

HOW TO MAINTAIN A GOOD

FOUNDATION

SIGNS OF PROBLEMS ARE THINGS LIKE CRACKS IN WALLS AND CEILINGS, STICKING DOORS AND WINDOWS, UN-EVEN OR SAGGING FLOORS, TWISTED OR UN-EVEN SIDING, CRACKS IN BRICKWORK, OUT-OF-SQUARE GARAGE DOORS, ETC.

DO: Call professionals if you believe the situation to be severe, where the movement is greater than 2" and appears to be getting worse each year.

DO: Look around the perimeter of your home for indications of down spout problems (water funneling back toward foundation).

DO: Remove any trees from the near proximity of the foundation.

DO: Make certain that any concrete walkways, driveways, etc. slope away from the foundation. If you notice slope toward the foundation, you should have the problem corrected as soon as possible.

DO NOT: Assume you will never have a problem because of how recent your home was built. Sometimes homes that have been solid may suddenly sink or shift because of a drought or other deep soil issue.

DO NOT: Allow the structure to settle further and further year after year. This can become a very serious problem and often times result in costing much more than catching the problem early.

DO NOT: Panic if you notice problems and believe that it is going to be extremely expensive. You may be surprised to find that often times the problems can be corrected at a very low cost. With the modern methods of jacking and stabilizing, the home can often times be adjusted back to level and square frame condition, then the doors & windows may be operational again, and the overall appearance of the structure can be restored.

Please always consult a professional as needed. We claim no responsibility for any damages or injuries that may result from the use of any information contained here.



Bill Barnes

(512) 555-1234

HOW TO PATCH HOLES IN

WINDOW SCREENS

THE TYPE OF MATERIAL USED TO MAKE THE WINDOW SCREEN WILL DICTATE HOW YOU REPAIR THE HOLES.

SMALL HOLES:

Metal Screens: Use a sharply pointed tool to push the strands of wire back toward the hole; you may be able to close the hole completely. If there's still a hole, apply clear nail polish or household cement over it. Let the sealer dry. Apply additional coats until the opening is filled.

Vinyl or Fiberglass Screens: Move the threads back into place. Otherwise, fill tiny holes with clear nail polish or household cement. Be careful not to let any sealer run down the screen. Nail polish may dissolve some types of screen materials.

LARGE HOLES:

Vinyl or Fiberglass Screens: Lay the screen flat. Put a patch (of the same screening material) about 1/2 inch bigger all around than the hole, and set it over the hole. Place a sheet of aluminum foil over the patch area, shiny side down, and press the patch firmly with a hot iron. Be careful not to touch the screen directly with the iron. The heat will fuse the patch onto the screening. If you can't lay the screen flat, sew the patch into place with a needle and nylon thread using a firm running stitch, but don't pull the thread too tight. Apply clear nail polish over the edges of the patch.

Metal Screens: Cut a square or rectangle patch (of the same screening material) about 1 inch bigger all around the hole. Pull out the wires on all four sides to make a wire fringe about 1/2 inch deep around the patch. Bend the fringe wires down sharply at a right angle; use a wood block to make a clean bend on each side of the patch. When the fringe wires are evenly bent, set the patch over the hole in the screen, and press to insert the bent fringe wires through the screening around the hole. The patch should be flat against the screen, covering the hole completely. Fold fringe wires down flat toward the patch's center on the other side of the screen. Then stitch around the entire patch with a needle and nylon thread or with fine wire.

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Bill Barnes

(512) 555-1234

STEPS FOR HOW TO REPAIR A

LEAKY FAUCET

MOST LEAKS ARE CAUSED BY FAULTY WASHERS.

TOOLS NEEDED:

SCREWDRIVER • ADJUSTABLE WRENCH • REPLACEMENT WASHERS • BRASS SCREWS (IF APPLICABLE)

1. Turn off the water supply at a nearby shutoff. If your house doesn't have shutoffs for individual fixtures, go to the main shutoff and turn off the entire water supply to your home. Then turn on the faucet until the water stops flowing.
2. Remove the handle. If applicable, pry the decorative cap off first with a screwdriver to expose the screw. Then remove the decorative bonnet with a wrench. Once the packing nut is exposed, remove it by turning it counter-clockwise.
3. Remove the stem and washer assembly. Once the valve unit is out, remove the brass screw that holds the old washer in place. Apply pressure while turning the screw slowly so as not to break the old screw.
4. Install a new washer (and brass screw, if necessary).
5. Reassemble the faucet parts, and put the unit back into the faucet housing. Tighten the packing nut, and then put the handle back on.
6. Turn the faucet off, the water supply on, and then test the repair. If you still get leaking, try tightening the packing nut, or you might have the wrong size washer.

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Bill Barnes

(512) 555-1234

STEPS FOR HOW TO

PAINT A WALL

DON'T SKIP THE PREP WORK: A PROPERLY PRIMED SURFACE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

TOOLS NEEDED:

- CELLULOSE SPONGE
- PRIMER
- DISHWASHING LIQUID
- PAINTER'S TAPE
- PAINT TRAY
- EDGER
- SMALL PAINTBRUSH
- PUTTY KNIFE
- SPACKLING PUTTY
- LADDER
- OLD BED SHEETS OR NEWSPAPER
- PAINT ROLLER (6 A FEW ROLLER COVERS)

1. Using a large cellulose sponge and a solution of water mixed with a few drops of mild dishwashing liquid, clean your walls to remove any dust, dirt, and grease. Patch any holes with putty.
2. Use blue painter's tape to protect any areas you don't want your paint to get on, like trim, molding, and door frames. Run long strips of the tape just inside the outer edges of these areas.
3. Cover furniture and floors with old bed sheets or newspaper.
4. Pour primer into a tray. Dip your roller in, rolling it back and forth across the tray's ridges to remove any excess and prevent drips. Make sure the roller gets evenly coated. Paint your wall until it is fully covered. Let the primer dry completely.
5. Fill a clean tray with paint. Using an edger, paint a clean line along the edges of your wall. Then, using a new roller, paint your wall inside the edges in the same manner that you applied the primer. Use a small paintbrush to make touch-ups or fill in any hard-to-get areas.
6. Peel off the tape while the paint is still wet to avoid removing any dried paint along with it.

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Bill Barnes

(512) 555-1234

STEPS FOR HOW TO REPAIR A

FENCE POST

WHEN A POST IS LEANING OR BEGINS TO WOBBLE, YOU'LL NEED TO FIX IT.

TOOLS NEEDED:

- FENCE POST REPAIR BRACKET (FOR 4-BY-4 FENCE POST)
- 2-BY-4, 6 IN. LONG
- HAMMER
- SLEDGEHAMMER
- SMALL PIECE OF SCRAP WOOD
- PRY BAR
- SHOVEL
- GALVANIZED NAILS

1. Push the fence post into a correct upright position. Wedge the 6 in. two-by-four between the post and the ground so the post stays in place. Loosely nail the top end of the piece of wood to the post so you can remove it later.
2. Remove any fence pickets on either side of the fence that either cover the post, or are to the immediate right and left of the post. To remove pickets, hold a small block of scrap wood against the back of the picket. Hit the block of wood with your hammer so the top of the pickets pops loose. Pull the nails out with a pry bar.
3. Dig out the dirt around the base of the post until you see the concrete holding it in place.
4. Set half of the post repair bracket on top of the concrete with the edges over the base of the post. Drive the bracket into the concrete with a sledgehammer. Angle the bracket so that it wedges itself into the concrete, while at the same time it slides over the top of the post. Once the bracket is firmly lodged in the concrete, tap the top of the bracket so it completely covers the post like a sleeve. Nail the bracket to the fence post with several galvanized nails.
5. Install the other half of the bracket on the other side of the fence post, just like above.
6. Remove the piece of wood used to prop up the fence post. Refill the post hole with dirt. Pack the dirt down with the backside of your shovel. Nail the pickets you removed earlier back in place.

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STEPS FOR HOW TO MAINTAIN

POOLS

THE SECRET TO PRISTINE POOL HEALTH IS REGULAR, ROUTINE CARE.

SKIM DEBRIS AND CLEAN OUT BASKETS: Use a long-handled net to skim debris and clean out baskets every few days. Skimming increases the efficiency of the pool's circulation and lowers the amount of chlorine you'll need to add.

VACUUM THE POOL AND BRUSH WALLS & TILE: Vacuum every week to keep water clear. Brushing the walls and tile helps minimize algae buildup and calcium deposits. For plaster-lined concrete pools use a stiff brush. For vinyl, fiberglass or tile use a softer brush.

CLEAN THE POOL FILTER: Clean the filter only when it has a good amount of dirt in it. Cleaning it too often can actually hinder the filtration process.

CHECK AND MAINTAIN WATER LEVEL: A low water level could mean the pump is damaged. If the water is low, use a garden hose to bring it up to safe levels. If you drain your pool for maintenance, make sure the pool doesn't sit empty too long.

MAINTAIN THE PH LEVEL: A reading between 7.2 and 7.8 is ideal. Use a pH testing kit.

SUPERCHELORINATE WATER: Adding a large amount of chlorine to a pool is called "shocking" and is good to do approximately every week to rid of the potent chlorine odor.

FIND AND REPAIR LEAKS: Fill a plastic bucket ¾ full of water. Mark the water line inside the bucket. Place the bucket in the pool and mark on the outside of the bucket where the water line is. Let it float for 2-3 days. If the water distance has gone down the same inside and out, it's water evaporation. If it is different, you have a leak! Call a professional.

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Bill Barnes

(512) 555-1234

STEPS FOR HOW TO REPLACE AN

A/C FILTER

CHECK THE FILTER MONTHLY, AND REPLACE IF THERE IS DIRT BUILD UP. CHANGING THE FILTER REGULARLY MIGHT NOT SEEM IMPORTANT, BUT THE RELATIVELY MINIMAL COST AND EFFORT WILL REWARD YOU WITH LOWER ENERGY COSTS.

1. The filter may be located at the air handler in the attic, crawl space or utility area. Or it may be at a ceiling or wall return grill in the living room.
2. Turn off the a/c unit at the thermostat.
3. A filter at the return grill can be removed by unfastening the grill cover. If the filter is at the air handler, remove the blower compartment cover (if necessary), and slide out the filter.
4. Place the old filter in a trash bag immediately to prevent dust from flying.
5. Purchase a new filter that is the same size and type as the old one.
6. When installing the new filter, note the arrow on the filter's frame, indicating the proper direction of air flow. The filter should be positioned with the arrow pointing towards the blower.
7. Put the cover back on, and turn the a/c back on. Never run the unit without the filter in.

NOTE: Changing the filter during the heating season is just as important as during the cooling season, since many units use the same duct work for both heating and cooling.

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(512) 555-1234

HOW TO GET RID OF SURFACE SCRATCHES ON

HARDWOOD FLOORS

IF YOUR FLOORS HAVE DEEP SCRATCHES, IT IS BEST TO CONSULT A HARDWOOD FLOORING PROFESSIONAL.

SANDPAPER: Most surface scratches on hardwood floors can be removed with basic sandpaper or steel wool. Clean the scratched area with a clean cloth and wood cleaner. Rub sandpaper or a steel wool pad over the scratched area. Start by buffing gently and then increase pressure to rub the scratch out. Rubbing too hard can make more scratches. Buff with the grain of the wood or use a slight circular motion to avoid damaging the wood. Feather out the buffing area to include the areas immediately surrounding the scratch to help the sanding look more natural.

WAX: There are generally two kinds of hardwood floor waxes: no-buff wax or paste wax. No-buff wax is typically easier to use. To remove scratches using no-buff wax, apply the wax into the scratch in a circular motion with a clean cloth. As you work, the scratch will darken and eventually blend into the color of your hardwood flooring. After the wax is worked into the scratch, run a clean cloth over the area. Be sure the wax is even. Paste wax is thicker than no-buff wax and is ideal for small surface scratches. Paste wax is available in clear, honey or brown tones to match most hardwood floor finishes. To apply, put a dab of paste wax in the center of a soft cloth. Form the cloth into a ball and knead it to soften the wax. Rub the wax onto the scratch. The wax will be glossy at first and then the surface will become cloudy. When the surface turns cloudy, wipe off the paste wax with a clean cloth and buff the floor to an even sheen. Wax should not be applied to a hardwood floor with a polyurethane finish.

TOUCH-UP KIT: Touch-up kits are an effective tool for repairing surface scratches, especially on urethane finishes. Touch-up kits are widely available from wood flooring retailers or home improvement stores. Most kits come in a variety of colors. If you can't find an exact match to your wood color, opt for a lighter shade rather than a darker one. If a color solution is too dark, it will look like a stain on your hardwood floor. Touch-up kits typically require you to paint a solution onto the scratch with an artist's brush.

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Bill Barnes

(512) 555-1234

TIPS FOR

TREE PRUNING

PRUNING STIMULATES GROWTH AND ENCOURAGES STRONG, HEALTHY BRANCHES.

TOOLS NEEDED:

- SCISSOR CUT SHEARS
- PRUNING SAW
- LADDER
- SAFETY GLASSES
- LOPPERS
- POLE SAW
- WORK GLOVES
- HARD HAT

1. For early spring blossoming trees, trim in summer after flowers bloom. For a late spring blossom, trim in fall or winter. Trim non-flowering trees in fall or winter. Never remove more than 20% of the crown.
2. Safety first! Trees taller than 25 ft are best left to a pro. Also look for hanging limbs, and never work near power lines. Never stand and work higher than 6 ft on a ladder. Never use a chainsaw while on a ladder.
3. Step back and look at the tree, envisioning the final result. Look for the main, living branches. Remove dead or damaged limbs from these, using a pole saw. If the limbs are really long, remove them in sections. Always cut outside the branch collar (the mounded part where the branch meets the trunk).
4. Saw fat branches (3 in. diameter +) in three cuts to prevent tearing. Using a pruning saw, start about 6 in. from the base of the branch, sawing partway through; away from the trunk for a vertical, on the underside for a horizontal. Saw from the other side. Cut off the 6-inch stub at an angle, just above the branch collar.
5. Remove suckers at the base of the trunk. These offshoots are unattractive and take nutrients. Use shears or loppers for thin suckers. Use a pruning handsaw for large or crowded suckers. Don't nick the trunk bark.
6. Clip water sprouts. These grow straight up from dominant branches and take nutrients. Use scissor cut shears, or use extended loppers when dealing with upper limbs.
7. Remove inward-growing and rubbing/crossing branches. These wound the tree.

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Bill Barnes

(512) 555-1234

STEPS FOR HOW TO REPAIR

ROOF SHINGLES

THE MOST COMMON SIGN OF NEEDING REPAIR IS A LEAK.

TOOLS NEEDED:

- PRY BAR
- REPLACEMENT SHINGLE
- HAMMER
- ASPHALT ROOF CEMENT
- SCRAPER
- UTILITY KNIFE
- 6D GALVANIZED ROOFING NAILS
- TROWEL

1. Make sure the roof is completely dry and it is a sunny day. Use safety ropes, wear rubber-soled shoes for traction, and keep in mind the location of power lines.
2. Look for damaged, curled or missing shingles at the leak point. Remove the bad one by lifting edges of surrounding shingles, and remove any protruding nails with pry bar. Hidden nails should be left in place.
3. Slightly round back corners of the new shingle with utility knife.
4. Slide new shingle into gap, aligning the front edge with the other shingles and tucking the back edge under the row above it.
5. Lift corners of overlapping shingles and fasten top of new shingle with 6d galvanized roofing nails driven through each corner. Cover nail heads with cement, and then smooth down edges.

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Bill Barnes

(512) 555-1234

HOW TO INSTALL

ATTIC INSULATION

INSULATION GREATLY REDUCES ENERGY COSTS. A 15 IN. DEPTH IS RECOMMENDED!

TOOLS NEEDED:

- SAFETY GOGGLES
- FACE MASK
- UTILITY KNIFE
- LONG-SLEEVED SHIRT & PANTS
- FIBERGLASS INSULATION (FACED/OR UNFACED)
- GLOVES
- MEASURING TAPE
- SOFFIT BAFFLES
- ATTIC STAIRWAY INSULATION COVER

1. Lay down boards to help you walk safely in the attic. Determine the cubic footage of the area you need to insulate (width x length x depth). If your attic already has insulation, but not enough, measure how much is needed to reach a 15" depth. The very bottom layer of insulation should be faced with a vapor retarder. Any additional layers should be unfaced (without paper backing).
2. Wear protective gear. Fiberglass can release tiny fibers that irritate the skin and be harmful to breathe in.
3. Lay the insulation (facing on bottom) between the wood joists, starting at an area farthest from the attic access. Cut it to length on a flat surface, using a utility knife. Lay the rows snugly together.
4. Cut a notch in the insulation to fit around any obstacles, like pipes. Use small pieces of unfaced insulation to fill in gaps.
5. If there is recessed lighting or other metal fixtures, keep insulation at least 3" away, unless the fixtures are IC-rated (insulation-contact rated). The fixture could overheat, causing a fire.
6. Lay additional unfaced insulation on top, perpendicular to the joists, to reach the recommended 15" depth.
7. Don't block the flow of air from soffit vents. Install attic vents (baffles) at each soffit vent.
8. Finish with an attic stairway insulation cover.

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Bill Barnes

(512) 555-1234

STEPS FOR HOW TO REPLACE AN

ELECTRICAL OUTLET

A DAMAGED OR MALFUNCTIONING OUTLET WOULD NECESSITATE REPLACEMENT.

TOOLS NEEDED:

- NEEDLE NOSE PLIERS
- VOLTAGE METER
- SCREWDRIVER

1. Turn off the power to the outlet at the fuse box or circuit breakers.
2. Test the outlet with a voltage meter to make sure the power is off. The meter should read zero.
3. Unscrew the cover plate and remove it. Then unscrew the outlet and pull it out of the wall. It should come out a few inches.
4. Make note of where the black and white wires were connected to the old outlet.
5. Loosen the screws holding the wires and remove the outlet.
6. Take the old outlet with you to a hardware store and buy the same kind.
7. Attach the wires to the new outlet in the same fashion as the old one. Wrap the wires around the terminals with needle-nose pliers or your fingers.
8. Tighten the screws around the wires. Then screw the outlet back into the wall, and screw the cover plate back on.
9. Reactivate the proper circuits at the fuse box and test your work.

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