addressed these concerns with models that boast suspension systems, which drastically reduce rattling. For example, the Whirlpool Duet washer shown above has a six-point suspension system that cuts down on vibrations during the spin cycle.

**SMART SETTINGS.** Many of us select our laundry settings without really thinking about which options will work best for the load of laundry that we're cleaning. Some washers and dryers have sensors that will help determine the best cycle settings, so you won't have to. For example, the GE Profile front-load washer shown on page 37 has a wash system that automatically detects the size of your load and adds the right amount of water. The Whirlpool Duet dryer features a system that monitors how fast your laundry load is drying and automatically stops the cycle when it's done.







After the laundry is dry, you'll probably pull out at least a couple of items that are wrinkled. If you can't get to the dryer before your clothing cools, you're stuck ironing set-in wrinkles. You can buy some time by choosing a dryer with a tumbling feature designed to prevent wrinkles. Samsung's super-capacity steam dryer, for example, tumbles your clothing without heat after it's dry to keep it wrinkle-free.

**CLEAN WITH STEAM.** You may have noticed that many new washers and dryers tout steam technology. This feature is useful in a number of ways. First, steam is great for wrinkle reduction. The Maytag Performance Series dryer in the *Photo* at left is just one example of a dryer that can relax wrinkles by using steam technology.

Laundry appliances with steam technology also come in handy for refreshing clean clothing that you haven't worn in a while. Some dryer models have a "refresh" setting, so you can take advantage of steam's ability to reduce wrinkles and odors. That way, you won't have to fully wash clothing that doesn't need a regular wash cycle.

Steam also provides a way to sanitize items that you want to get as clean as possible. Towels, bedding, and children's clothing are great candidates for the steam sanitizing cycle in a dryer.

If you live with someone who has allergies, you know how important it is to reduce allergens at all costs. Steam cleaning can come to the rescue yet again in this situation by removing allergens from clothing. The LG ultra-capacity steam washer even has an "Allergiene" cycle, which gets rid of allergens such as pet dander.

**PROTECT YOUR WALLET.** Another great feature of new washers and dryers is that they have a smaller impact on the environment, and that means they'll have a smaller impact on your wallet in the long run, too. Most feature-loaded washers conserve water, and many washers and dryers even exceed Energy Star requirements. The Bosch Vision washer has an Active-Water system, which according to the manufacturer uses 70 percent less water per load than the industry average.

A laundry room leak can become a costly disaster, so it's worth looking for models with leak protection features. In addition to its water-saving system, the Bosch Vision washer has a sensor that detects leaks, shuts off the water, and pumps out any remaining water to prevent damage. Technology like this might be enough to make laundry day a little less stressful.

— Written by Alyssa McNab



Electrolux's washer and dryer pair with IQ-Touch controls is available in bright colors and offers speedy cleaning.



Leak protection and gentle clothes drying are just two of the features found in Bosch Vision washers and dryers. (Also shown on page 37.)



This ultra-capacity washer from LG offers allergen reduction, and the dryer can refresh clothing with a steam cycle.



# One Smokin' hot — Fire pit

Turn a store-bought fire bowl into an attractive yard feature that the whole family can enjoy. All it takes are some paving stones from the home center and a few hours of work.

Everybody enjoys the warmth and comfort of a natural wood fire. It's one of the main reasons that decorative fire bowls have become such popular items at every store from The Home Depot to Walmart. The bowls available today even come with a screen on top that serves as a spark arrestor, which means they're safe to use in most municipalities. (But be sure to check your local codes.)

If you were to just set the fire bowl on a patch of grass, though, you'd be missing a real opportunity to add style and function to your yard. This project gives a decorative fire bowl the prominence it deserves. And with the help of a shallow recess that's surrounded by a square of tumbled concrete pavers, it still blends naturally with the yard around it. These features give the fire pit a feeling of permanence, making it a welcome addition to your outdoor living space.

**Making Your Own** — The other nice thing about this fire pit is that it doesn't force you to commit to a time-consuming project. In fact, you can build it in an afternoon and enjoy a fire that evening. Plus, you can do it all for about \$300 worth of materials from the home center — the fire bowl itself; wall blocks to create the wall around the pit; 13" square pavers; and some gravel, sand, and decorative rocks to form the base. As far as the work goes, you can realistically complete this project in a few hours. We'll walk you through the construction process over the next few pages, and then offer guidance on accessorizing and personalizing the pit to make it an attractive part of your yard.





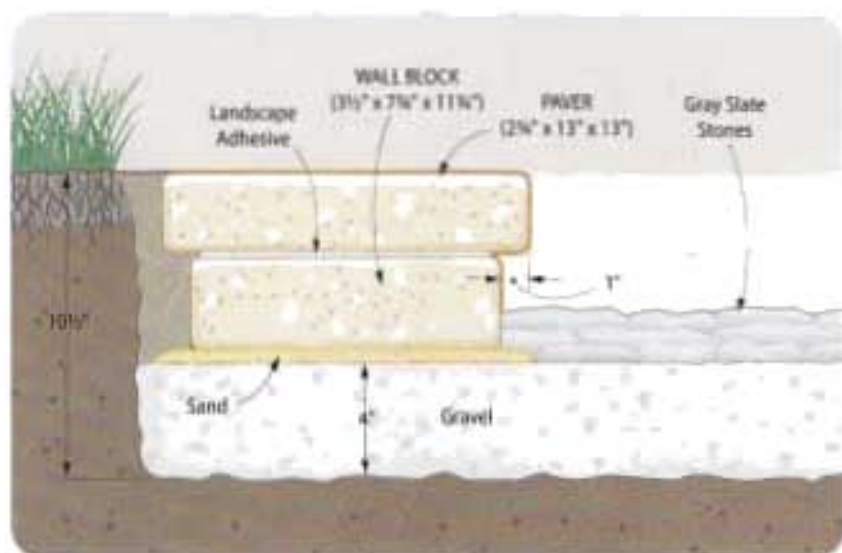




To make the fire pit, you'll want to start by selecting a fire bowl. (The one we used is listed on page 63.) You can use its diameter to determine the size of the pit itself — and its style to determine the type of blocks you'll use. Our bowl was 30" in diameter, so we surrounded it with 13" square pavers to create a pit with an inner dimension of 39" x 39".

We chose these pavers because they had matching tumbled concrete wall blocks that we could use to build the inner walls of the pit. You'll also need enough gravel to create a 4" base layer under the blocks and bowl (we used about a half-ton), a few bags of sand to level the blocks, and some decorative stones (we used gray slate).

The next consideration is the location of the pit. First, check your local codes to make sure you place it a safe distance from any structures. Then, call the utility company and ask them to



mark any utility lines in the area where you're thinking about digging.

The fire pit needs to be level, so you'll want to find a patch of yard that's relatively flat. As you can see, ours had a slight grade to it, but it was subtle enough that our pit still looked good.

**Lay It Out & Dig In** — With your supplies on hand, you can get to work. Step one is to lay out the pavers to form the outline of the pit. Use a tape measure

to make sure they're square from side to side and positioned correctly in the yard. Once you have them where you want them, use a flat-bladed shovel to score the outline of the pit in the grass (Fig. 1).

The next step is to dig out the pit to a depth that matches the combined thickness of your base, blocks, and pavers (Illustration, above). When you get near the bottom, take some time to get the surface level and the sides straight.



### Create a Base & Wall

#### [1] Score the Grass

After laying out the pavers, use a flat-bladed shovel to score the perimeter of the pit.

#### [2] Compact the Base

A hand tamper makes quick work of getting the base layer of gravel flat and level.

#### [3] The Sand Solution

Raking out a thin layer of sand makes it easy to create a level surface for laying blocks.

#### [4] Build the Wall

Lay the wall blocks along each side of the pit, and check them every once in a while to make sure they're level with one another.

## Add Pavers & Stone

### [5] Bash the Blocks

If the wall blocks aren't quite level, the sand allows you to coax them into position with a mallet and a scrap of 2x4.

### [6] Backfill with Soil

Use plain soil to fill in the spaces beside and behind the wall blocks.

### [7] Lock Down the Pavers

A bead of landscape adhesive between the wall blocks and pavers ensures that your pit will last for the long haul.

### [8] Add Decorative Stone

Finally, pour in your decorative stone of choice. Gray slate complemented our pit nicely.



**Pour in the Base** — With the soil out, the gravel can go in. You'll need a lot to form a 4" base layer, but this thick layer of gravel will ensure that the fire pit stays stable and drains moisture nicely.

To add the gravel, just dump it in and rake it out. Get it as level as possible, and then use a hand tamper to compact it flat and smooth (Fig. 2). As you get close to the depth of gravel you want, use a tape measure to check the depth and a long level to check the flatness.

**Build the Wall** — The next step is adding the wall blocks, and this is where the sand comes in. By raking out a thin layer of sand above the gravel, you can ensure that the blocks sit flat and level with one another as you lay them along each side of the wall (Fig. 3).

We wanted the faces of the wall blocks to be recessed 1" behind the pavers on top, so we used a paver to position the first block before laying them. Also, keep in mind that only the front faces of these blocks will be visible after you put on the pavers. That means you can start laying the blocks a few inches from each corner and overlap adjoining blocks at the corners to make them all fit properly. We were able to make the walls without cutting a single block.

As you work your way around the pit laying blocks, check periodically to make sure they're level (Fig. 4). You can place a handful of sand underneath the blocks or tap the surface with a mallet and a scrap block to make small adjustments as needed (Fig. 5). Once all the blocks are laid, backfill behind and beside them with soil (Fig. 6).

**Finish It Up** — With the blocks in place, you're ready to add the pavers to the top. If you took the time to position and level your base layer and wall blocks correctly, this part should be easy. Still, we took a few minutes

to dry-fit all the pavers first. Then, we picked up the pavers one at a time and applied a bead of landscape adhesive underneath each one to really solidify the construction of the pit (Fig. 7).

Now all that's left is spreading a layer of decorative stones (Fig. 8) and placing the fire bowl in the center. Then you can accessorize and stylize your yard around the pit as desired to truly make it a great outdoor gathering place.

— Written by Wyatt Myers, illustrated by Matt Scott, project designed by James R. Downing

## Fire Pit Accessories

To transform this fire pit into a great gathering spot, you need the right accessories. Here are just a handful that we recommend:

- Chairs and tables
- Citronella candles
- Fire-tending tools
- Firewood holder
- Telescoping forks (for hot dogs and marshmallows)
- Pie irons/sandwich makers
- Fire extinguisher nearby (for safety's sake)





A hand holding a paintbrush is shown in the process of painting a large, light green circle on a wall. The brush has a black handle with a silver ferrule and a white label that reads "DAVID WHITE". The hand is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt. The background is a plain, off-white wall with several other faint, larger green circles already painted, creating a minimalist, modern aesthetic.

# Creating simple circles

If you've grown weary of plain walls, then think outside of the box with a round design. We'll show you how to paint circles like a pro, so you can easily and quickly infuse any room in your home with color, pattern, and personality.

Sometimes, seeing spots is a good thing — especially when they're adding interest to a humdrum wall. You can make them big and bold or small and subtle depending on the effect you want to achieve. Circular designs are also one of the few decorative paint treatments that don't require you to cover the entire wall surface, so you can leave your base color alone and complete a dramatic accent wall in just a few hours.

The challenge of the circle technique is painting freehand — you can't just mask off round shapes like you can with straight lines. But don't worry, we'll make it easy with clear instructions and how-to photos for every step. The secret lies in the simplest of materials: string, a tack, and a pencil. With this trio of tools, you can draw perfect circles the size of a Volkswagen or an orange. And we'll show you how to perfect the technique by making templates on craft paper before moving on to painting your wall.



\*All paint colors are Behr Premium Plus (tm) colors.





### Tack-and-String Technique —

To get started making circles, you'll just need to round up some brown craft paper, string, a tack, a marker, and scissors. Start by poking a tack through a piece of brown craft paper, roughly in the middle of the sheet. Flip the paper over, so the sharp end of the tack is sticking up. Now slip the end of a length of string on the sharp end of the tack. Use braided string — it won't unravel when you poke the tack through it.

Then, think about how wide you want your circle to be, and divide that measurement in half. (If it's been a while since you took geometry, you're determining the circle's radius.) Tie the opposite end of the string to a marker, close to the point, so the length of string equals your desired radius. In other words, if you want your circle to be 12" wide, the string should measure 6".

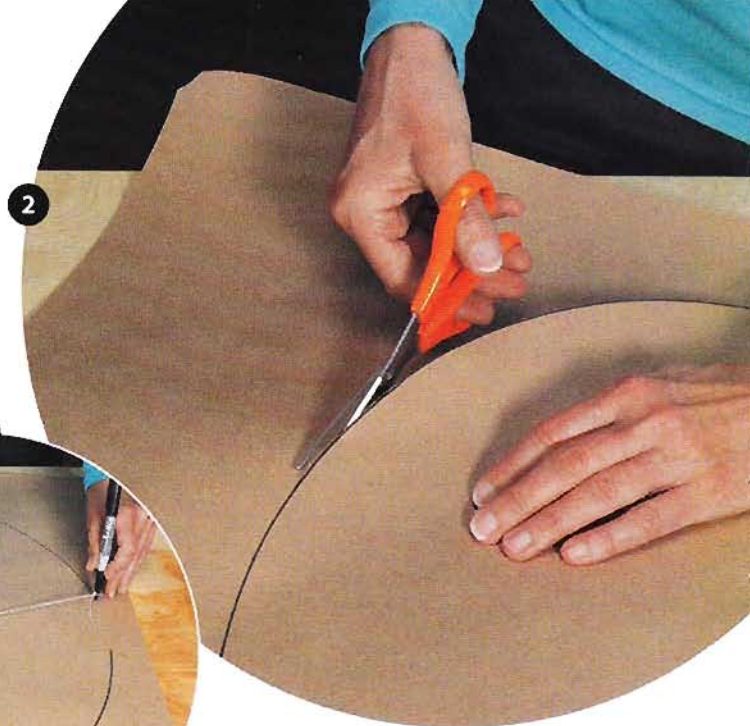
Next, hold onto the tack, so the paper won't tear when you stretch the string. Hold the marker with your other hand, and rotate it around the paper, drawing a circle. Practice a few times until you get the hang of making various-sized circles.

**Planning Your Pattern**—Now that you've mastered drawing perfect circles,

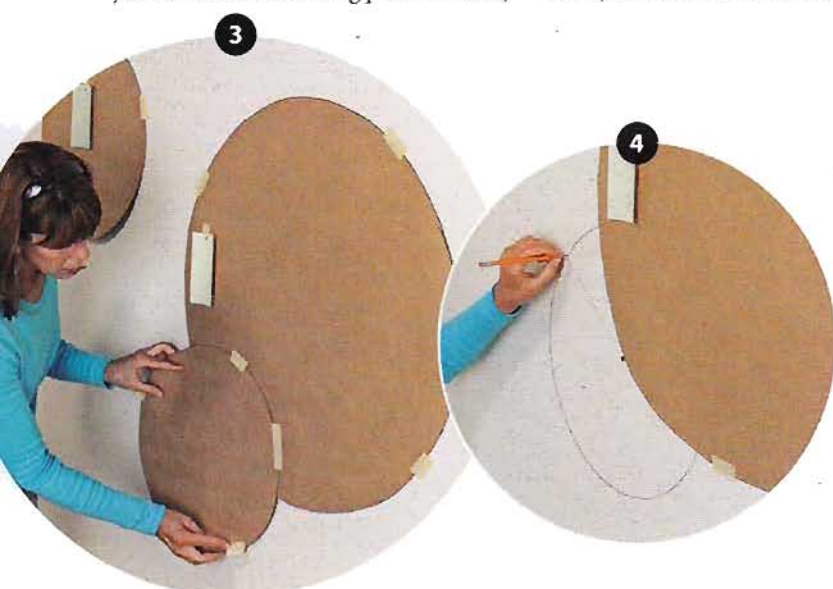
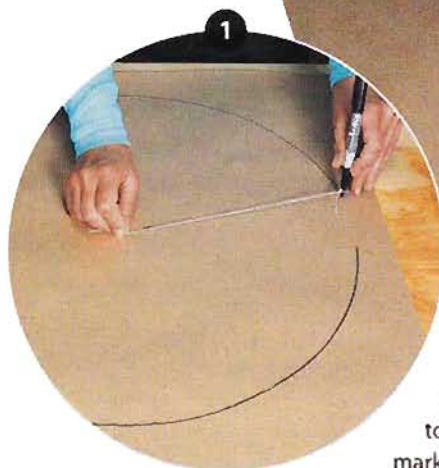
you can decide how you want to paint them on your wall. The circles in our featured pattern measure 7", 8", 16", 18", 23", and 28" in diameter. Feel free to reproduce our pattern exactly, or modify it to suit your own style and space. An accent wall with circles will vary in impact depending on the size of the circles and the paint colors selected. Our monochromatic scheme offers a subtle effect, while bolder color choices could

appear contemporary and dramatic. Take a look at the color samples shown throughout these pages for ideas.

Once you've decided on colors and a pattern, resist the temptation to start merrily penciling circles on the wall. Make some paper circles first, so you can easily experiment with your design. The few extra minutes this takes is well worth all the erasing you'll probably save yourself. Just use the tack-and-string



[1] When you're making circle templates from craft paper, be sure to keep the string taut and hold the marker as straight as possible, so the circle will be even. [2] Then carefully cut out the circle. Make templates in several different sizes.



[3] Paper templates will help you envision different designs before you commit to marking on the wall. [4] Use a sharp pencil instead of a marker to draw circles on the wall, so you can cover the lines with paint. Cut a small notch just above the pencil's point to hold the string when you tie it on.



[5] When you start painting on the wall, take your time. Carefully paint a narrow perimeter so that it just covers the pencil line. The brush's tapered shape helps handle the curves.

method to draw all the sizes of circles needed for your pattern (Fig. 1), and then cut them out (Fig. 2).

Stick the circles to the wall with masking tape, so it will be easy to rearrange them until you're satisfied with the overall design (Fig. 3). Also, tape a paint chip of the color you're considering for each circle right on the paper to help you imagine the final result.

When you have your design just right, mark on the wall where the circles are located and how large they are before you take the paper circles down. To do this, just make a pencil mark through the tack hole in the center of the paper, and then make a small mark on the paper circle's outer edge, as well. Now you can remove it.

Next, place a tack with string on it directly on the circle's center mark, pushing hard enough to secure it to the wall. Stretch the string until it reaches the outer mark, and tie on a pencil so that its tip hits the mark exactly. Then lightly draw a circle on the wall (Fig. 4). Repeat this process until you've drawn all of the circles in your pattern.

Where two circles overlap, don't mark the section that appears to hide behind the top circle. When you're

done, re-tape the paint chip that you selected onto each circle, so you won't forget which shade goes where.

Once you've finished the design, you can start painting those nice round shapes. We chose a new paint product — Behr Premium Plus Ultra — for this application. It combines primer and paint, so your odds of getting away with one coat improve substantially. Sample paint jars might even contain enough for some of your colors. You'll also need a 1" tapered brush to outline the circles and a small foam roller and pan to fill in the centers.

Start painting your design by carefully outlining a circle (Fig. 5).

Then switch to the roller and fill in the center while the outer strip is still wet (Fig. 6). Continue in this fashion until you've completed all of the circles in your pattern (Fig. 7).

Circle designs can appear as bubbles in a bathroom, favorite team colors in a family room, floating balloons in a child's room, or any place where curves might add some decorating spice.

— Written by Louise Ritchhart, design by Kurt Schultz

#### Bold Kids' Room Colors

- |                      |         |
|----------------------|---------|
| [1] Limeade          | S-G-420 |
| [2] Atomic Tangerine | S-G-320 |
| [3] Tutti Frutti     | S-G-100 |
| [4] Intense Teal     | S-G-490 |



[6] Foam mini-rollers work perfectly for filling in the centers of the circles. They're available in the paint aisle at the home center or any craft store. [7] For overlapping circles, paint the circle that is "underneath" first, and allow the paint to dry before cutting in the circle "on top."







## EASY PHOTO SHELF

*P*hoto shelves — those long, narrow rails installed on the wall that framed photos rest on — are appreciated for their flexibility and ease of use. Any time you want to swap out photos of family members, special events, or vacations, it will only take a minute. Our custom photo shelf is assembled from common materials that you can buy at the home center, so it's also economical. This makes it an attractive alternative to the wood photo shelves you can purchase, which often start at \$15 a foot. Buying several of those can be a pricey proposition, but our unique design will let you build all the photo shelves you need without straining your budget.

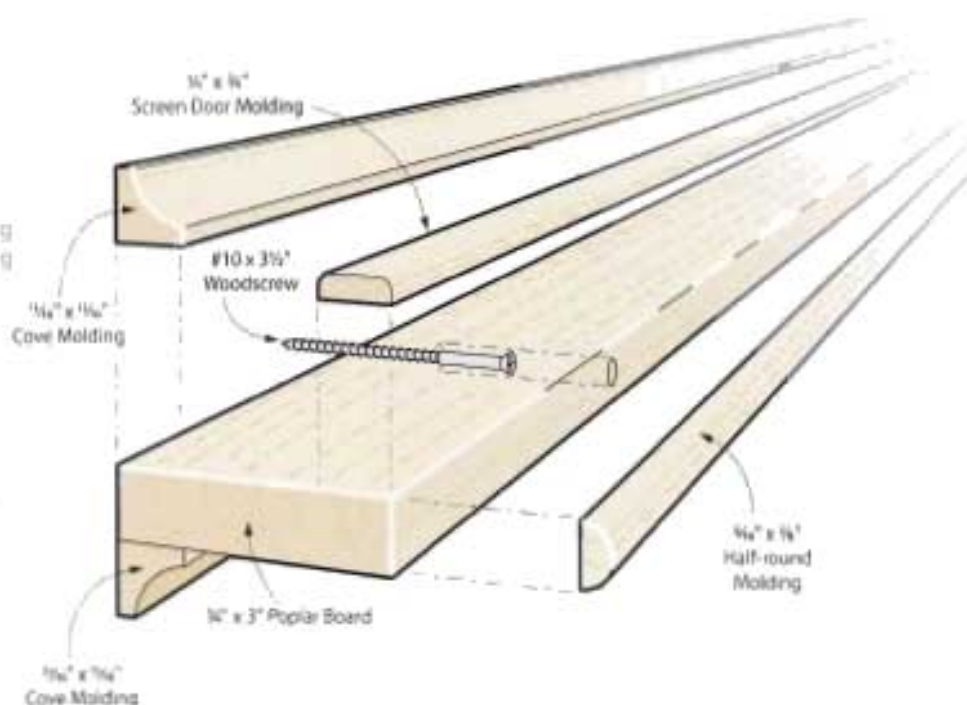
This shelf also features an innovative design element that lets you easily attach each shelf to the wall. And these shelves are a snap to put together, even if you're new to working with wood. Assembly is simply a matter of cutting the materials to the desired length, drilling mounting holes through the rail, attaching moldings, and mounting the shelf to the wall. We'll also show you how to use a handy tool you might not be familiar with — a doweling jig — that makes short work of drilling perfectly straight holes through the rail.



It's a challenge faced in many homes: What's the best way to display a constantly evolving collection of family photos? This simple-to-build custom shelf lets you add or rearrange photos in different-sized frames without having to make new nail holes in the wall.

#### MATERIALS & TOOLS

- $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 3" poplar board
- $\frac{1}{4}$ " x  $\frac{1}{4}$ " cove molding
- $\frac{1}{4}$ " x  $\frac{1}{2}$ " screen door molding
- $\frac{1}{4}$ " x  $\frac{1}{2}$ " half-round molding
- circular or miter saw
- level
- doweling jig
- drill,  $\frac{1}{8}$ " and  $\frac{1}{2}$ " drill bits
- nail set
- tape measure
- clamps
- $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 17-gauge finish nails
- #10 x  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " wood screws
- wood glue
- wood filler
- sandpaper
- paint and brushes







[1] Apply wood glue to the back of the screen door molding.

[2] Then drive in a few finish nails to hold it securely.

Before you begin, you'll need to get familiar with how a photo shelf is constructed. The shelf's main rail is made from a 1" x 4" poplar board. A piece of screen door molding acts as a stop for the frames. Two pieces of cove molding get mounted on the top and bottom edges at the back to add interest and weight to the shelf's design. And finally, half-round molding covers the mounting screws on the front edge.

**What You'll Need** — Check out the list on page 49 to see what tools and supplies you will need. One tool you might not have is a doweling jig to drill perfectly straight mounting holes through the center of the rail. There are several varieties of doweling jigs, but for this purpose, a basic \$10 model works just fine (see *Resources on page 63*).

Before you start building, you'll want to determine where each shelf will be attached to the wall. That way, you can decide how many shelves you need

and in what lengths. While you're at it, locate and mark the studs in the wall where the shelves will go. You'll attach the rails to the studs later.

**Assembly Process** — Now you can cut the poplar rail and the moldings to length. To clean up the edges, also rip the rails to 3" wide. Then apply a bead of wood glue to the back of the screen door molding (Fig. 1), and attach it to the rail with finish nails (Fig. 2).

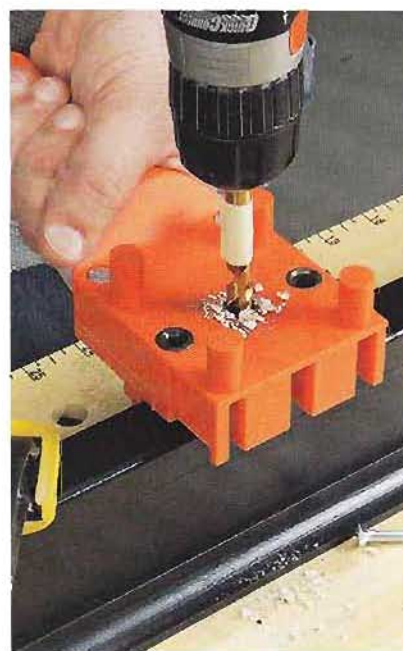
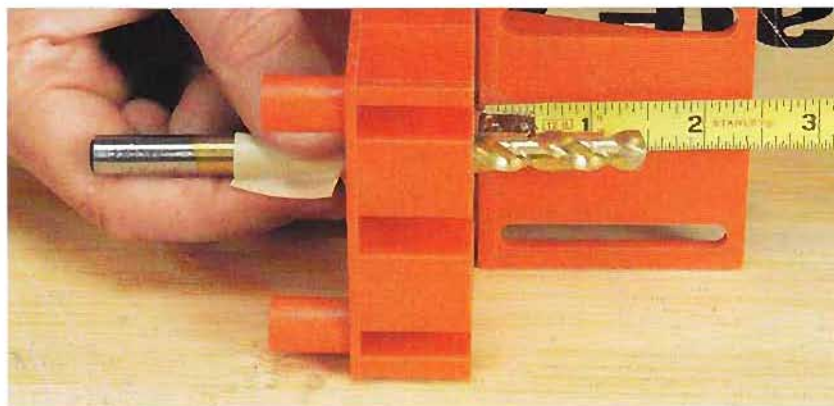
Next, use wood glue and finish nails to attach the top and bottom cove moldings to the rail. Finally, sand the assembled rail and the piece of half-round molding smooth, prime and paint both pieces, and allow the paint to dry. We painted our shelves black, but there are endless possibilities for how you can finish yours (see *Sidebar, page 51*).

**Counterboring Tips** — Before you mount the rail, hold it against the wall where you plan to mount it, and get it

level. Then transfer stud locations (they will be 16" apart) to the front edge of the rail.

Now you are ready to use the doweling jig to drill mounting holes in the rail. This tool helps you drill deep holes called counterbores, which will allow the 3½" woodscrews to drive into the studs to mount the shelves securely to the wall (see *Illustrations, page 51*).

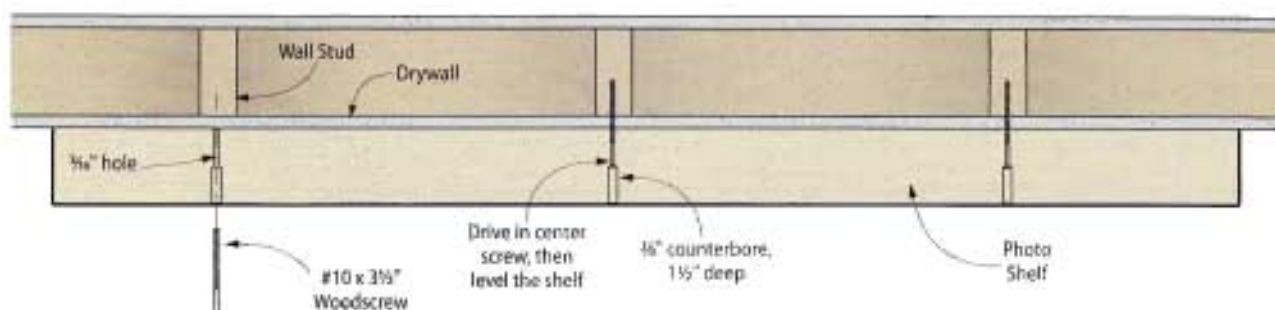
On a work surface, slide the ⅜" bit through the hole marked ⅜" in the doweling jig. Measure 1½" from the bit's tip, and then wrap tape around the bit to establish the drilling depth. (Fig. 3). Clamp the rail to a work surface, so it won't move while you're drilling. Then firmly hold the jig against the bottom of the rail, and drill a counterbore into the rail at



[3] Wrap a piece of masking tape around the ⅜" bit where it extends from the jig to ensure that the counterbores will be 1½" deep. [4] Next, clamp the rail securely in place, and use the jig to drill counterbores at each of the locations you marked.



## MOUNTING THE SHELF

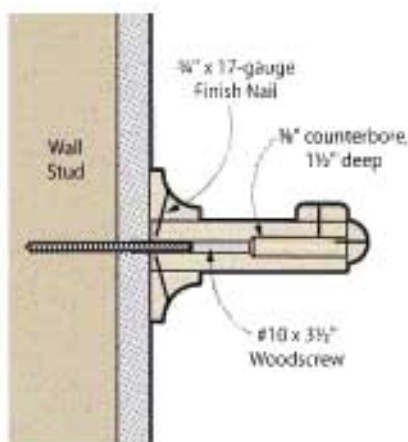


[5] Switch to a  $\frac{1}{8}$ " bit, and drill a hole through the counterbore's center all the way through the rail.

each of the marked locations (Fig. 4). Switch to a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " bit, and drill straight through each of the larger holes, this time going all the way through the rail (Fig. 5). It's not necessary to use the doweling jig for these holes — just hold the drill as straight as possible.

**Easy Mounting Trick** — Now you can mount the rail to the wall at the stud locations. There's a simple way to make sure it's level: Loosely attach a screw in the center hole first, so the shelf can still move slightly (Illustration, above). Then get the shelf level, drive in the screws on either side, and tighten the center screw.

To complete the photo shelf, attach the half-round molding to the front of the rail with finish nails (Fig. 6). (If you ever need to move the shelf, just carefully pry off the molding and then reattach it after the shelf is installed in its new location.) Stop hammering



just before the nail head is flush, so you don't damage the molding's finish. Then use a nail set to recess the nails in all of the moldings, and fill the holes with wood filler. When the filler is dry, touch up the spots with paint.

— Written by Louise Ritchhart, illustrated by Erich Lage, project designed by Kent Welsh



[6] Carefully drive in small finish nails to attach the cap molding to the front edge. This will cover up the screw holes.

Painted

Stained

Antiqued

### FINISHING OPTIONS

There's no right or wrong color for photo shelves — choose any finish that complements the room they will be installed in. Try a brightly painted shelf in a child's room, or apply two coats of mahogany gel stain for a rich look. Ivory paint wiped with antiquing stain provides a soft, warm finish.





# *m*ismatched **FRAMES**

Most people acquire photo frames gradually, and that means those frames probably don't match. But you don't have to pitch them and start fresh. We'll show you tricks to make mismatched frames look like they were meant to be displayed together.





Photos capture some of the most important moments in our lives, so it's no surprise that many people frame them to give as gifts or display in their homes. The problem is that when you accumulate photo frames over time, they usually don't match one another — or your home's decor. After a few years, you could have a pile of frames that look great individually but clash when used in the same space.

Even if your mismatched frames make you cringe every time you see them, you don't have to send them to the garage sale pile or the garbage can. Instead, you can use a few simple materials and tricks to make them look like they were always supposed to be grouped together on your wall or table. You'll be amazed by the difference that some paint, background materials, mats, or strategic photo arrangements can make.

When you rejuvenate your photo frame displays, you don't have to limit yourself to frames you already have. Thrift stores, home store clearance sections, and flea markets offer treasure troves of inexpensive frames. These castoffs can end up as charming finishing touches in your home. Read on to find out which of these ideas — or perhaps a combination of them — will solve the problems specific to your frames.

### Color Sense

One of the easiest ways to bring consistent style to your frame grouping is to change the color of the frames. Painting the frames is often the best option if the colors and materials of your group of frames clash or if the frames' colors don't work with your decor (*Before Photo, above*).

When you're painting frames that are made of different materials, using spray paint is your best bet for getting a consistent finish. You can get spray paint that will work on just about any material from wood to metal. Plus, using spray paint ensures that you'll be able to fully paint the details of intricate frames. The number of coats you'll need will depend on the color of the spray paint and the frame's material and

These "before" and "after" photos show the impact that a little paint can have on mismatched photo frames. We started with a small group of frames that had clashing finishes and styles. After a few coats of spray paint, the frames are tied together by a common color but maintain their own unique details.

original color. Remember that several light coats are always better than one or two heavy coats.

The most popular color choices for grouped frames are white and black, but your options are really only limited by the number of paint colors you can find. You could also choose to paint one or two frames in a coordinating color to make them stand out from the rest.

When you're picking paint, just be sure that the color or colors you choose aren't so eye-catching that they take attention away from the photos inside the frames. We chose to stick with classic white paint for our frames because we wanted to make sure the photos would be the main focus in the display (*After Photo, above*).

### Background Check

Changing the frames themselves isn't always the best approach. Sometimes a collection of frames can work together even if their colors and styles aren't identical. In these cases, you have a number of options for transforming the way your photos are presented.

One option is to use fabric, art board, or scrapbook paper as photo backgrounds to give the frames a unified look. To make the backgrounds, simply trace around the frame's backer board on your paper or fabric, cut it to size, and then secure your photo on top with adhesive.





Even photo frames with very different styles and colors can work together when you add some coordinating mats.

When you're using mats that are all the same color, you run the risk of making the photo display look too uniform and bland. Add some interest by incorporating a variety of mat configurations and sizes. For example, if you have two photos that are the same size, you could try one photo in a large frame with a wide mat and another photo in a smaller frame with a narrow mat. For the wall arrangement shown at left, we mixed some double-layer photo mats and even one with an oval opening into the grouping.

If you're lucky enough to have frames with standard dimensions, you can purchase pre-cut mats at many art and hobby stores. You may not be able to find pre-cut mats in the sizes or colors you're looking for, though. In those cases, you'll need to have them cut professionally at a frame shop or learn to cut your own.

Art supply stores sell basic mat cutters that you can use to get started. Mat board is also available at art supply stores or through online retailers. You

Patterned paper or fabric can really make your photos stand out, but you'll want to use a bit of caution when choosing patterns. There's a fine line between an interesting pattern that highlights the photos and a distracting pattern that overwhelms them. Select patterns that have simple, subtle designs and colors.

You can use the same background pattern for all the frames or choose two or three coordinating patterns. For the backgrounds of the frames shown at right, we chose double-sided scrapbook paper that featured a different pattern on each side. The patterns were designed to work well together, so we just had to decide which of the two patterns to display in each frame.

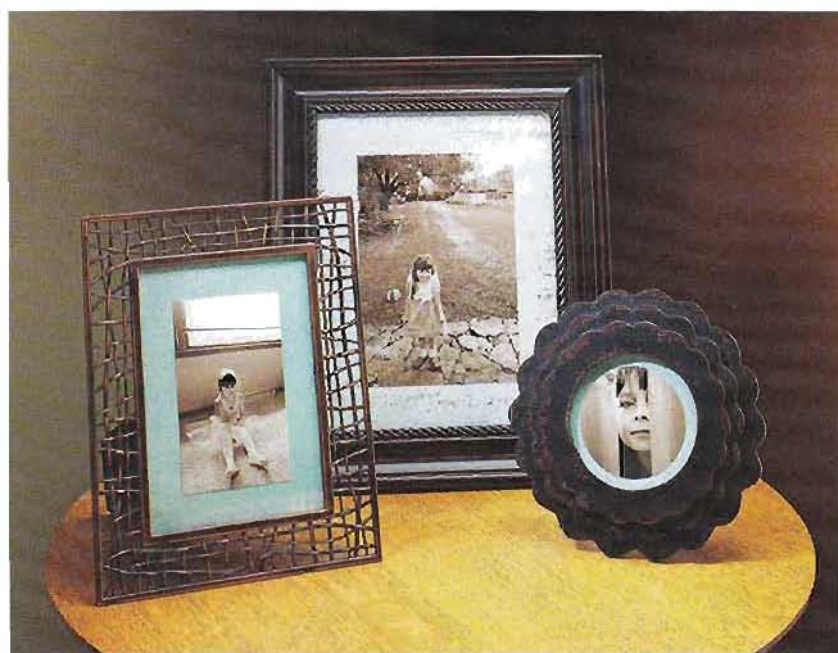
You'll also want to make sure your project materials are safe for photos. Choose only acid-free papers and adhesives for anything that will come in contact with the photos.

### Mat Finish

If you prefer a classic and sophisticated style, you could use photo mats as the consistent element between the frames. It's a simple but effective way

to make different types of frames look like they belong together. Plus, adding mats instantly rejuvenates the frames to make them look like they're new.

The easiest way to use mats to unify your mismatched frames is to choose ones that are all the same color. White, black, ivory, gray, and beige tones are versatile color choices that will work with just about any decor style. Or if you'd prefer to use more colorful mats instead, pick a tone that coordinates with your room's decor colors.



You can give your framed photos a quick, simple makeover by adding scrapbook paper from a craft store.



## “Your photos can make the mismatched frames look like a carefully planned gallery display.”

can choose from just about every shade imaginable, including some metallic mat boards in gold and silver. Keep in mind that many companies have a minimum order rule for Internet purchases, so you may want to explore local options first if you're working with a small group of frames.

### Picture Switch

If your decor is eclectic, or if you need a dramatic focal point in a room, mismatched frames could actually work to your advantage. To keep them from looking disorganized, though, you need to choose the photos you'll display in them carefully. With the right subjects and colors, your photos can make the mismatched frames look like a carefully planned gallery display.

The first strategy for using photos to tie mismatched frames together is grouping photos that have a common theme, such as photos of children or landscapes. This approach can be used alone or combined with some of the other frame-unifying ideas we've

presented. You'll notice that we chose to use coordinating photos in the frame display groupings shown here. By doing so, we were able to boost the other coordinating features like mats and paint to ensure that the mismatched frames worked well together.

You could also group photos from one special event, such as a wedding or birthday. Mix photos that show details of the event, like bouquets or candles, with photos of larger subjects like people or buildings.

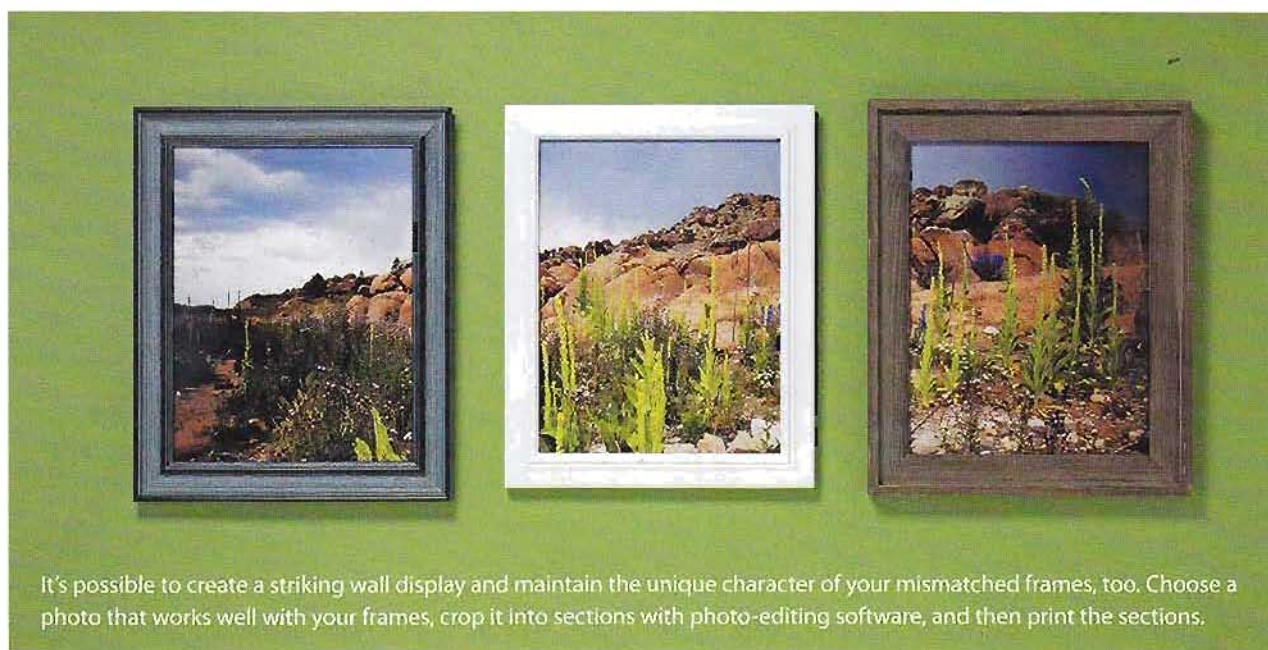
Another way to coordinate your frames is to choose photos that have a similar treatment, such as black-and-white photos or ones with a sepia filter. Many computer photo-editing programs will allow you to instantly adjust your digital photos to black and white or sepia. Some instant photo printing kiosks in stores also offer you the option of adding those popular effects, so you won't have to edit the photos in advance. If you have a bit more experience with photo-editing software, you can give your photos

subtle color washes to complement colors in your decor.

The next strategy can have dramatic results when it's done well. Go through your photos and identify some that have the same dominant color. This color should be one that's also found in the decor of the room where you'll display the photo grouping. Then arrange those photos together in a group of frames. This might also be a chance to practice your own photography skills by capturing photos specifically for this purpose.

The final option also requires a bit of computer skill. Use photo-editing software to crop a photo into sections, and then print each section separately for use in a different frame. This option works best when used for a small grouping of mismatched frames. The result will be especially dramatic if you select a high-impact photo, like the beautiful nature scene shown below, to tie the frames together.

— Written by Alyssa McNab



It's possible to create a striking wall display and maintain the unique character of your mismatched frames, too. Choose a photo that works well with your frames, crop it into sections with photo-editing software, and then print the sections.







# Simple & Stylish Storage Wall

Conquer clutter in a basement or family room for good with this high-capacity storage unit. It shows a stylish face on the outside and boasts big-time storage and shelving within.

Most homes have a room that seems to collect clutter like a magnet. Toys, games, books, and sports equipment all find their way to it, and then gradually grow into unsightly stacks.

The inexpensive shelving units that are available at most home centers are a good start to corralling all that clutter, but there's just one problem: You can still see it all staring back at you from those open shelves. If your family happens to use the room frequently, it can be an annoyance and an eyesore.

The solution, then, is to take those functional shelving units and enclose them. That way, you still get all the storage space without having to look at your stuff.

This storage wall project delivers on that promise in a big way. Inside, it's comprised of two large wire shelving units joined by two more shelves in the center to create a whopping 111 cubic feet of storage space. Outside, simple MDF top and side panels and acrylic-panel doors enclose the shelving and give the wall a dash of style. With the right paint and finish choices, this large storage unit blends nicely with the rest of the room's furnishings.



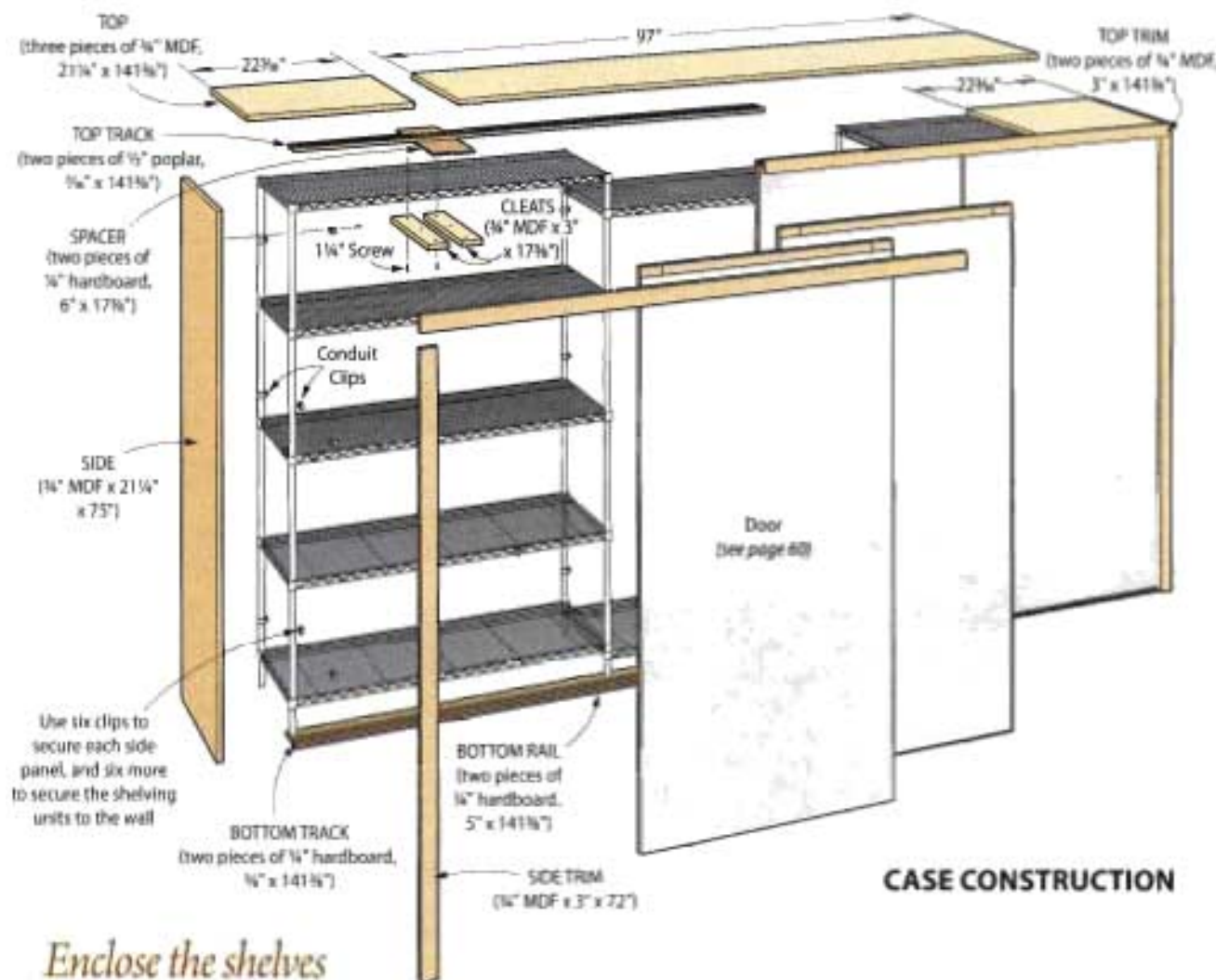
You won't find a project this big that's much easier to build. Since the shelving units come from the home center, all you have to do is put them together. Then you just have to cut a few MDF pieces for the top panel, side panels, trim, and door frame. For a sleek, interesting look, the door panels are made from large pieces of acrylic. And a simple track system allows the doors to slide back and forth in front of the shelves.



## BEFORE:

Open shelves and piles of stuff kept this family room from living up to its full potential, but this large storage wall allowed the family to enclose the clutter and make the room more welcoming. Inside, it boasts over 100 cubic feet of storage for toys, games, or seasonal items. Outside, shiny acrylic doors and a clean design give it style. Thanks to a natural finish that complements the color of the room nicely, the large unit blends right in. But the best part is that you can build it in a weekend for \$500.





## CASE CONSTRUCTION

### Enclose the shelves

As you can see in the illustration above, there really isn't much involved in assembling the storage wall. Once you build the shelves and pick a good spot for them on the wall, the next step is to add the bottom track assembly.

**Get on Track** — The bottom track is made of 1/4"-thick hardboard strips. It has a wide bottom rail that rests on the floor and gets held in place by the shelf legs, which slip through holes in the rail. The rail provides a smooth surface for the doors to roll on, even on carpeted or rough floors. Three narrow strips sit on the rail to form tracks for the doors to slide in.

The storage wall is over 140" wide — wider than a single sheet of hardboard — so you'll need to cut eight strips to make up the track assembly, two each for the bottom rail and the three tracks. Using a circular saw paired with a long straightedge is a good method for cutting these hardboard strips to width, or you can recruit a

friend to help you cut them on a table saw. When it comes time to crosscut the strips to length, stagger the cuts, so the joints are offset between the bottom rail and the track pieces. This will prevent the doors from catching in the track.

Once you have the pieces cut, lift up the front legs of the shelving unit, and set the two bottom rail pieces in place. Then mark the locations of the legs where they rest on the rail, and drill holes at these locations. Later on, the front legs will rest in these holes to hold the door track assembly in place.

Now move the rail pieces back into place under the front legs of the shelving units, and glue the track pieces to the rail pieces where shown in the Side View, above right. Use spacers to establish the locations of the tracks as you glue them in place (Fig. 1).

Once the glue dries, you may need to shim the track assembly to get it level if your floors are uneven. Drive in the

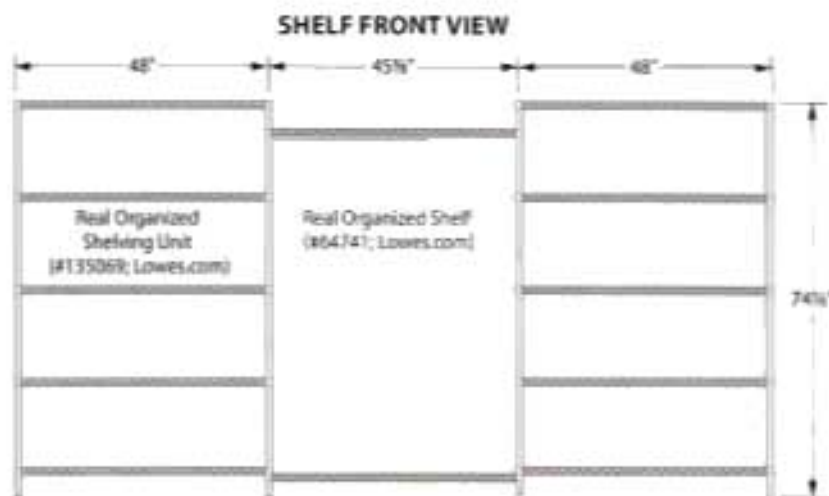
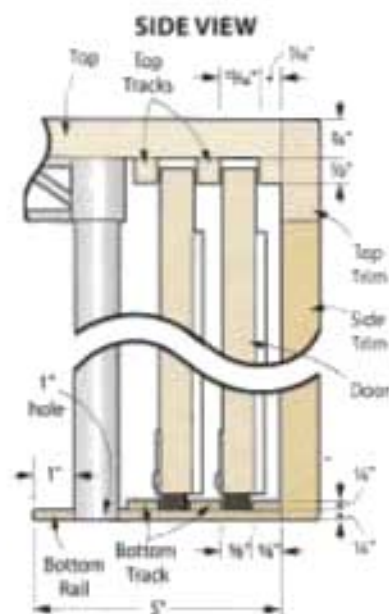
shims from the back of the track, and check your work with a long level.

**Top It Off** — With the track complete, you can get to work on the top panel, which is made from 3/4" medium-density fiberboard (MDF). The top panel is pretty long, so it's actually made up of three separate panels — a long one in the middle, and a shorter one on each end. Also, the panels protrude beyond the front of the shelves. That's because another set of tracks get attached to the underside of these panels to hold the tops of the doors.

Here again, a circular saw and straightedge make quick work of cutting these panels. Then you can finish them by rolling on a couple coats of polyurethane with a foam roller.

We connected the top panels to each other and to the top of the shelving units in one step with the use of some simple cleats and spacers. The cleats, which are made from scrap MDF, rest under the uppermost wire shelves at





the joint between each pair of MDF panels. And the spacers, which are made from two pieces of hardboard stacked face to face, rest directly above the cleats on the top side of the shelf. By driving screws up through the cleats, through the spacers, and into the MDF panels above, you can simultaneously connect the panels to the shelving units and to one another (Fig. 2).

There's still one thing left to add to this top panel, and that's the upper door track system. To hold the doors securely at the top, these strips need to be thicker than the 1/4" hardboard strips at the bottom. We made them from poplar. You'll need to make six strips to cover the entire span of the shelving units. After cutting the strips to size, glue and clamp them in place on the underside of the top panel (Fig. 3).

**Send in the Sides** — Since the side panels are each made from one piece of MDF, they're even easier to add to the assembly. After cutting them to size and finishing them, the panels are held in place with conduit clips, which are available in the electrical aisle of the home center. Just slip the clips around the outer legs of the shelving units, and space them every 18" or so. Then drill pilot holes, and connect the clips to the side panels with screws (Fig. 4).

While you're adding these clips, it's a good idea to secure the back legs to the wall with a few more clips to make sure the unit can't tip forward. Here,

you'll want to use wall anchors and longer screws. If there's a gap between the clip and the wall, you can add a block of wood to serve as a spacer.

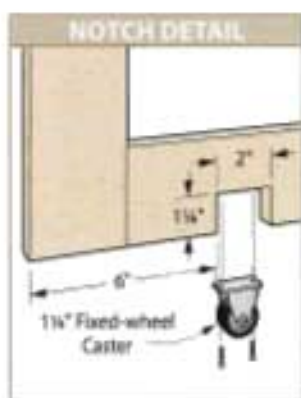
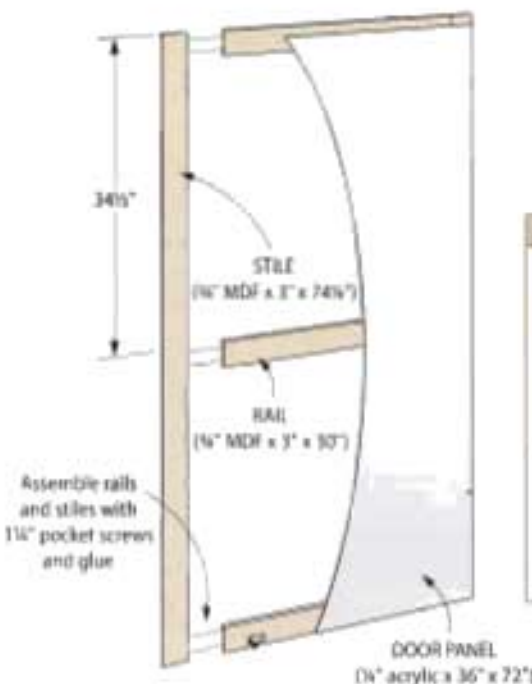
**Trim It Out** — The last parts to add to this assembly are top and side trim strips that cover the top track and

the exposed edges of the top and side panels. We made these strips from leftover pieces of MDF. You'll need two strips to span the full length of the top of the shelves. Just cut the strips to size, finish them with polyurethane, and then glue and nail them in place.



Adding MDF panels to these wire shelving units is easy. Cleats with screws driven through them hold the top panels in place, and conduit clips hold the side panels to the legs.





## Door details

The final touch to this storage wall is a set of four large sliding doors. To amp up the style, we made the front panel on each door from acrylic. Glossy white paint applied to the back of each panel lends a unique look.

This paint also serves another purpose — it covers up the frame of the door, which is made from MDF rails and stiles that are pocket-screwed together. Two casters rest in notches at

the bottom of each door frame to allow them to slide easily in the door track.

**Make the Frames** — Start by making the door frames. Cut out two vertical stiles and three horizontal rails for each. Then dry-assemble each door, check for square, and join the rails to the stiles with glue and pocket screws.

You'll need to add two small notches to the bottom edge of each lower rail to accept the casters. Lay out these notches, and cut them with a jigsaw. Then attach the casters with screws.

**Put on the Panels** — At a local home center, we found acrylic sheets that were 3-ft. x 6-ft. The door frames are slightly taller, but the couple inches of exposed frame at the top will get covered up by the top trim anyway. That meant we didn't even have to cut these acrylic sheets to make the front panels.

Now you can get ready to paint the panels. Acrylic comes with a peel-off facing on both sides to protect it from scratches. Peel the facing off the back of each sheet for now, but leave the front facing on to protect it from paint over-spray. Clean the exposed face with window cleaner. Then put cardboard or paper down in the area where you plan to paint, and set the sheets face-down.

To get the best results when painting acrylic, use spray paint that's made for painting plastic. (We used Krylon

Fusion in "Gloss White.") Also, to prevent "finger fatigue," it's worth your while to pick up a spray can trigger handle. This simple accessory snaps onto the top of a can of spray paint to make it more comfortable to use.

Make multiple passes, and spray in a sweeping, overlapping pattern as you work your way across each piece. You may need to apply several coats.

While you're at it, you'll also want to paint the front and sides of the door frames, so they won't show through the acrylic. Once the paint dries, you can attach the acrylic to the frames. Lay the frames on a flat surface, with the painted side up, and apply a bead of silicone to the frame. Then position the acrylic door panels on top of the frames, and clamp them in place.

The doors are complete, and now you just have to put them in place in the storage wall's track system. Luckily, it's designed so you can simply lift the doors up at an angle into the top track, pivot them inward, and drop them down into the bottom track. Also, be sure to position the two middle doors in the back track, and the two outer doors in the front track.

— Written by Wyatt Myers, illustrated by Matt Scott, project designed by Mike Donovan

## 3 Door Design Options



**Clever Cutouts**  
This door features a hardboard front panel. Windows with frosted acrylic complete the look.

**Funky Fabric**  
Stretching fabric over the door frames creates a cool look and a place to hide speakers.

**Great Grooves**  
Use your circular saw to cut kerfs across hardboard front panels, and then add a coat of paint.



time to ...

## TRICK it out

A number of wire shelving accessories are available in stores or online that can add even more function to your storage wall (*see the Resources on page 63*). Here are just a handful of our favorites:

[1] **Keyboard Tray**—One possibility for this storage wall is to mount another shelf in the center for a computer and turn the wall into a hideaway office. This handy tray can be mounted beneath the wire shelf to hold the computer's keyboard. It even has a comfortable pad to rest your hands on while you type.

[2] **Garment Tube** — If you leave the center compartment open like we did, it makes a great place to store coats, jackets, and other seasonal clothing. This garment tube is designed to mount to the underside of a wire shelf to hold all these clothes and more.

[3] Hanging Shoe Organizer — Another option for that open center compartment is to hang one of these shoe organizers.

This one, available at Lowe's, has bold, bright colors and 20 pockets for storing all your favorite shoes. Of course, as you can see at left, it can be used for much more than shoe storage.

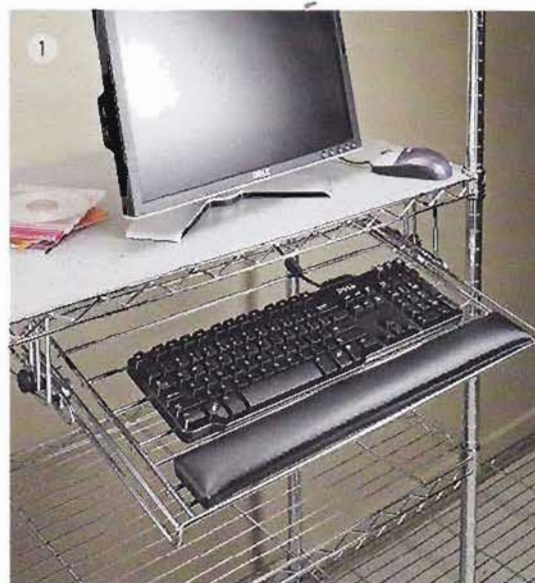
**[4] Drawers**—While these wire shelves are handy, they're not really well-suited to storing smaller items that can slip through the wires. That issue can be resolved with pull-out drawers. These are available in a variety of sizes, and they slide in and out of brackets that mount easily to the underside of the shelves.

**[5] Baskets**—Some other easy add-ons are baskets and document holders that clip to

the sides of the shelves. These can hold books, magazines, sports equipment, and other items that you want to be able to access quickly.

**[6] Dividers & Ledges**—You could also further compartmentalize these large shelves by placing wire divider panels on them. They're great for keeping books and other tall items from tipping over. Or mount ledges around the sides and back of the shelves to keep items from falling off.

**[7] Shelf Liners**—Plastic liners are available in several colors to add style to the shelves. The liners also make them more functional by preventing items from slipping through the wires.







# Vintage Tin Timepiece

*This one-of-a-kind creation harkens back to Victorian times when decorative ceiling treatments were the rage. We found this 24" x 24" tin ceiling tile at a local salvage store, but authentic vintage tiles are easy to find online, as well. It only takes a few simple steps to transform a tile into a unique timepiece. Just purchase clock hands in a size and style that look good on your tile and a quartz clock movement with a high-torque motor, so it's powerful enough to operate oversized hands (see page 63 for sources). Then simply drill a hole in the center of the tile, and attach the movement and hands.*





## RESOURCES

### DIY Gear (Page 8)

Lufkin Folding Wood Rule, available at The Home Depot  
 Strait-Line Sonic Laser Tape, HomeDepot.com, 800-430-3376  
 PowerLock Tape Rules; 100' PowerWinder; Measuring Wheel, StanleyTools.com, 800-262-2161  
 AutoTape Powered Tape Measure; Laser Measuring Tape, BlackandDecker.com, 800-544-6986  
 Material Estimator, Calculated Industries, Calculated.com, 800-854-8075

### DIY Tips (Page 16)

#### Pull-Out Baskets:

Liberty European Side-Mount 22" Drawer Slides #47738, available at The Home Depot  
 Casual Home Large Paper Rope Storage Basket #10445390; Casual Home Tuck-Away Hamper #10445393, Target.com, 800-440-0680

### Front Entry Facelifts (Page 19)

#### Cottage Classic:

Ceramic Planter #281217, Lowes.com, 800-445-6937  
 Spirit In The Sky Paint #676, BenjaminMoore.com, 800-344-0400  
 Portfolio Outdoor Galvanized Wall Lantern, available at Lowe's stores  
 Pillows from World Market and Pottery Barn

#### Traditional Craftsman:

Mastercraft Craftsman Pre-Finished Wood Grain Fiberglass Door; Hunter Lakeshore Outdoor Lantern, available at Menards stores  
 Emtek Craftsman Mortise Handleset #EM3308US108, DirectDoorHardware.com, 877-852-9449

4" Pewter House Numbers; Postmaster Copper Wall-Mount Mailbox, available at Lowe's stores  
 Concrete Stain in Pewter #247165 and Earth Brown #247162, RustOleum.com, 800-323-3584

#### Contemporary:

Schlage Century Handleset #SLH-CEN, DirectDoorHardware.com, 877-852-9449  
 Stone Doorknocker #120-4544; Numero House Numbers #120-5534 through #120-5543; Cylinder Solar Light #120-3013; Envelope Mailbox #120-1935; Pebble Mat #120-4148, Chiaso.com, 877-244-2776  
 Square Galvanized Steel Planters (set of two) #65700 SS, PlantersEtc.com, 305-904-1380  
 Sienna Clay Paint #104, BenjaminMoore.com, 800-344-0400

### Laundry Room Redo (Page 26)

Countertop purchased locally (manufacturers vary by region and store)  
 Real Organized 20" Heavy-Duty Countertop Support Brackets #48990; Aqua Glass Above-Counter Utility Sink with Faucet #134810; Sauder Cabinet Base Unit #198691; Sauder Cabinet Door Set #205238; Portfolio 3-Light Mini Pendant Fitter #268812 with Litex Pendant Glass in Frost #266577; InterDesign Ironing Board Holder #157434; Real Organized Supreme Laundry Sorter #115928, Lowes.com, 800-445-6937  
 Flor Haven Savannah Carpet Tiles #SL26-65, special order through Lowe's, Lowes.com, 800-445-6937 / Flor.com, 866-281-3567  
 Front-Loading Laundry Cart #100T, LaundryCarts.us, 203-400-0939  
 WaterTite-LX Waterproofing Paint, Zinsser.com, 888-855-1774  
 Snow White Paint #OC-66; Seaside Resort Paint #725, BenjaminMoore.com, 800-344-0400

### Drying Rack (Page 33)

Lehigh 1/2" x 100" Plastic Clothesline #66442; Steelworks Aluminum Tube (Round) 1" x 8" #55978; 1" x 4" x 2" Red Oak Board #9352, Lowes.com, 800-445-6937  
 1/2" White Flat Nylon Webbing, Strapworks.com, 541-741-0658

### Clean Machines (Page 36)

Asko Integrated Washer #W6903FI and Dryer #T793FI, AskoUSA.com, 800-898-1879  
 GE Profile Washer #WPDH890JMG and Dryer #DPVH890JMG, GEAppliances.com, 800-626-2005  
 Samsung Washer #WF419AAW and Dryer #DV419AGW (not pictured), Samsung.com, 800-726-7864

Fagor Combination Washer and Dryer #FAS-3612X, FagorAmerica.com, 800-207-0806  
 Whirlpool Duet Washer #WFW9550WR and Dryer #WED9550WR, Whirlpool.com, 866-698-2538  
 Maytag Performance Series Washer #MHW900VJ and Dryer #MEDE900VJ, Maytag.com, 800-344-1274  
 Electrolux Washer #EIFLW55IKG and Dryer #EIED55IKG, ElectroluxAppliances.com, 877-435-3287  
 Bosch Vision Series Washer #WFC8440UC and Dryer #WTV8330US, BoschAppliances.com, 800-944-2904  
 LG Washer #WM3001HRA and Dryer #DLEX3001R, LGE.com, 800-243-0000

### Fire Pit (Page 40)

Garden Treasures 30" Steel Fire Pit #256803; Tan Renaissance Patio Stones #291193, Lowes.com, 800-445-6937  
 Tan Renaissance Wall Blocks; gravel; sand; gray slate stones, available at Lowe's stores

### Photo Shelf (Page 48)

Wolfcraft Dowel Quick Doweling Jig #4641, AceHardware.com, 866-290-5334

### Storage Wall (Page 56)

Real Organized 5-Tier Steel Freestanding Shelving Unit #135069; Real Organized 18" x 48" Steel Wire Shelf #64741, Lowes.com, 800-445-6937  
 Shepherd 1 1/4" Rubber Fixed Caster, available at The Home Depot  
 Chrome Wire Keyboard Drawer #WB339042; Single-Box Slides (pair) #WB477CP6; Modular Dividable Plastic Tote Boxes #WB772036 and #WB772040B; Wire Utility Basket #WB184798; Chrome Wire Document Holder #WB489070, GlobalIndustrial.com, 888-978-7759  
 Super Erecta Garment Hanger Tube and Brackets #MET-AT4818NC, BrightShine.com  
 Chrome Wire Shelving Divider #SI-ASD18C; 18"-long Shelf Ledge x 6" high #SI-ASL18C; 48"-long Shelf Ledge x 6" high #SI-ASL48C; Shelf Liners 18" deep x 48" wide (pack of two) #2PKTL-6, Shelving.com, 800-637-9508  
 20-Pocket Shoe Organizer, available at Lowe's stores

### Vintage Tin Timepiece (Page 62)

High-Torque Quartz Clock Movement #10114; 9 1/2"-long Balanced Clock Hands #65901, KlockIt.com, 800-556-2548



## A LOOK INSIDE



[PAGE 38]

### Sleek, Stylish Storage Wall

Enclose clutter in a family room or basement with this easy weekend storage project.

[PAGE 40]

### Paint Power: Simple Circles

Think outside the box and breathe new life into bland walls by painting a round design.



[PAGE 50]

### Framing Tips & Tricks

Unsure what to do with a bunch of mismatched photo frames? Transform them into a great-looking photo gallery with these eight simple strategies.

