

The Home HANDYMAN

March/April 2025 • Vol 35 No 03



SA'S
ORIGINAL
DIY
MAGAZINE

GET WINTER-READY:

BATHROOM FIXES,
ADHESIVE ADVICE,
AND SEASONAL
CARE TIPS

6 X WOODWORKING
PROJECTS TO
TACKLE

WOODWORK:
MAKE A GARDEN ARBOUR
RESTORATION PROJECT:
RESTORE AN ANTIQUE DRESSER

DECKING:
WHY MAINTENANCE MATTERS



South Africa's go-to magazine for woodworkers, DIY enthusiasts and homeowners

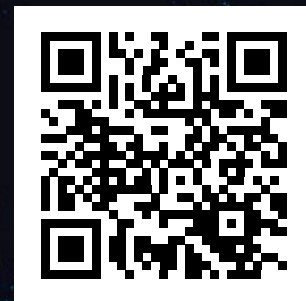
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FROM THE WORKBENCH

In memory of Denis Lock – a craftsman, teacher, and friend

It is with a heavy heart that we share the news of Denis Lock's passing. Denis was not only a cherished contributor to this magazine but also a guiding light for so many in the woodworking community. His influence reached far beyond the pages of our publication, leaving an indelible mark on countless aspiring woodworkers through his writing, teaching, and sheer passion for the craft.

Denis began contributing to the magazine in 2005, first publishing step-by-step woodworking projects before evolving into his well-loved columns, A Woodworker's Diary and Denis' Hints, Hacks and Answers. Over the course of nearly two decades, Denis penned more than 130 articles, offering insights shaped by over 70 years of woodworking experience. His unique ability to distil complex techniques into practical, digestible advice made him a favourite among readers.

Denis was more than just a writer. He was a teacher, mentor, and a firm believer in the importance of safety and precision. I remember many times when, just as an issue was about to go to print, Denis would raise concerns about a photograph or detail that didn't quite meet the safety standards he held dear. His unwavering commitment to ensuring that readers were given the best and safest advice was a testament to his integrity and care for the craft.

Beyond the magazine, Denis dedicated 15 years to running his woodworking school, guiding over 600 students through the intricacies of the trade. His patience, skill, and desire to see others succeed made his classes a beacon for hobbyists and professionals alike. Denis' enthusiasm was infectious, and he tirelessly promoted the magazine at woodworking shows and events, encouraging others to learn, create, and share in the joy of woodworking.

On a personal level, Denis was a trusted adviser and friend to many of us at the magazine. As an editor, I often found myself leaning on his technical expertise and thoughtful feedback. He had a way of challenging you to do better, not out of criticism but because he believed in the potential of the work and those producing it.

His legacy will continue to live on in the projects we create, the lessons we apply, and the passion he instilled in so many. While Routing with Denis may no longer continue, the knowledge he imparted will undoubtedly be carried forward by those he taught and inspired.

To Denis' family and friends, we extend our deepest sympathies. We hope you find comfort in knowing how deeply he was respected and admired by all who had the privilege of working with him. Denis, you will be missed, but your mark on the woodworking community will remain forever.

Rest in peace, Denis.

Gregg



The Home HANDYMAN

www.homehandyman.co.za

2025

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About The Home Handyman magazine:

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

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

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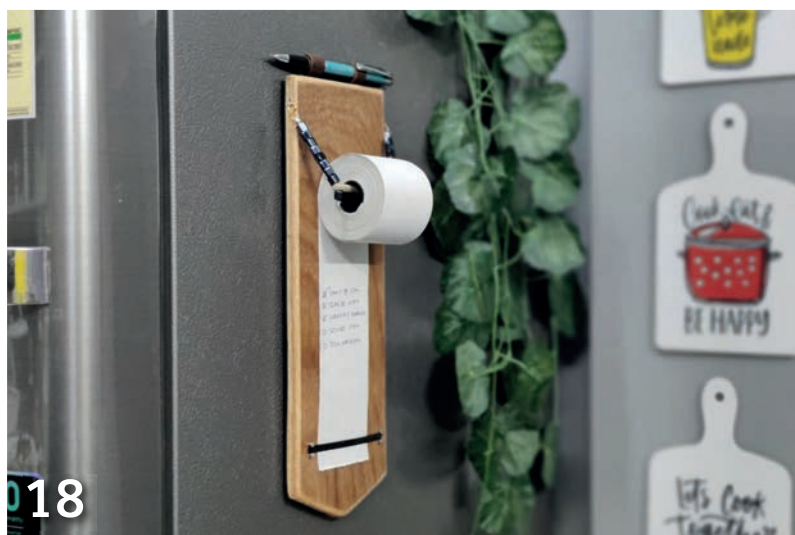
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FROM OUR READERS

Sharing letters, ideas, and questions from our community

Thanks for the projects

I've been an avid reader of your magazine for years, and I can't thank you enough for the inspiration you've provided. My most recent project was inspired by your article on creating garden furniture from pallets. I built two benches and a small coffee table for our patio, and the end result was beyond what I could have imagined!

The step-by-step guidance was perfect for someone like me who's still a novice at wood-working. I even managed to stain and seal the wood using your tips for outdoor projects, so now they're weatherproof and look absolutely stunning.

I'd love to see more projects like this, especially for outdoor spaces. Maybe something for garden décor or tips on building vertical planters? With summer around the corner, I'm excited to keep my hands busy.

Thanks for a brilliant magazine – I look forward to every issue!

Annemarie van Wyk, George



Welding for beginners

I'm interested in learning how to weld for DIY projects like garden gates and metal frames. What type of welding machine should I start with, and are there any safety tips I should know before diving in?

Sipho Dlamini, Rustenburg

Ed replies: *Welding is a great skill to learn for DIY projects! For beginners, I recommend starting with a MIG (Metal Inert Gas) welder. MIG welding is one of the easiest techniques to master and works well for most home projects involving mild steel. Look for a machine with adjustable settings so you can practice with different thicknesses of metal.*

Safety is crucial when welding. Always wear a welding helmet with a proper shade to protect your eyes from the bright arc. Invest in flame-resistant gloves, a welding jacket, and sturdy boots to shield yourself from sparks and hot metal.

Ensure you're working in a well-ventilated area, as welding produces fumes that can be harmful if inhaled. If you're working indoors, use an exhaust fan or wear a respirator. Start with small projects to build your confidence, and remember: patience is key. Good luck!



Easy sanding block upgrade

I always struggled to hold sanding blocks firmly, especially when working on curved surfaces. My solution? Wrap a piece of foam pipe insulation around the block! The foam gives you a better grip and conforms to uneven surfaces, making sanding faster and more efficient.

Willem Smit, Paarl

My go-to resources

Your magazine has become my go-to resource for all things DIY. I've recently started teaching my teenage son, Liam, a few handy skills, and your content has been a fantastic guide for us.

Last weekend, we worked together to build a birdhouse for our garden, using the plans from your crafting section. It was such a fun project, and we're both proud of how it turned out. Liam's already brainstorming ideas for painting and decorating it.

Thank you for creating content that's easy to follow and encourages families to bond over DIY. If you have more beginner-friendly projects like this, we'd love to try them out!

Sarah Kennedy, by email





Reader's projects

Willing to share your latest project with our readers? Send your project and a picture of the finished product.
Email projects and photographs to: editorial@homehandyman.co.za

Restored floor success

I wanted to share a success story thanks to your tips. My family and I recently moved into an older house that needed a bit of TLC. Your article about restoring wooden floors from an old issue gave me the confidence to rent a sander and refinish the living room floor myself. It was hard work, but the end result is worth it – the floors look brand new!

I appreciate how you broke down the process and included helpful advice on which type of varnish works best. I went with a satin finish, and it's added such a warm, inviting touch to the space.

I'd also love to see more advice on restoring older homes. From repairing cornices to updating kitchen cupboards, I'm eager to tackle more projects and learn along the way.

Thabo Nkosi, Polokwane



Brick holder for levelling walls

If you're building a small brick wall and struggle to keep the bricks level, here's a trick: attach two sturdy wooden guides on either side of your wall using clamps. These act as a frame and keep your rows perfectly straight as you lay the bricks. It's like having an extra pair of hands to hold everything in place.

Daniel Ferreira, Bloemfontein

Preventing rust on tools

Living in a humid area, I used to find rust forming on my tools no matter how careful I was. Now, I store a handful of silica gel packets (the ones you find in shoe boxes) in my toolbox. They absorb moisture and keep my tools dry, and it's been a game-changer!

Darrn Anka, by email



Fixing uneven tile grout

I recently grouted my kitchen backsplash, but some areas are uneven, with grout sitting lower than the tile edges. It doesn't look great, and I'm worried about dirt collecting in the gaps. Is there a way to fix this, or do I need to redo the entire backsplash?

Michelle Botha, by email

Ed replies: You can definitely fix uneven grout without redoing the whole job. First, clean the area thoroughly to remove any dirt or grease. Next, use a grout saw or similar tool to carefully scrape out the uneven grout lines, being careful not to damage the tiles.

Once the lines are even, reapply new grout, ensuring you pack it tightly into the gaps. Use a grout float to level the surface, and wipe off any excess with a damp sponge before it dries. Once cured, seal the grout to protect it from dirt and moisture. It's a bit of work, but it'll give your backsplash a polished, professional finish!

Reusable paint tray liners

Instead of constantly buying disposable paint tray liners, try this: line your paint tray with a sheet of aluminium foil or cling film before pouring the paint in. Once you're done painting, just peel off the liner and toss it away—your tray will stay clean and ready for the next project!

Lerato Mokoena, Pretoria

Choosing wood for a kitchen countertop

I'm planning to build a wooden countertop for my kitchen and want something durable but also attractive. What type of wood would you recommend, and how should I treat it to withstand moisture and heat?

Johan Steenkamp, by email

Woodworker, Anton du Plessis replies: For a kitchen countertop, hardwoods like oak, maple, or teak are excellent choices. They're durable, scratch-resistant, and can handle the wear and tear of daily use. Teak, in particular, is naturally resistant to moisture, making it ideal for kitchen environments.

Once you've chosen your wood, treat it with a food-safe finish, like mineral oil or tung oil, to enhance its water resistance. For extra protection, apply multiple coats of polyurethane. This will create a tough, heat- and moisture-resistant layer while maintaining the wood's natural beauty.

Be sure to sand the surface between coats for a smooth finish, and reapply the oil or sealant every six months to keep the countertop in great condition.



GARDEN CHARM



What you will need

Tools:

- Table saw
- Mitre saw
- Cordless drill
- Jigsaw
- Router table
- Clamps

Materials:

- Cedar or pressure-treated pine
- 4 posts, 3 048mm long, 100 x 100mm

- 4 planks, 2 438mm long, 250 x 50mm
- 4 boards, 2 438mm long, 100 x 50mm
- 5 tongue-and-groove boards, 1 829mm long, 150 x 25mm
- Waterproof construction adhesive
- 75mm deck screws
- 50mm spiral nails
- 2 pairs of hinges
- 2 sets of cupped magnets
- Exterior-grade paint
- 8 bags of fast-setting concrete mix
- Latch

>> Mark McIndoe

Transform your garden with a stunning handcrafted gate and arbour that combines style and function. This ambitious project is ideal for experienced woodworkers, creating a timeless entrance that's sure to impress.

The side gate to our garden was disintegrating, becoming more of an eyesore than an entryway. My wife and I decided it was time for a replacement. She browsed online and found a design that caught her eye – a garden gate with an elegant circular arch. While it looked a bit complicated to build, its clean lines and timeless design won me over.

The challenge was apparent from the start. The design called for curved woodwork, precise joinery, and attention to detail. Thankfully, a friend of mine had recently purchased a CNC router, making the curved elements much easier to produce. However, I would still recommend this project only to seasoned DIY enthusiasts or woodworkers with a well-equipped workshop and some time to spare.

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Planning and design

A well-thought-out design is crucial for a project like this. The gate that inspired my build came from a Ralph Lauren garden gate catalogue I saw online. While the original design was elegant, I decided to simplify it slightly to suit my skills and needs.

For instance, the sign above the gate and decorative lights were unnecessary, and I adjusted the height to ensure my dog couldn't slip through. Using Fusion 360 software, I sketched out the design, scaling it to fit my garden space. The arbour depth was set to half the width of the doorway, creating balance and proportionality.

To add strength and durability, I incorporated lap joints for the curved sections and gate frame. These joints, combined with waterproof construction adhesive, ensured a solid and weather-resistant structure.

Step 2: Installing the posts

The foundation of any arbour and gate lies in the posts. I used three posts, 3 657mm long, burying them approximately 650mm deep. If you're working with better soil, you may need to go deeper for added stability.

The installation process was laborious, given the clay-heavy, rocky soil in my garden. After digging the holes, I placed each post and secured it using two bags of quick-set concrete mix, with some brick fragments for added strength.

Spacing between the posts was 1 140mm and 500mm. For the shorter post, I used an offcut of 100 x 100mm wood, dowels, and adhesive to extend it to the correct height.

Step 3: Crafting the arches

The curved arches were the standout feature of the design but also the most challenging to construct. Using Fusion 360, I divided each arch into four sections that could be cut from 250 x 50mm timber.

Before cutting, I planed the wood to ensure a smooth finish and consistent thickness, removing about 1mm from each side. The CNC router was then used to cut the pieces, with lap joints precisely trimmed to 30mm deep and edges reduced to 18mm.

Once cut, I used a bandsaw to release the pieces and a flush-cutting router bit to refine the lap joints. This meticulous process ensured a snug and secure fit.

Step 4: Assembling the arches

The assembly process required patience and attention to detail. First, I dry-fitted the pieces to check the

fit. I then predrilled holes for dowels and applied waterproof construction adhesive liberally to all contact points.

After tapping the dowels into place, I left the assembly to cure overnight. Once the adhesive had set, I sanded the surfaces thoroughly, filling any gaps or imperfections. A coat of exterior-grade paint provided protection from the elements while enhancing the structure's appearance.

Step 5: Building the gates

The gate was constructed using the same principles as the arches. The frame was built from 100 x 50mm wood, with tongue-and-groove cedar boards fitted into stopped dados for added strength.

After assembling the gate, I trimmed it to size, accounting for the hinges and allowing room for seasonal swelling. I used self-closing polymer hinges, which are both durable and visually unobtrusive. To ensure a tight fit, I recessed the hinges with a router, reducing the gap between the gate and posts.

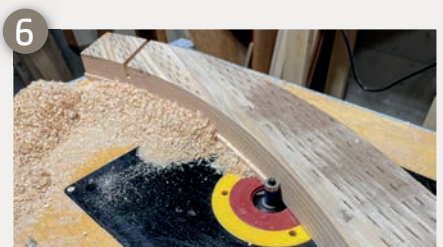
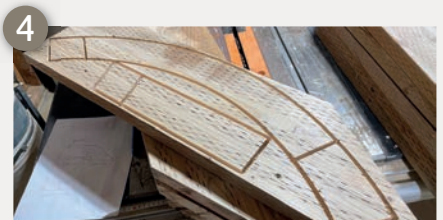
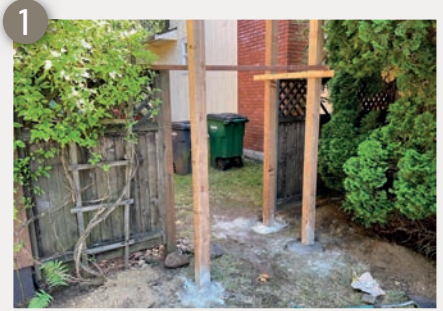
Step 6: Reinforcing and finishing

To enhance the arbour's structural integrity, I added crosspieces with an octagonal cross-section. These were 38mm across and protruded 80mm at each end, spaced evenly at 183mm.

For the sides, I used cedar lattice secured with 18mm trim. This added visual interest while providing support for climbing plants. Magnets recessed into the gate and posts were a clever solution for holding the gates open, offering practicality without detracting from the overall design.

Step 7: Landscaping and planting

No garden gate is complete without a path and greenery to complement it. I added a rustic path leading through the gate, using natural stone and gravel for a charming, organic look.



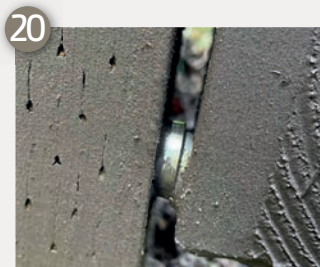
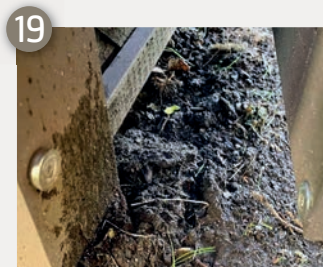
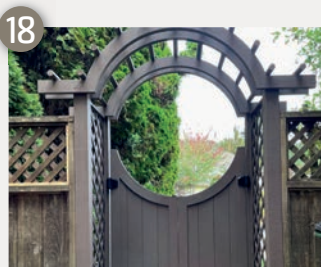
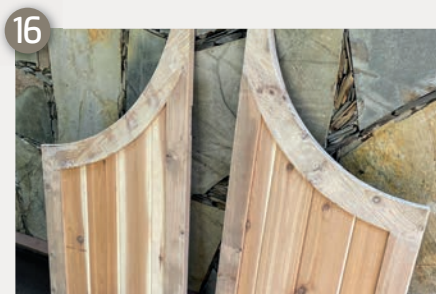
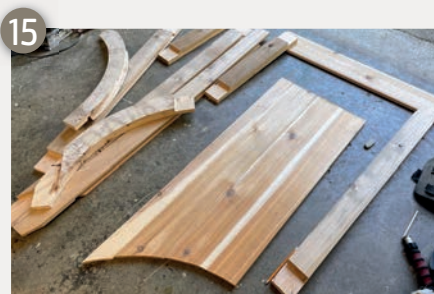
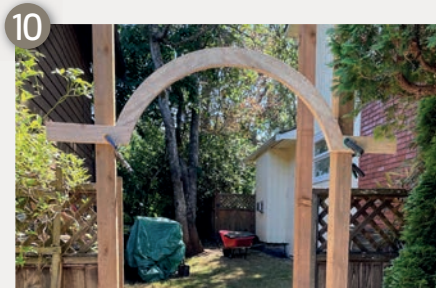
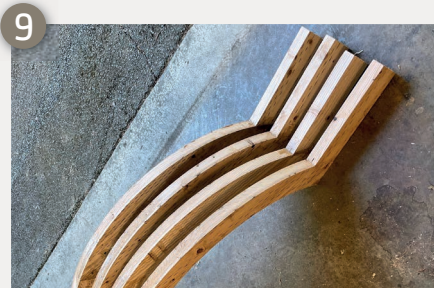
To enhance the arbour's aesthetic, I planted a clematis, training it to climb over the structure. This created a natural canopy that softens the design and adds a sense of permanence. I also pruned back an overgrown climbing rose, allowing it to share the space with the clematis.

Final thoughts

Building this garden gate and arbour

was a rewarding challenge that tested my skills and patience. While it's not a beginner-friendly project, the satisfaction of creating a functional and beautiful structure makes the effort worthwhile.

With its elegant curves and sturdy construction, this gate has transformed our garden entrance, making it a feature we'll enjoy for years to come.



1. The foundation of any arbour and gate lies in the posts 2. I used three posts, 3 657mm long, burying them approximately 650mm deep 3. I planed the wood to ensure a smooth finish 4. I used a CNC router to cut the pieces 5. Once cut, I used a bandsaw to release the pieces 6. A flush-cutting router bit was used to refine the lap joints 7. The curved arches were the standout feature of the design but also the most challenging to construct 8. Cut eight pairs of pieces in total 9. Dry fit the pieces and predrill the holes for the dowels 10. Check that the arches will fit 11. The gate was constructed using the same principles as the arches 12. The frame was built from 100 x 50mm wood 13. The frame coming together 14. I used tongue-and-groove cedar boards fitted into stopped dadoes for added strength 15. After assembling the gate... 16. ...I trimmed it to size, accounting for the hinges and allowing room for seasonal swelling 17. To enhance the arbour's structural integrity, I added crosspieces with an octagonal cross-section 18. The arbour starting to come together 19. Magnets recessed into the gate and posts were a clever solution for holding the gates open 20. The magnets offer practicality without detracting from the overall design

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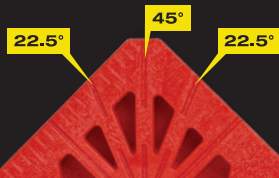
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Upgrade your entertaining game with this extra-large charcuterie board!

Perfect for family gatherings or parties, this custom board combines style and functionality.

SLICE AND SERVE



What you will need

- Live edge board: 1,220mm (length) x 305mm (width) x 25mm (thickness) (Redwood)
- Cutting board oil
- Board wax
- Swoosh handle template
- Corner radius router template
- Double-sided tape
- Dust mask
- Planer
- Dual-bevel sliding mitre saw
- Jigsaw
- Router
- Small router table
- Flush trim router bit: 38 mm
- Round-over router bit: 6 mm
- Drill press
- Palm sander
- Sandpaper: 100, 120, 150, 180, and 220 grit

- Painter's triangles
- Power drill and buffing pad

>> Peter Fillmore

I recently built an extra-large charcuterie board to complement our new kitchen after moving it to the back of our house. This oversized board is ideal for serving up an impressive spread at large gatherings or family functions. Let me guide you through the process of making your own!

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Sizing the board

Start with a live edge board measuring approximately 1,220mm x 305mm x 25mm. Cut it down to 810mm (610mm for the main board and 200mm for the handle) using a mitre saw. Plane the board from 25mm to 22mm thickness for a smoother surface (this step is optional if your board is pre-flattened).

Safety tip: Always wear a dust mask, safety glasses, and use dust extraction systems when cutting, sanding, or planing.

Step 2: Adding the handle

Trace the handle shape onto the board using an acrylic template. Drill a 30mm hole for the handle opening using a Forstner bit.

Roughly cut the handle shape with a jigsaw, staying a few millimetres outside the traced line. Attach the template to the board using double-sided tape. Use a router table with a 38mm flush trim bit to follow the template and refine the handle shape. Move the board clockwise to avoid tear-out.

Step 3: Softening the corners and edges

Attach a corner radius template to round off the board's edges. Smooth the edges using a flush trim router bit, moving clockwise. Switch to a 6mm round-over bit to soften the outer and inner edges of the board, including the handle opening.

Step 4: Prepping and sanding the board

Fill any holes with glue and sand smooth once dry. Sand the entire board in stages: 100, 120, 150, 180, and finish with 220 grit.

Wet the board to raise the grain, let it dry, and sand lightly with 220 grit to remove the raised grain.

Step 5: Customising the board (optional)

Add a personal touch by embedding a customised coin or emblem. Drill a 25mm hole and secure the coin with glue.

Step 6: Oiling and waxing the board

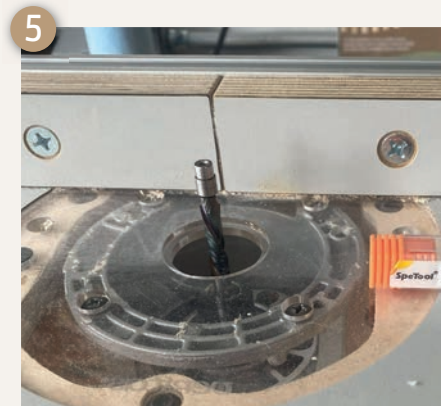
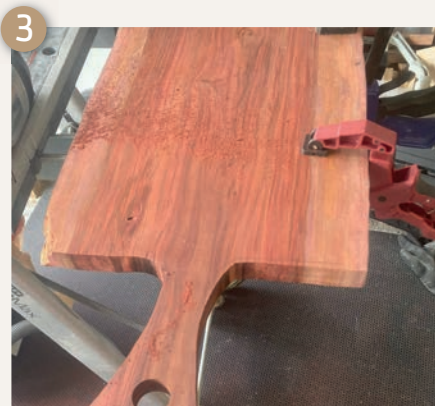
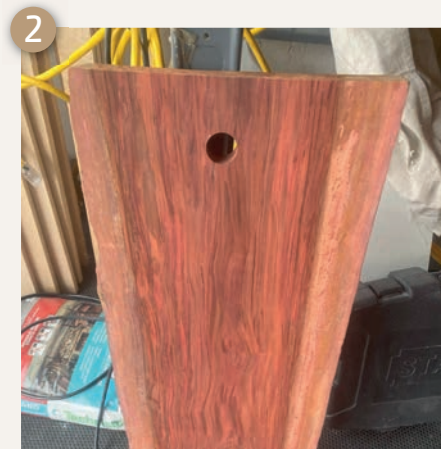
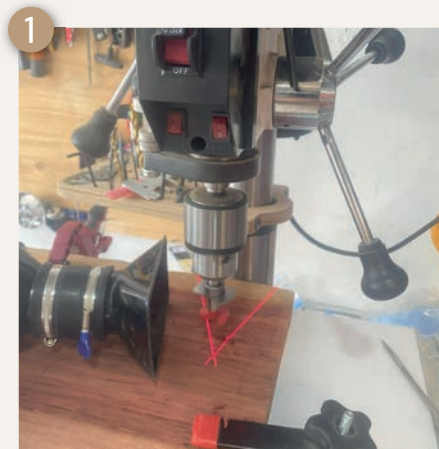
Apply a generous coat of cutting board oil to both sides and let it soak overnight. Buff off excess oil and apply a layer of board wax. Polish

with a buffing pad or by hand for a smooth, food-safe finish.

Step 7: Serve and enjoy

Your XL charcuterie board is now ready for action! Load it up with cheeses, meats, fruits, and other goodies for a stunning centrepiece that will wow your guests.

Whether for family dinners or special occasions, this board is sure to impress while making entertaining easier and more enjoyable.



1. Drill a 30mm hole for the handle opening using a Forstner bit 2. Make sure you are happy before proceeding 3. Roughly cut the handle shape with a jigsaw 4. Attach the template to the board using double-sided tape 5. Use a router table with a 38mm flush trim bit to follow the template and refine the handle shape 6. Smooth the edges using a flush trim router bit 7. Fill any holes with glue and sand smooth once dry 8. Apply a generous coat of cutting board oil to both sides and let it soak overnight 9. You can add a personal touch if you want by embedding a customised coin or emblem

As the proud father of twin girls, I've learned that everything in the house often needs to come in twos – and luckily, I love DIY! When we received a second-hand bed, I decided to build a matching pull-out bed.

DIY PULL-OUT BED



What you will need

Materials:

- Wood boards for the outer edge: 140mm tall and 18mm thick
- Wood strips for slat support: 18mm x 28mm
- 4 wheels (fixed preferred, but I used swivel)
- Screws
- Wood glue
- 4 L-shaped screws
- Rubber tape
- Bed slats
- Mattress: 700mm x 1 600mm

Tools:

- Drill/screwdriver
- Measuring tape
- Level
- Clamps

>> Karim Bernard

We received a second-hand flat-pack bed as a gift, but our daughters' shared room wasn't big enough for another fixed bed without sacrificing precious play space. So, I designed and built a pull-out bed that can slide under the existing one when not in use. This simple DIY project kept the room spacious and gave each of my girls a comfy place to sleep! Here's how I did it!

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Measure the bed

This project is simple, following the bed's structure but reducing its length by 50mm. The shorter length ensures it slides easily under the existing bed while leaving enough space for the 700mm x 1 600mm mattress.

To fit the pull-out bed snugly beneath the other bed, I chose slightly thinner boards (18mm thick) compared to the original bed's 22mm thickness.

Step 2: Build the outer frame

Using a Kreg Jig, I drilled two pocket holes at each joint and secured the corners with two screws. To ensure stability, I also drilled three additional screws through the outer short sides of the bed.

For added strength, I applied wood glue to all joints before securing the screws. This makes the frame strong enough to handle regular use.

Step 3: Add slat supports

Just like the original bed, I measured and marked the lines for the slat support strips. Using screws and glue, I attached the strips along the marked lines and added a central crossbar for

extra reinforcement. This ensures the bed can support the weight of an active child.

Step 4: Reinforce the corners

To stabilise the frame further and create a base for the wheels, I cut wooden triangles and secured them in the corners with screws and glue.

The corner reinforcements serve two purposes:

1. Prevent the boards from warping due to movement.
2. Provide a solid surface for attaching the wheels.

I then fixed the wheels, adding a screw to limit their rotation and make sliding the bed easier.

Step 5: Final touches

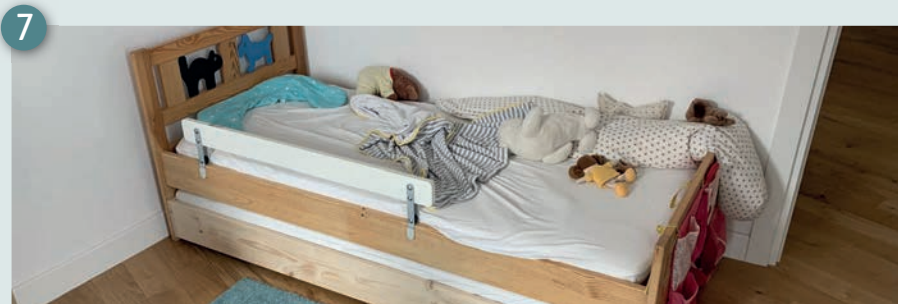
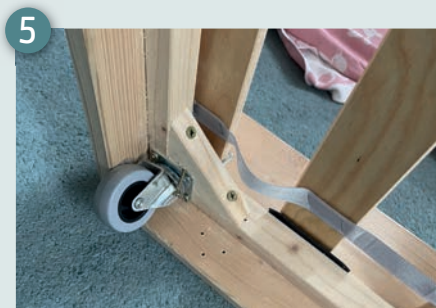
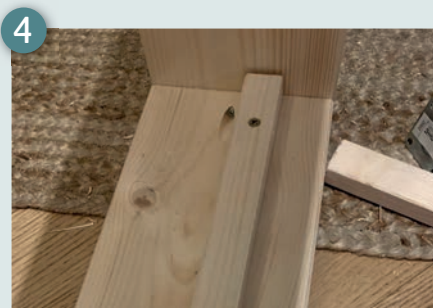
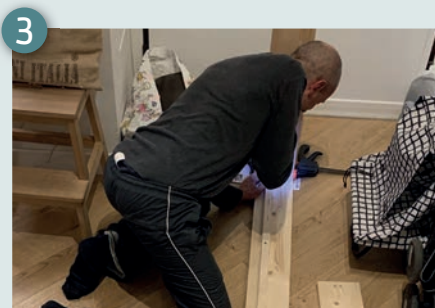
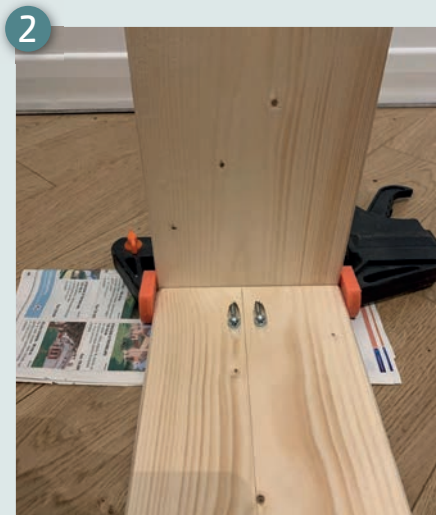
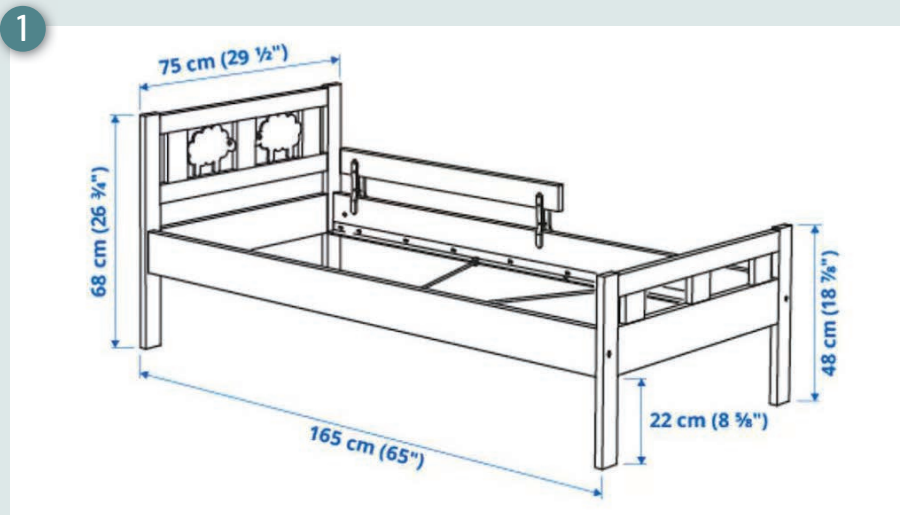
To keep the slats securely in place, I added L-shaped screws in all four corners of the frame.

At first, I noticed the bed creaked when the slats rubbed against the wood. To solve this, I applied rubberised tape to the wooden strips where the slats rest. This simple fix made the bed completely silent, even during movement.

Two years later...

The pull-out bed has exceeded my expectations and has been in daily use for over two years. It's sturdy enough to handle my daughters jumping on it, slides easily under the main bed, and has been a great space-saving solution for our small room.

If you're looking for a practical DIY project to make the most of a compact space, this sliding bed might just be what you need. Give it a go – you'll love the results!



1. The dimensions of the bed we were gifted 2. Using a Kreg Jig, I drilled two pocket holes at each joint 3. I measured, marked and installed the slat support strips 4. Close up of the slat supports 5. To stabilise the frame further and create a base for the wheels 6. To keep the slats securely in place, I added L-shaped screws in all four corners 7. Two become one – how it looks with the bed slid under the main bed



Before



After

FROM DRAB TO FAB



What you will need

- Wood filler
- Sandpaper (80, 120, 180, 220, and 400 grit)
- Degreaser/cleaner (I used The Pink Stuff)
- Lint-free towels or blue shop towels
- Primer
- Paint (colour of your choice)
- Paintbrush
- High-quality foam roller
- Optional: paint blocker/sealer
- New legs and hardware (pulls)
- Drill

>> Danny Cinema

When I stumbled upon a solid wood, three-drawer dresser for just R50 at a garage sale, I knew it had potential. With a bit of work, I turned this budget find into a polished, stylish piece that blends perfectly with my home office. Here's the step-by-step process to help you restore your own treasure!

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Find your project piece

First, hunt for a budget-friendly dresser made from solid wood. Avoid MDF pieces, as they're harder to restore and less durable. I found mine for just R50, but check second-hand stores, garage sales, or online marketplaces for deals.

Step 2: Deep clean the dresser

Start by thoroughly cleaning your dresser. Use a degreaser or all-purpose cleaner like to remove dirt, grime, and oils from the surface. Wipe it down with lint-free towels (blue shop towels work great) to avoid leaving fibres behind. A clean surface is essential for a smooth restoration process.

Step 3: Fill imperfections

Inspect the dresser for holes, dents, or other imperfections. Apply wood filler generously to these areas, ensuring you overfill slightly so you

can sand it flush later. Allow the filler to dry completely before moving on to the next step.

Step 4: Sand everything

Sanding is one of the most important steps in restoring furniture. Use a random orbital sander if possible for a quicker, smoother result. Start with 80-grit sandpaper to remove any old finishes or rough patches. Gradually work your way up through 120, 180, and finish with 220 grit for a smooth surface.

After sanding, clean the dresser again to remove all dust and particles. Wipe it down with a clean, damp cloth, and then run a dry towel over it to ensure the surface is spotless.

Step 5: Prime the dresser

Priming is key to ensuring your paint adheres well, especially if you're using a light colour or painting over dark wood. I applied the primer with a paintbrush to get good coverage, then smoothed it out with a foam

roller to eliminate brush strokes. Use light pressure with the roller to glide it over the surface.

Allow the primer to dry completely before moving to the next step

Step 6: Paint your masterpiece

Once the primer is dry, it's time to paint! I applied three coats of paint for

a rich, even finish. Sand lightly with 400-grit sandpaper between the first and second coats for an ultra-smooth result. Do not sand the final coat to preserve the finish.

If your dresser will be in a high-traffic area or you plan to sell it, consider applying a paint blocker or sealer for extra durability.

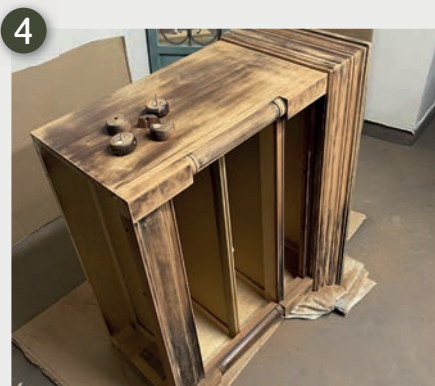
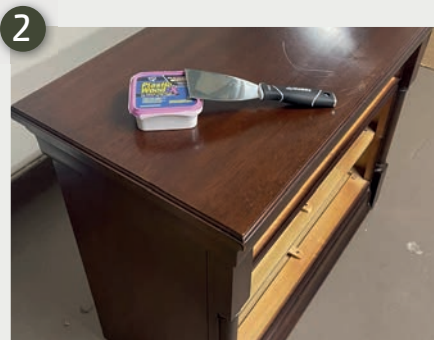
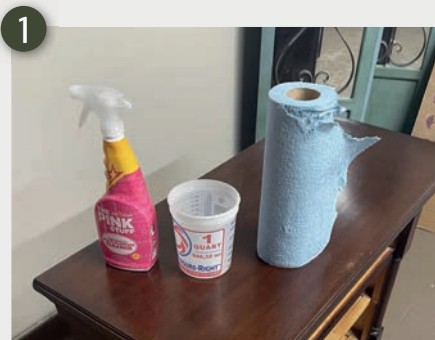
Step 7: Add new hardware

After letting the paint cure for 48 hours, I installed new legs and hardware to give the dresser a modern look. The original pulls didn't fit my style, so I chose new ones. I had to drill new holes to match the hardware placement, but it was a small effort for a big impact.

Final thoughts

This restored dresser cost me just R50 to buy and less than R100 in supplies. With a bit of effort, it's now a gorgeous piece that fits perfectly in my home office. If I wanted to sell it, I could easily ask for R500 or more – but this one's a keeper!

Whether you're looking to upcycle a budget find or create a unique piece for your space, restoring a dresser is a rewarding DIY project anyone can tackle. Give it a go and enjoy the transformation!



1. Start by thoroughly cleaning your dresser 2. Inspect for holes, dents, or other imperfections. Apply wood filler 3. Start sanding with 80-grit sandpaper to remove any old finishes or rough patches. Gradually work your way up through 120, 180, and finish with 220 grit for a smooth surface 5. After sanding, clean the dresser again to remove all dust and particles 6. Priming is key to ensuring your paint adheres well 7. Paint the dresser the colour of your choosing 8. Once dry, you can add new hardware if you want to

Create a DIY coffee table with a creative twist.

UPCYCLE YOUR SPACE



What you will need

Tools:

- Cordless drill
- Jigsaw
- Handsaw
- Screwdriver
- Drill bit
- Paintbrush

Materials:

- Chair legs
- Wood for tabletop
- 4 wood screws
- 4 punched plates (with at least two holes each)
- 4 screw-in nuts
- 4 machine screws
- Paint

>> Louis Woodfield

Turn spare furniture parts into something extraordinary! In this project, I transformed unused chair legs and a leftover countertop piece into a sleek and stylish coffee table. It's a budget-friendly and rewarding way to upcycle and add charm to your living room.

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Cutting the chair legs

To ensure the table sits level, cut the chair legs to the same length. Use the crossbraces between the legs as a guide to make the cut parallel to the tabletop's position. A handsaw or jigsaw will work well for this step.

Step 2: Cutting the tabletop

Shape the tabletop however you like. As long as it fits securely on the legs, you have creative freedom. I chose a freeform design, using a jigsaw to create a modern and organic look.

Step 3: Attaching the legs

1. **Prepare the legs:** Attach punched plates to the tops of the legs using wood screws. Countersink the screws so they sit flush with the plates. Predrill holes to avoid splitting the wood.
2. **Mark the tabletop:** Position the legs on the underside of the tabletop, then mark where the screw holes will go.

3. **Drill and secure the nuts:** Drill holes for the screw-in nuts, ensuring you don't drill through the tabletop. Use a piece of tape on the drill bit to mark the proper depth.

4. **Assemble the table:** Install the screw-in nuts in the tabletop, then attach the legs with machine screws. This method makes it easy to disassemble and reassemble the table. Alternatively, you can use wood screws for a simpler approach.

Step 4: Painting and finishing

Add a personal touch by painting or finishing the tabletop. I used a chalk-based paint to cover the top surface, giving it a stylish and modern appearance. Once dry, apply oil to protect the surface from spills and to enhance the wood's natural beauty.

Step 5: And voilà!

Your new coffee table is ready to take centre stage in your living room. This project is not only functional but also a conversation starter, showcasing your upcycling skills and creativity.



1. The chair legs which will be upcycled 2. To ensure the table sits level, cut the chair legs to the same length 3. Shape the tabletop however you like 4. I chose a freeform design, using a jigsaw to create a modern and organic look 5. Attach punched plates to the tops of the legs using wood screws 6. Countersink the screws so they sit flush with the plates 7. Position the legs on the underside of the tabletop, then mark where the screw holes will go 8. Attach the legs

Say goodbye to misplaced to-do lists and messy shopping notes with this simple yet stylish DIY project.

This notepad holder is not only functional but also a fun and creative way to add charm to your organisation routine.



A NOTE-WORTHY PROJECT

>> Amit Saha

This compact, handmade organiser is designed to keep your lists neat, accessible, and stylish. Whether you're a busy parent, an avid planner, or a DIY enthusiast, this project is the perfect blend of functionality and creativity. Follow these step-by-step instructions to craft your own.



What you will need

- 10mm plywood board (100mm x 300mm)
- 10mm leather strap (10mm x 60mm)
- Cords and beads
- Dowel pin (100mm long)
- Necklace hooks (2 pieces)
- Small screw eye pins (2 pieces)
- Wood lacquer (optional)
- Receipt paper rolls
- Mini hacksaw blade
- 10mm screws (4 pieces)
- Button magnets (4 pieces)

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Prepare the base

Start by cutting your 10mm plywood board to 100mm x 300mm. For added flair, shape one end into an arrow design or another playful design. Sand all the edges and corners until smooth to remove splinters and give the base a polished look.

Step 2: Mark and drill hooking points

Use a ruler and pencil to measure and mark points on both sides of the board. These marks will guide you when drilling small holes for the screw eye pins. Keep the spacing symmetrical for a balanced appearance.

Step 3: Polish and seal the surface

Before assembling, wipe the board with a dry cloth to remove dust and pencil marks. Use fine-grit sandpaper to smooth the surface, particularly around the drilled holes. If you'd like to add a finishing touch, apply

a coat of clear wood finish. This step is optional but will enhance durability and give the project a sleek, professional finish.

Step 4: Create a pen holder

To keep a pen handy, cut two small strips of leather approximately 10mm wide. Fold the strips into loops and staple them to the back of the board using a staple gun. Position the loops so that a pen or marker can slide through easily without falling out.

Step 5: Assemble the receipt hanger

Cut two pieces of cord or ribbon, each about 100mm long. Thread these cords through the screw eye pins on the sides of the board. Next, prepare your dowel pin by drilling a small hole on each end. Insert beads onto the cord for decoration, then secure the ends of the cord to the dowel using necklace hooks. This setup allows the receipt roll to hang freely while being easy to replace.

Step 6: Install the paper roll and cutter

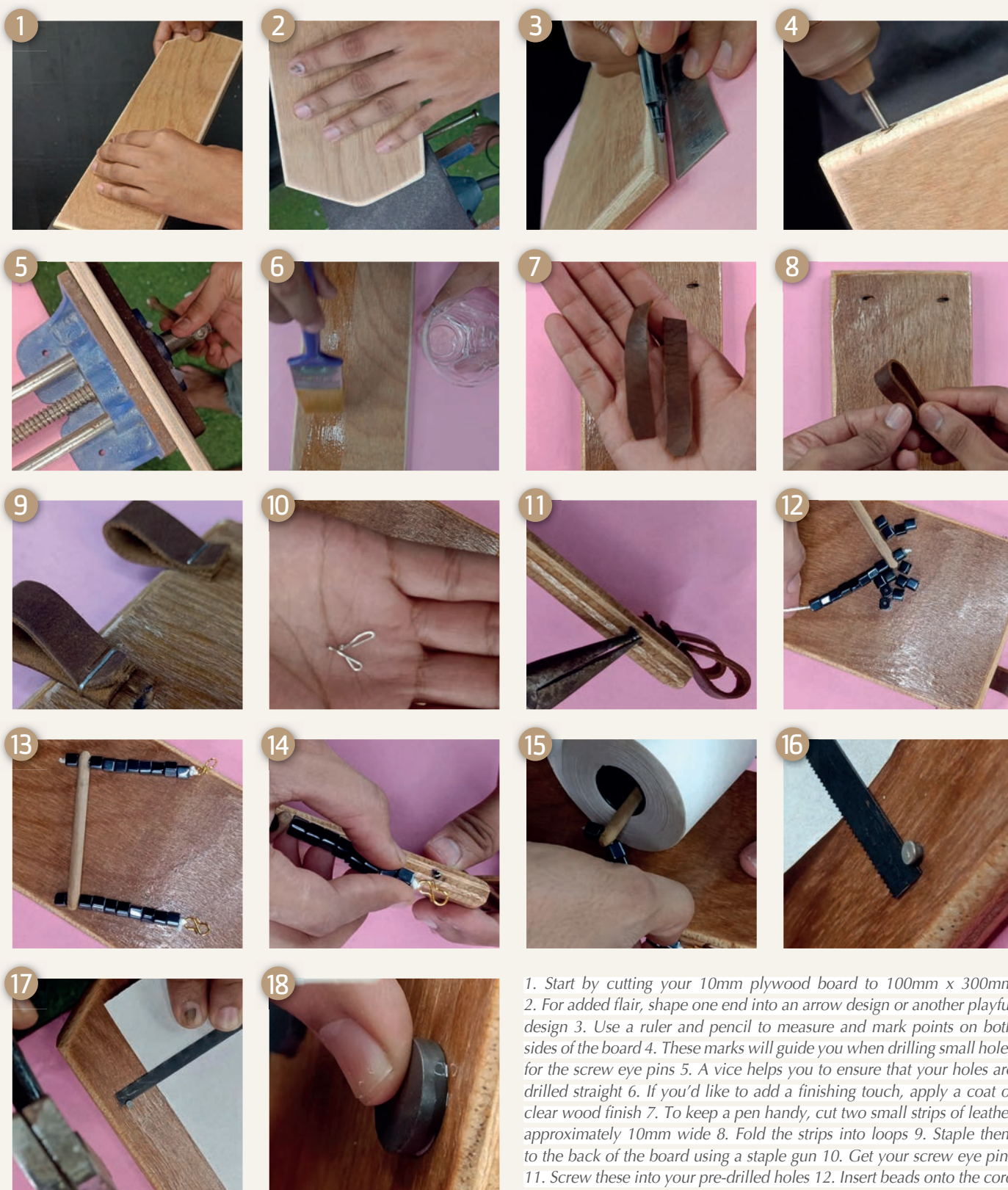
Place your receipt roll onto the dowel and attach it to the hooks. For the cutter, repurpose an old hacksaw blade. Trim the blade to around 100mm and fix it to the board using four small screws, with two on each side for stability. Position the blade so the paper can glide under it smoothly and tear cleanly.

Step 7: Add magnets

For versatility, attach four button magnets to the back of the board using hot glue. These magnets allow you to stick your notepad holder onto a fridge or any magnetic surface, keeping it within easy reach.

Step 8: The finishing touches

Give the entire piece a final inspection to ensure everything is secure and smooth. Test the paper roll, pen holder, and magnets to confirm they function as intended.



Congratulations! You've created a practical and stylish tool to keep your life organised. This DIY notepad holder is simple enough for beginners yet customisable for experienced crafters. Experiment with different finishes, colours, or materials to make it uniquely yours.

1. Start by cutting your 10mm plywood board to 100mm x 300mm
 2. For added flair, shape one end into an arrow design or another playful design
 3. Use a ruler and pencil to measure and mark points on both sides of the board
 4. These marks will guide you when drilling small holes for the screw eye pins
 5. A vice helps you to ensure that your holes are drilled straight
 6. If you'd like to add a finishing touch, apply a coat of clear wood finish
 7. To keep a pen handy, cut two small strips of leather approximately 10mm wide
 8. Fold the strips into loops
 9. Staple them to the back of the board using a staple gun
 10. Get your screw eye pins
 11. Screw these into your pre-drilled holes
 12. Insert beads onto the cord for decoration
 13. This setup allows the receipt roll to hang freely while being easy to replace
 14. Secure the ends of the cord to the dowel using necklace hooks
 15. Place your receipt roll onto the dowel and attach it to the hooks
 16. For the cutter, repurpose an old hacksaw blade
 17. Trim the blade to around 100mm and fix it to the board using four small screws
 18. Attach four button magnets to the back of the board using hot glue


 A photograph of a modern living room. On the right, a black wood-burning stove with a glass door shows a fire burning inside. A black pipe extends from the top of the stove towards the ceiling. Below the stove, a metal firebox is filled with stacked firewood. To the left of the stove, two large windows with white frames look out onto a lush green forest. In the foreground, a white sofa is partially visible. On the floor next to the sofa are two wooden mushroom-shaped stools. A small black bag sits on the floor near the stove.

Seasonal home care:
preparing for cooler
months.

WINTER IS COMING

As the cooler months approach, it's easy to focus on cosy fires and thick blankets, but if you want to avoid expensive repairs and frustrating surprises, now's the time to give your home some TLC. From gutters to gardens, prepping your home during the quieter months can save you significant trouble once the first cold front or heavy rain hits. Here's how to autumn-proof your home and ensure everything stays in top shape.

The importance of timing

A recent study by Kandua.com shows that 80% of South Africans put off home maintenance until something breaks or the first rains reveal a leak. The months of May through July are surprisingly quiet for roofers, waterproofing specialists, and gutter cleaners – despite this being the ideal time to get ahead of the game. By waiting until spring, problems that could have been minor repairs become expensive, larger-scale issues.

Autumn is the perfect time to plan ahead. Gutters, roofing, and waterproofing should be at the top of your list, allowing you to address any potential cracks, blockages, or damaged tiles before the wet season sets in. Neglecting these can lead to damp walls, leaks, and long-term structural damage.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO AUTUMN-PROOFING YOUR HOME

Gutters and roof maintenance

Clearing out gutters may not seem like a high-priority task, but once leaves and debris build up, water can overflow or pool, damaging your roof and walls. A blocked gutter can lead to cracks or leaks, which are far harder (and costlier) to fix once the rainy season begins.

Step-by-step guide to gutter maintenance

1. **Inspect the gutters:** Walk around your house and check for visible signs of blockages or sagging gutters. Look for cracks or rust that might indicate wear.
2. **Remove debris:** Using gloves and a sturdy ladder, remove any leaves, twigs, and dirt from the gutters. A small garden trowel works well for stubborn debris.
3. **Flush with water:** Use a garden hose to flush out remaining dirt. This will also reveal any leaks.
4. **Seal cracks:** If you notice any small cracks or holes, seal them with a waterproof gutter sealant.
5. **Check downspouts:** Make sure downspouts are clear of blockages and direct water away from the foundation.

Roof maintenance tips

- **Check for loose or missing tiles:** Replace any that appear damaged or displaced.
- **Inspect flashing:** Ensure flashing around chimneys and vents is intact.
- **Trim overhanging branches:** Prevent damage to the roof by cutting back branches that could fall during a storm.
- **Hire a professional:** If climbing the roof feels unsafe, hire a roofing specialist to conduct a thorough inspection.



Using gloves and a sturdy ladder, remove any leaves, twigs, and dirt from the gutters

Painting and waterproofing

If your budget allows, painting the exterior of your home in winter offers significant benefits. Dry, cool weather ensures the paint adheres well and has plenty of time to cure before the rain arrives. Waterproofing your roof and walls can also prevent costly leaks, preserving your home's integrity and resale value.

Tips for waterproofing

1. **Inspect walls and ceilings:** Look for cracks or water stains. Address these areas with a waterproof sealant or paint.
2. **Focus on joints and edges:** Pay extra attention to areas where walls meet the roof or foundation.
3. **Apply waterproof paint:** Opt for high-quality waterproof paint specifically designed for exterior surfaces.
4. **Check indoor areas:** Waterproof laundry rooms, and bathrooms to prevent damp buildup.

Don't forget the pipes

Cold weather can cause pipes to contract, increasing the risk of cracks or bursts – particularly if the water inside freezes. This is a common issue in older homes or properties that haven't had regular plumbing inspections. To avoid this, call in a plumber to check your pipes, insulation, and overall system health before winter kicks in.

Preventative plumbing tips

- **Insulate exposed pipes:** Use foam pipe insulation to protect outdoor or exposed pipes.

- **Drain outdoor taps:** Disconnect garden hoses and drain outdoor taps to prevent freezing.
- **Fix leaks immediately:** Even a small leak can escalate during colder months.
- **Keep the heat on:** Maintain a low level of heating during cold snaps, even if you're away.

Tidy up the garden

Strong winds and storms are part and parcel of the cooler months, so ensure your garden is ready. Trim back overhanging branches and check for any trees that look unstable. According to Kandua, tree fellers are busiest in October, March, and April – the months of the biggest storms. By handling this in autumn, you reduce the risk of falling branches causing property damage.

Garden preparation tips

1. **Trim branches and shrubs:** Cut back any foliage that could damage your home or power lines.
2. **Secure loose garden furniture:** Prevent furniture or tools from becoming projectiles in strong winds.
3. **Inspect fences and gates:** Reinforce or repair any weak points.
4. **Clear drainage areas:** Ensure outdoor drains are free of leaves and debris



Keep your garden tidy by raking the autumn leaves

Winter pest-proofing your home

Cooler weather can drive pests like rodents and insects indoors, looking for warmth and food. Taking steps to pest-proof your home now can save you the hassle of dealing with infestations later.

Pest-proofing steps

1. **Seal gaps:** Inspect your home for small openings around doors, windows, and pipes. Seal them with silicone or steel wool.
2. **Store food securely:** Keep food in airtight containers to prevent attracting pests.
3. **Check the attic and basement:** If your house has these, they

are common entry points for rodents. Look for signs of droppings or nesting materials.

4. **Trim vegetation:** Ensure trees and bushes don't provide easy access for pests to enter your home.

Ventilation and air quality

While sealing your home against the cold is important, maintaining good indoor air quality during winter is equally crucial. Poor ventilation can lead to condensation, mould growth, and stale air.

Tips for better ventilation

1. **Use extractor fans:** Ensure extractor fans in the kitchen and bathrooms are working effectively to remove moisture.
2. **Open windows strategically:** Ventilate your home during the warmest part of the day to prevent condensation buildup.
3. **Invest in a dehumidifier:** This is especially helpful if your home is prone to dampness.
4. **Check your air conditioner's filters:** Clean or replace filters to ensure efficient airflow and minimise allergens.

Outdoor living spaces

If you enjoy spending time outdoors, winter doesn't have to mean giving up your patio or garden. With the right adjustments, you can create a cosy outdoor retreat for cooler evenings.

Outdoor preparation tips

1. **Add heating elements:** Consider portable fire pits, outdoor heaters, or patio heaters to keep warm.
2. **Invest in weatherproof furniture:** Protect your outdoor furniture with covers or switch to weather-resistant materials.
3. **String up lighting:** Add fairy lights or solar-powered lanterns for a cosy, inviting vibe.
4. **Use outdoor rugs and throws:** These make your space feel more comfortable while adding insulation.



Just because its winter doesn't mean you can't entertain outdoors – free-standing heaters are a great addition

Pool maintenance

Winter may seem like an odd time to care for your pool, but it's actually the best time to address any cracks, faded paint, or algae build-up. Cooler temperatures make it easier to drain, repair, and repaint the pool without battling the blazing heat of summer.

Pool maintenance checklist

1. **Drain the pool partially:** Lower the water level to clean and inspect the interior.
2. **Scrub and treat algae:** Use a pool brush and algae treatment to remove build-up.
3. **Repair cracks and tiles:** Fix any structural issues while the pool is dry.
4. **Repaint if necessary:** Consider repainting the pool to give it a fresh, clean look.



Cleaning and decluttering

Winter is a great time to tackle areas of the home you might overlook during busier months. Decluttering and deep cleaning now will make your home feel more organised and pleasant during the cooler season.

Winter cleaning checklist

1. **Deep-clean carpets and curtains:** These tend to trap dust and allergens.
2. **Declutter storage spaces:** Organise garages or outdoor sheds to make space for seasonal items.
3. **Check your chimney:** If you have a fireplace, clean the chimney to prevent soot buildup or fire hazards.
4. **Polish windows and mirrors:** Maximise natural light during shorter days by keeping these areas sparkling clean.



The cost of procrastination

Delaying essential home maintenance can lead to cascading issues. A small roof leak can result in water-damaged ceilings, mould growth, and damaged insulation. Similarly, a blocked gutter can compromise not just the roof but also the walls and foundation. By staying on top of these tasks now, you can avoid much larger bills down the line.

As tempting as it is to hibernate under blankets, remember

that a little effort now will save you from unnecessary stress – and expense – in the months ahead. If you're unsure where to start or lack the skills, don't worry. There are plenty of professionals available who can help, ensuring that by the time winter arrives, your home is in perfect shape.

So, before the temperature drops, get proactive. A well-prepared home is a happy, warm, and stress-free home.

DIY projects to keep you cosy this winter

The cooler months provide the perfect opportunity to take on some creative DIY projects that can add warmth and comfort to your home. These ideas are practical, affordable, and fun to tackle over a weekend.

DIY ideas for winter:

1. Draft stoppers for doors and windows

Prevent cold draughts from sneaking in by making your own draft stoppers. Use old fabric scraps, socks, or even denim from worn-out jeans. Fill them with rice, dried beans, or stuffing, and sew or glue the ends closed. They're easy to make and will help keep rooms warmer while reducing energy costs.

2. Homemade fleece blankets

No-sew fleece blankets are a quick and easy project. All you need is two pieces of fleece fabric and scissors. Cut fringe along the edges and tie the layers together for a warm and personalised blanket. They also make great gifts!

3. Upcycled hot water bottle covers

Transform old sweaters or knitted items into cosy covers for your hot water bottles. Cut a section of the fabric, sew it to fit the bottle snugly, and add a button or tie closure for extra charm.

4. DIY firelighters

Prepare for chilly evenings by making eco-friendly firelighters. Use egg cartons, tumble dryer lint, and melted candle wax to create compact fire starters. These are perfect for lighting a fire in the braai, fireplace, or outdoor fire pit.

5. Knitted or crocheted winter accessories

Take up knitting or crocheting to create scarves, beanies, or throws. South Africa's local wool industry offers a variety of

high-quality yarns, so you can support local while staying warm.

6. Personalised mug cosies

Keep your coffee or tea warm for longer by crafting reusable mug cosies. These can be knitted, crocheted, or sewn using fabric. Add buttons or embroidery for a personalised touch.

7. Pallet wood blanket ladder

Build a simple blanket ladder using reclaimed pallet wood. It's an easy project that can be stained or painted to match your décor. Use it to display blankets, throws, or even scarves for easy access on chilly nights.

8. Candle-making with local flair

Make your own candles using soy wax or beeswax and customise them with essential oils like rooibos, buchu, or lavender for a uniquely South African touch. Use recycled glass jars or clay pots for an eco-friendly twist.



Why DIY this winter?

Not only do these projects keep you busy during the cooler months, but they also enhance your home's comfort and style while saving money. Plus, they're a great way to spend quality time with family or friends indoors when the weather outside isn't ideal.

By tackling these DIY ideas, you can embrace the winter season in true South African style –cosy, creative, and resourceful!

THE ULTIMATE DIY COMPANION

What is a multi-tool
and what DIY jobs is it
good for?

When it comes to versatility, few tools can match the multi-tool. Whether you're a seasoned woodworker, a dedicated DIYer, or simply someone who enjoys tinkering around the house, a multi-tool is the go-to gadget that can handle a variety of tasks with ease. Its ability to cut, sand, grind, and scrape makes it one of the most practical tools you can own, effectively replacing several single-purpose tools in your toolbox.

Why every DIY'er needs a multi-tool

A multi-tool is exactly what the name suggests – a single device capable of performing multiple functions by swapping out different attachments. Its compact size and ergonomic design allow it to reach tight spaces and awkward angles where traditional tools might fail. This makes it invaluable for small repairs, detail work, and projects that require precision.

For DIY'ers, the biggest advantage is efficiency. Rather than stopping mid-project to hunt down another tool, the multi-tool allows you to switch between sanding, cutting, and grinding quickly. This not only saves time but also reduces the clutter in your workspace.

Key features to look for

When shopping for a multi-tool, it's essential to consider features that will enhance its usability and longevity.

1. **Variable speed control:** The ability to adjust the speed of the tool allows for greater control over delicate tasks and more aggressive material removal when necessary.
2. **Quick-change attachments:** Look for models that feature a tool-free mechanism to swap attachments quickly and without fuss.
3. **Power source:** Multi-tools come in both corded and cordless varieties. Corded models tend to offer more

power for heavy-duty tasks, while cordless models provide greater flexibility and portability.

4. **Accessory variety:** Some brands offer a wide array of attachments, from cutting blades to sanding pads. Ensure the multi-tool you choose is compatible with readily available accessories.
5. **Ergonomic design:** A comfortable grip and well-balanced weight distribution make prolonged use much easier, reducing hand fatigue.

TOP USES FOR A MULTI-TOOL

The real beauty of a multi-tool lies in its adaptability. Here are some of the most common applications that highlight just how essential it can be for DIY projects:

Cutting

- **Wood and drywall:** Need to cut through drywall to install an outlet or trim a piece of wood? A multi-tool can make precise plunge cuts without damaging surrounding areas
- **Metal and plastic:** Fitted with the right blade, a multi-tool can slice through nails, screws, and plastic pipes, making it perfect for repair work.

Sanding

- **Detail sanding:** The triangular sanding head is perfect for smoothing corners, edges, and tight spaces where larger sanders can't reach.
- **Finishing touches:** After a woodworking project, switch to a fine-grit sanding pad to polish and prepare the surface for painting or staining.

Grinding and Polishing

- **Removing rust or old paint:** Multi-tools can grind away rust from metal surfaces or strip paint from furniture with ease.

- **Tile and grout work:** Grind away old grout or polish tiles during bathroom renovations.

Scraping

- **Adhesive and silicone:** Use the scraper attachment to remove old caulking, adhesive residue, or stubborn carpet glue.
- **Flooring projects:** Strip away linoleum, underlayment, or worn-out vinyl flooring quickly.



Step-by-step guide to using a multi-tool

For those new to multi-tools, here's a simple step-by-step guide to getting started with basic projects:

Step 1: Choose the right attachment: Select the appropriate blade or sanding pad based on the task at hand. Most multi-tools come with a starter set of attachments.

Step 2: Secure the attachment: If your tool features a quick-change system, simply unlock the head, place the attachment, and secure it. For other models, a hex key may be required.

Step 3: Adjust the speed: Start at a lower speed to get a feel for the tool's performance, especially for delicate materials. Increase the speed as needed for tougher jobs.

Step 4: Practice on scrap material: Before diving into your project, practice on a piece of scrap material to build confidence and understand how the tool handles.

Step 5: Begin the project: Let the tool do the work; avoid forcing it through materials. Use smooth, controlled movements.

Step 6. Clean and store: After use, clean the attachments and store the tool in a dry place. Proper maintenance extends its lifespan.

Tips for maximising efficiency

- **Match the attachment to the task:** Using the correct attachment ensures better results and prevents damage to both the tool and the material.
- **Keep spare attachments:** Sanding pads and blades wear out over time. Having extras on hand keeps your workflow uninterrupted.
- **Secure workpieces:** Clamp down materials to prevent slipping, ensuring cleaner, safer cuts.
- **Use protective gear:** Safety goggles, dust masks, and gloves are essential, especially when sanding or cutting.

Choosing the right brand

With a growing number of options available, it's worth investing in a trusted brand. Bosch, DeWalt, Makita, and Dremel consistently receive praise for their durability and performance. While high-end models may cost more upfront, their longevity and power often outweigh the expense in the long run.

Are multi tool attachments universal?

Yes and no – typically manufacturers will have their own format that works well with their tool. Some manufacturers create attachments that are interchangeable with other brands, but not all brands do.

Other manufacturers create universal attachments that work across all brands. To guarantee that an attachment will work with your multi tool use the manufacturer's blades.

If working on removing skirting boards, for example, and can't find your manufacturer's brand of saw attachment, you can check what other brands' attachments work with yours. If unsure, go for a universal attachment. In the unfortunate situation where they don't work with your multi tool you can always exchange or get a refund.

Why multi-tools are the ultimate companion

A multi-tool is more than just a gadget – it's a reliable partner that simplifies complex DIY tasks. Its ability to switch between cutting, sanding, grinding, and scraping means fewer tools to buy and store, making it an economical choice for homeowners and professionals alike.

By investing in a quality multi-tool and mastering its functions, you open up a world of possibilities for home improvement, repair, and creative projects. From fixing door frames to crafting furniture, this versatile device truly earns its place as the ultimate DIY companion.



Practical tips for modern renovations.

BIG BATHROOM UPGRADES

Renovating your bathroom can breathe new life into your home without requiring a massive budget. Whether you're tackling a full remodel or just refreshing a few elements, there are plenty of cost-effective ways to achieve a modern, stylish space. From updating fixtures to improving storage, small changes can make a big impact. Here's a comprehensive guide to upgrading your bathroom with practical and affordable solutions.

Planning your bathroom upgrade

Before diving into renovations, it's essential to plan and budget carefully. A well-thought-out plan will save time, money, and ensure the final result aligns with your vision.

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Assess your needs and goals

- Identify areas that require attention, such as outdated tiles, leaking fixtures, or poor lighting.
- Consider the functionality – do you need more storage, better lighting, or updated plumbing?
- Determine your aesthetic preferences – are you going for a sleek modern look or a more rustic feel?

Step 2: Set a budget

- Prioritise the essentials. Focus on plumbing, waterproofing, and high-traffic areas before luxury features.
- Allocate funds for unexpected costs, such as hidden water damage or structural issues.
- Research affordable materials and fixtures that offer quality without a hefty price tag.

Step 3: DIY vs professional help

- Tackle simple upgrades like painting, installing shelves, and updating fixtures yourself.
- For plumbing, tiling, or electrical work, consider hiring professionals to ensure the job is done right.

Step-by-step guides for common upgrades

1. Updating fixtures and fittings

Replacing old taps, showerheads, and handles is a simple yet effective way to modernise your bathroom.



Tools and materials:

- New taps, showerhead, or handles
- Adjustable wrench
- Plumber's tape
- Silicone sealant

Step-by-step guide

1. Turn off the water supply to the fixture.
2. Use the adjustable wrench to carefully remove the old fixture.
3. Clean the area around the opening, removing old sealant or debris.
4. Apply plumber's tape to the threads of the new fixture to ensure a watertight seal.
5. Screw the new fixture into place and tighten securely.
6. Turn the water back on and check for leaks. Apply silicone sealant around the base if necessary.

Additional tip: Consider upgrading to water-saving fixtures, such as low-flow taps and showerheads, to reduce water consumption and lower utility bills.

Extra advice: When selecting fixtures, consider matching the finish across all taps, showerheads, and handles to create a cohesive, polished look. Matte black, brushed nickel, and brass are trending options that add a modern touch.



2. Installing a new vanity or basin

A new vanity can dramatically change the look of your bathroom while adding storage and functionality.



Tools and materials:

- New vanity unit
- Drill
- Level
- Screws and wall plugs
- Plumber's tape
- Silicone sealant

Step-by-step guide

1. Measure the space and ensure the new vanity fits properly.
2. Turn off the water supply and disconnect the plumbing from the old basin.
3. Remove the old vanity, carefully prying it from the wall if needed.
4. Mark where the new vanity will sit and drill pilot holes for mounting.
5. Secure the vanity to the wall using screws and wall plugs.
6. Reconnect the plumbing and ensure all fixtures are watertight. Apply silicone around the edges.

Extra storage hack: Look for vanities with built-in drawers or shelves to maximise storage space. If space is limited, consider a floating vanity that provides a sleek look and opens up floor space, making the bathroom feel larger.



3. Replacing tiles or installing a splashback

Tiles can wear down or become outdated over time. Replacing tiles or installing a splashback is an effective way to refresh the bathroom's appearance.



Tools and materials:

- Tiles
- Tile adhesive
- Notched trowel
- Grout
- Tile spacers
- Tile cutter

Step-by-step guide

1. Remove old tiles using a hammer and chisel, taking care not to damage the wall underneath.
2. Apply tile adhesive to the wall using a notched trowel.
3. Place the tiles in position, using spacers to ensure even gaps.
4. Cut tiles to size where necessary using a tile cutter.
5. Allow the adhesive to set for at least 24 hours.
6. Apply grout between the tiles and wipe away excess with a damp sponge.

Pro tip: Consider using large format tiles for a modern look and minimal grout lines, which also reduces maintenance. Mosaic tiles or patterned splashbacks can add a statement feature wall without overwhelming the entire space.



4. Improving storage and organisation

Adding shelves or cabinets can help reduce clutter and improve the overall functionality of your bathroom.



Tools and materials:

- Floating shelves or cabinets
- Drill
- Level
- Screws and wall plugs

Step-by-step guide

1. Mark where you want the shelves or cabinets to go, ensuring they are level.
2. Drill pilot holes and insert wall plugs.
3. Secure the shelves or cabinets to the wall with screws.
4. Arrange bathroom essentials neatly to maximise space.

Smart storage solutions: Use vertical storage, corner shelves, and over-the-door organisers to make the most of limited space. Consider mirrored cabinets for additional storage and to create the illusion of a larger room.



Conclusion

Bathroom upgrades don't have to be expensive or time-consuming. By focusing on simple, practical changes, you can create a modern, functional space that adds value to your home. Whether you choose to update fixtures, install new tiles, or improve lighting, these cost-effective strategies will leave your bathroom looking refreshed and revitalised.

5. Enhancing lighting

Good lighting can transform the atmosphere of your bathroom and make daily tasks easier.



Tools and materials:

- New light fixtures
- Screwdriver
- Wire connectors
- Voltage tester

Step-by-step guide

1. Turn off the electricity at the breaker.
2. Remove the old light fixture by disconnecting the wires.
3. Connect the new fixture, matching the wires (live, neutral, and earth).
4. Secure the fixture to the wall or ceiling and restore power.

Pro tip: Install LED mirrors or wall-mounted sconces for stylish, energy-efficient lighting. Layering ambient, task, and accent lighting will create a bright and welcoming space.



Quick cosmetic updates

If you're looking for fast and budget-friendly ways to revitalise your bathroom, cosmetic updates are a great solution. These minor changes can have a big visual impact without requiring significant time or expense.

Regrouting tiles

Over time, grout can become discoloured, cracked, or stained. Refreshing grout lines is a cost-effective way to make your tiles look new again.

- **Choose the right grout colour:** Opt for a contrasting shade to make tiles stand out, or use a matching colour for a seamless appearance.
- **Seal it for longevity:** Once the grout is dry, apply a sealant to protect it from moisture and stains.

Painting walls or tiles

A fresh coat of paint can instantly brighten up your bathroom.

- **Moisture-resistant paint:** Use specialised bathroom paint to prevent peeling and mould growth.
- **Tile painting:** For outdated tiles, consider tile-specific paint for a clean, modern look. Be sure to thoroughly clean and sand the surface before painting for better adhesion.
- **Accent walls:** Create a feature wall using bold colours or patterns to add personality to the space.



Replacing hardware

Upgrading small details like cabinet handles, drawer pulls, towel rails, and hooks can subtly transform the look of your bathroom.

- **Trendy finishes:** Matte black, brushed gold, or chrome finishes can instantly modernise the space.
- **Coordinated accents:** Match hardware finishes across all fixtures for a cohesive design.



Accessorising for style

Enhance the bathroom's aesthetic with carefully chosen accessories.

- **Textiles:** Invest in high-quality towels, bath mats, and a stylish shower curtain. Opt for neutral tones or patterns that complement the room's colour scheme.
- **Decorative elements:** Add candles, small plants, or artwork to create a relaxing atmosphere.

- **Storage upgrades:** Use decorative baskets, jars, or trays to organise toiletries while adding visual appeal.



Updating mirrors

Swapping out an old mirror can make a huge difference.

- **Framed mirrors:** Choose a mirror with an elegant frame to act as a focal point.
- **LED mirrors:** Add functionality and style with backlit or demisting mirrors.



Freshening up silicone

Old, discoloured silicone can make even a clean bathroom look shabby.

- **Remove and replace:** Use a silicone tool to remove old silicone and apply a new bead around tubs, sinks, and showers.
- **Use mould-resistant products:** Select a silicone designed to resist mould and mildew for a long-lasting finish.

Adding greenery

Plants can breathe life into your bathroom while improving air quality.

- **Low-maintenance options:** Choose humidity-loving plants like ferns, pothos, or peace lilies.
- **Creative placement:** Use hanging planters, small shelves, or window sills to display greenery.

By combining these cosmetic updates, you can give your bathroom a fresh, inviting feel without breaking the bank.



Tech-savvy upgrades

Incorporating technology into your bathroom can elevate its functionality and comfort while adding a modern touch. A smart shower system allows you to control water temperature, pressure, and flow with a digital interface, creating a personalised bathing experience. Heated flooring is another luxurious addition, ensuring warmth underfoot during cold seasons and enhancing overall comfort.

Voice-activated lighting and built-in speakers can transform your bathroom into a smart space. With simple voice commands, you can adjust the lighting to suit your mood or play music while you relax in the tub. For a practical yet high-tech solution, demisting mirrors prevent condensation build-up, ensuring a clear reflection even in the steamiest conditions.

These tech-savvy upgrades are perfect for anyone looking to combine style, convenience, and innovation in their bathroom renovation.



Adhesive guide: Choosing the right bonding materials.

SEAL THE DEAL

Adhesives are a crucial element of any DIY project, yet their importance is often overlooked. Whether you're crafting, making home repairs, or tackling large-scale renovations, the right bonding material can be the difference between success and frustration. With so many options on the market, it can feel overwhelming to choose the perfect adhesive for your project. This guide simplifies the selection process and offers practical advice to help you make the right choice.

Understanding adhesive types

Adhesives come in various forms, each designed for specific applications and materials. For versatile, everyday projects, PVA glue is a dependable choice. It works well with wood, paper, and fabric, is non-toxic, and dries clear, though it isn't suitable for areas exposed to moisture. For heavy-duty repairs or bonding dissimilar materials like metal, plastic, and stone, epoxy is an excellent option. It forms a strong, waterproof bond and can even fill gaps, though it requires precise mixing and has a limited working time.



PVA glue

When quick fixes are needed, super glue is your go-to adhesive. It creates a strong bond in seconds but is better suited for smaller areas due to its brittleness. For larger surfaces or structural tasks, construction adhesive provides heavy-duty bonding, making it ideal for wood, concrete, or drywall. Contact cement is another reliable option, especially for laminates and veneers, as it forms an instant, strong bond when surfaces are pressed together.



Construction adhesive

For creative projects or temporary fixes, hot glue is a handy choice. It's quick-drying and easy to use but lacks the strength for heavy-duty applications. Silicone sealant, on the other hand, is perfect for areas exposed to moisture, such as bathrooms and kitchens, thanks to its flexibility and waterproof properties.

Factors to consider when choosing adhesives

To select the right adhesive, start by evaluating the materials you're working with. Certain adhesives, like epoxy, are ideal for non-porous materials such as glass or metal, while others, like PVA glue, are best suited for porous materials like wood or fabric. Next, consider the strength and durability required. For high-load applications, opt for construction adhesives or epoxies, whereas hot glue is more appropriate for lightweight or temporary bonds.

Drying and curing times are also critical. Super glue and hot glue provide quick results, making them perfect for projects with tight timelines. However, for intricate work requiring precision, slower-curing adhesives like epoxy or silicone sealant may be better. Flexibility is another important consideration; silicone and contact cement remain pliable after curing, making them ideal for materials that expand or contract, whereas rigid adhesives like epoxy may crack under movement.

Lastly, assess the environmental conditions. For outdoor projects or areas exposed to moisture and temperature fluctuations, waterproof adhesives like silicone or epoxy are a must. Always check the product label for compatibility and any specific instructions.

Adhesive application techniques

For a successful bond, preparation is key. Begin by cleaning and drying both surfaces to remove dust, grease, or debris. For smooth surfaces, lightly sand them to improve adhesion. Once the surfaces are prepared, apply the adhesive evenly using the appropriate tool – such as a notched trowel for construction adhesive or a brush for PVA glue.

Testing the adhesive on a small, inconspicuous area can help ensure compatibility and avoid damage. After applying the adhesive, press the materials together and, if needed, secure them with clamps or heavy objects to maintain pressure

during the curing process. Always follow the manufacturer's recommended curing time, as rushing this step can weaken the bond.

Cleanup is just as important as application. Wipe away excess adhesive with a damp cloth before it dries, and use solvents for tougher adhesives like epoxy or contact cement. Proper cleanup ensures a neat finish and prolongs the life of your tools.

Common mistakes to avoid

Applying too much adhesive is a frequent error that can weaken bonds and leave a messy finish. Use just enough to cover the surface and avoid overloading. Another common mistake is failing to allow sufficient curing time. Adhesives need time to develop their full strength, so resist the temptation to use or move your project prematurely. Finally, always match the adhesive to the materials and conditions. Using the wrong adhesive can result in weak bonds or damage to the materials.

Adhesive safety tips

Adhesives can emit fumes or cause skin irritation, so always work in a well-ventilated area and wear protective gear like gloves and goggles. Keep adhesives stored in a cool, dry place, away from heat sources or open flames. When working with strong adhesives, read the safety instructions carefully and keep them out of reach of children and pets.

Wrapping up

Selecting the right adhesive is crucial to the success of any DIY project. By understanding the strengths and limitations of each type, considering factors like material compatibility and environmental conditions, and applying the adhesive properly, you can achieve professional-quality results. With this guide in hand, you'll be better equipped to tackle your next project with confidence and precision.

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Transform your deck into a durable and stylish outdoor haven with expert tips on maintenance, repairs, and creative enhancements.

DECKING DURABILITY

A well-maintained deck can last for years, providing a perfect outdoor retreat for family gatherings or solo relaxation. Whether your deck is exposed to baking sun or frequent rain, regular care will help keep it looking fresh and sturdy. This guide covers everything you need to know to maintain and enhance your decking, from seasonal maintenance to aesthetic upgrades and repairs.

Why deck maintenance matters

Preserving your investment

A deck can significantly add to your home's value and extend your living space into the garden. However, without proper care, even the sturdiest wood can warp, rot, or crack over time. Exposure to weather elements, fluctuating temperatures, and foot traffic can accelerate wear and tear. Regular maintenance not only preserves the visual appeal of your deck but also prevents costly repairs down the line.

A neglected deck can quickly become unsafe, with loose boards and railings posing hazards to family and guests. By establishing a maintenance routine, you ensure your deck remains a safe, attractive part of your home for years to come.

Cleaning and preparation

Start with a clean slate

Before you can apply any protective treatments or repairs, your deck needs to be spotless. Dirt, moss, and algae can not only make your deck slippery but can also lead to rot if left unchecked. Cleaning your deck is the first step in extending its life and making it look its best.

STEP-BY-STEP CLEANING

1. Clear the area

Remove all furniture, planters, and accessories from the deck. This gives you full access to all the surfaces and prevents water damage to your belongings during the cleaning process.

2. Sweep thoroughly

Use a stiff broom to remove loose debris and leaves. Pay attention to gaps between boards, as organic matter trapped here can foster dampness and decay.

3. Wash down

Use a hose with a spray attachment to rinse the deck. For stubborn grime, a pressure washer on a low setting can help, but be careful not to damage the wood. Pressure washing should be done carefully, as using too high a setting can etch the wood, leaving it rough and prone to moisture absorption.

4. Scrub with deck cleaner

Apply a specialised deck cleaner using a brush, scrubbing in the direction of the wood grain. This lifts embedded dirt and mildew. For best results, choose a cleaner designed for your specific decking material – whether it's softwood, hardwood, or composite.

5. Rinse and dry

Rinse the cleaner off thoroughly and leave the deck to dry completely before moving on to repairs or sealing. This may take 24 to 48 hours depending on the weather.

PREVENTING FUTURE GRIME BUILD-UP

- Consider installing a canopy or shade sail over your deck to reduce debris and prevent UV damage.
- Regularly sweep your deck, especially during autumn when leaves accumulate quickly.
- Use outdoor mats or rugs in high-traffic areas to limit dirt accumulation.

Repairing damage

Addressing the wear and tear

Once your deck is clean and dry, inspect it for signs of damage. Even the smallest cracks or splinters can worsen over time, especially in changing weather conditions. Catching and addressing damage early saves time and money in the long run.

Common issues to look for:

- **Loose or protruding nails/screws:** Hammer down or replace them with deck screws for better hold. Consider upgrading to stainless steel screws, which are more resistant to rust and corrosion.
- **Cracks and splinters:** Sand down splintered areas and fill cracks with a wood filler suitable for outdoor use. Follow up with a sealant to protect the repaired areas.
- **Rotten boards:** If any boards are soft or show signs of rot, replace them immediately to prevent the spread of decay. Pay special attention to areas near planters or under furniture, as these spots often stay damp longer.
- **Wobbly railings or steps:** Tighten bolts and screws, or replace worn connectors. Loose railings can pose significant safety hazards, especially for children and pets.

Proactive repair tips:

- Use end grain sealers when cutting replacement boards to prevent water from penetrating the exposed wood.
- Apply wood preservatives to the undersides of boards and joists to extend their life.

SEALING AND PROTECTING THE WOOD

Shielding your deck from the elements

Sealing your deck protects it from moisture, UV rays, and temperature fluctuations, all of which contribute to wood degradation. Applying a sealant not only enhances the wood's natural beauty but also adds a protective barrier that keeps water out and prevents fading.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT SEALANT

- **Oil-based sealers:** Penetrate deep into the wood and provide long-lasting protection. Ideal for older or softer

wood, oil-based products enrich the wood's colour and prevent cracking.

- **Water-based sealers:** Easier to apply and dry quickly. Suitable for newer wood and areas with higher humidity. These sealers are less prone to yellowing over time.
- **Coloured stains with sealant:** Add a hint of colour while protecting the deck. This can enhance the natural wood grain or cover imperfections.

APPLICATION TIPS

1. Apply on a dry day

Ensure the forecast is clear for at least 24 hours after application. Moisture can compromise the effectiveness of the sealant.

2. Use a brush or roller

Work the sealant into the wood, following the grain. Avoid applying too thickly to prevent pooling.

3. Cover all areas

Don't forget the sides and edges of the boards as these are vulnerable spots.

4. Let it cure

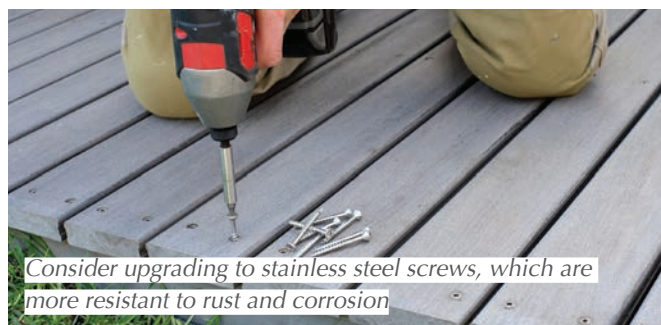
Allow the sealant to dry completely before replacing furniture or walking on the deck.

Enhancing your deck

Add style and function

Deck maintenance goes beyond protection – it's an opportunity to enhance both the aesthetic and functionality of your outdoor space. By thoughtfully updating your deck, you can create an area that feels like an extension of your home and suits your personal style.

A well-designed deck can cater to a variety of needs, whether you want a cosy space for relaxation, a lively entertainment area, or a practical solution for family gatherings. Here are some ways to elevate your deck while maintaining its durability and charm.



Consider upgrading to stainless steel screws, which are more resistant to rust and corrosion

Lighting for ambience and safety

Lighting is an essential upgrade that can transform your deck into a versatile space for evening use. Solar-powered lights are a sustainable option, perfect for railings and steps. They not only enhance safety but also add a subtle glow to your outdoor area.

For a warm and inviting atmosphere, consider hanging string lights overhead or along the perimeter of your deck. You could also install recessed LED lights into the decking boards to create a modern and sophisticated look. Lanterns and candle holders are another way to add soft lighting for special occasions or intimate gatherings.

Incorporating greenery

Bringing nature onto your deck makes the space feel more welcoming and lively. Built-in planters are a fantastic way to incorporate greenery, and they can also serve as a practical border around the deck. Raised planters work well for dividing spaces, adding privacy, or even growing herbs for a convenient kitchen garden.

If space is a concern, a vertical garden can be a striking and efficient solution. Install a trellis or hanging planters to add height and visual interest. For a low-maintenance option, choose native plants or drought-tolerant species that require less watering and care.

Furniture updates and layout

Furniture plays a significant role in how your deck is used. Refresh your existing pieces with weather-resistant paint or stain to match your updated style. For a complete overhaul, invest in durable outdoor furniture that can withstand the elements while offering comfort and versatility.

Modular furniture is particularly handy for decks, allowing you to rearrange seating easily for different occasions. A corner sectional can create a lounge-like feel, while a combination of benches and chairs can accommodate

larger groups. Don't forget to add cushions with removable, washable covers for practicality and comfort.

Defining areas

If your deck is large, consider breaking it into distinct zones for various activities. A dining area with a table and chairs can be complemented by a lounging section with plush seating. Use outdoor rugs or raised planters to subtly delineate these spaces without making the deck feel cluttered.

Shading and weatherproofing

Adding shade to your deck can improve its usability and protect it from the harsh sun. Options range from retractable awnings and pergolas to shade sails or even outdoor umbrellas. For a more permanent solution, consider building a covered section to shield part of the deck from both sun and rain, making it usable in different weather conditions.

Decorative elements

Enhance your deck's visual appeal with small decorative touches. Incorporate weatherproof art, such as metal wall hangings or sculptures, for a touch of personality. Outdoor rugs, throw pillows, and table settings can add colour and texture, tying the entire look together.

Technology for modern living

Bring your deck into the digital age by integrating technology. Add outdoor speakers for music, a weatherproof television for movie nights, or USB outlets for charging devices. These upgrades make your deck a functional and enjoyable space for everyday use.

By combining practical maintenance with creative enhancements, you can transform your deck into an outdoor haven that reflects your style and meets your needs. Whether you're hosting a braai or enjoying a quiet moment, these improvements ensure your deck remains a cherished part of your home.



Stay safe while tackling electrical repairs.

POWER PLAY

Tackling electrical jobs at home can save money and give you a sense of accomplishment, but even small mistakes can lead to dangerous consequences. From faulty wiring to overloaded circuits, understanding how to stay safe is vital for any DIYer. This guide highlights the most common errors and how to avoid them, ensuring your home projects are both safe and successful.

Understanding your limits

It's important to recognise the limits of your knowledge. While changing a light switch or installing a new socket cover might be simple enough, rewiring or dealing with consumer units requires professional expertise. Electrical work that isn't up to code can cause fires or severe electric shocks. If you're unsure, don't hesitate to bring in a licensed electrician.

Avoid these pitfalls for safer repairs

1. Overloading circuits

Plugging too many appliances into one outlet or circuit can lead to overheating and potentially start a fire. Always check the amperage rating of your circuit and ensure you don't exceed it. If you find yourself relying heavily on extension cords, consider installing additional outlets.

2. Using the wrong wire size

Wire size matters. Using a wire that's too thin for the electrical load can cause overheating. Always match the wire gauge to the job. For instance, lighting circuits typically require 1.5mm² cable, while power circuits need 2.5mm².

3. Incorrectly connecting wires

Loose connections or incorrectly twisted wires can lead to arcing, which may cause a fire. Ensure all connections are secure and that wires are properly joined using suitable connectors.

4. Neglecting to switch off power

Working on live circuits is one of the most dangerous mistakes. Always turn off the power at the main breaker and verify it's off using a voltage tester before starting any work. Label the breaker box clearly to avoid confusion.

5. Ignoring earthing and bonding

Proper earthing protects you from electric shocks. If you're replacing outlets or switches, double-check that the earth wire is correctly connected. In older homes, earthing might be insufficient, so consult a professional if you're unsure.

When in doubt, play it safe

DIY projects can be rewarding, but when it comes to electricity, cutting corners isn't worth the risk. If you ever feel uncertain, consult a professional. Staying safe means recognising when to step back and call in the experts. A properly completed project will not only function well but also provide peace of mind knowing your home is secure.

Stay safe with these simple tips

- **Plan ahead:** Know the layout of your home's electrical circuits and plan your work accordingly.
- **Use the right tools:** Always use insulated tools and wear rubber-soled shoes when working on electrical systems.
- **Test frequently:** After completing any job, test the system to ensure everything functions correctly and safely. A residual current device (RCD) can offer additional protection by cutting power if a fault is detected.
- **Document your work:** Keep notes of any changes made to your electrical system. This can be useful for future repairs and for electricians who may need to inspect your home.

Ensure your vehicle is road-ready for any season.

SEASONAL CHECKS AND DIY TIPS

Regular car maintenance is essential for keeping your vehicle running smoothly and safely, no matter the time of year. Each season presents different challenges, from icy winter roads to scorching summer heat. By following a seasonal maintenance routine, you can prevent breakdowns, improve fuel efficiency, and extend the lifespan of your car. This guide outlines key checks and DIY tips to keep your car in peak condition throughout the year.

Prepare for warmer months and long drives

Spring and summer are the perfect times to inspect your vehicle after the wear and tear of winter. Warmer weather often means longer drives, so ensuring your car is ready is crucial.

Checklist for spring and summer:

Check tyre pressure and tread: Heat causes tyre pressure to fluctuate. Ensure your tyres are inflated to the manufacturer's recommended levels. Tread depth should be at least 1.6mm to maintain grip. Uneven wear patterns could indicate misalignment or other issues requiring attention.

Inspect fluid levels: Top up engine oil, coolant, brake fluid, and windshield washer fluid. Check for any leaks under the car, as these could signal issues that need addressing.

Air conditioning check: Test the air conditioner. If it blows warm air, it might need regassing. Also, inspect the cabin air filter and replace it if it's dirty to ensure proper airflow.

Battery health: Warmer temperatures can shorten battery life. Check for corrosion and clean terminals if necessary. Consider having the battery tested at an auto parts store to ensure it's holding a proper charge.

Wash and wax: Salt and grime from winter can damage

paint. Give your car a thorough clean and apply wax to protect against UV rays. Pay extra attention to the undercarriage to remove any leftover salt or debris.

Additional summer tips:

- Keep a sunshade in your car to protect the interior from heat and fading.
- Carry extra water in case of overheating during long trips.

Get ready for cooler temperatures

Autumn brings wet roads and falling leaves, which can affect your car's performance. Preparing your vehicle for the coming months ensures safe and efficient driving.

Autumn maintenance tips:

Test your lights: Shorter days mean more night driving. Check that all exterior and interior lights are functioning correctly. Replace any blown bulbs, and clean the lenses to maximise brightness.

Wiper blades: Inspect the condition of your wipers. Replace them if they leave streaks or make noise. Consider using water-repellent treatments on your windshield to improve visibility during rain.

Inspect brakes: Wet conditions make braking distances longer. Listen for squeaking or grinding sounds, which may indicate worn brake pads. Have your brake fluid checked and topped up if needed.

Check heating and defroster: Ensure your heating and defroster systems work properly



to handle cold mornings. A malfunctioning defroster can impair visibility.

Inspect tyres: Wet roads require good tyre grip. Ensure your tyres meet the recommended tread depth and adjust pressure if necessary. Rotate your tyres if you haven't done so recently to promote even wear.

Additional autumn considerations:

- Clear leaves and debris from air intakes and around the windshield to prevent blockages.
- Check the spare tyre and ensure it is properly inflated and in good condition.



Prepare for freezing temperatures and icy roads

Winter is the toughest season for vehicles. Cold weather can affect engine performance, tyre grip, and battery life. Regular checks and maintenance can help prevent winter breakdowns.

Winter car maintenance steps:

1. **Check antifreeze levels:** Antifreeze prevents the engine from freezing. Ensure the coolant reservoir is full and that the mixture is correct (typically 50:50 water to antifreeze). Test the freezing point of the coolant with a hydrometer.
2. **Test the battery:** Cold weather reduces battery capacity. Have your battery tested, and replace it if it's older than three years. Keep jumper cables in your car for emergencies.
3. **Keep an emergency kit:** Store essentials like a blanket, torch, ice scraper, de-icer, gloves, snacks, and a first aid kit in your car. A portable phone charger can also be a lifesaver in emergencies.
4. **Check tyre pressure frequently:** Cold air reduces tyre pressure. Check your tyres weekly to ensure they stay inflated. Low tyre pressure can affect handling and fuel efficiency.

Additional winter precautions:

- Keep your fuel tank at least half full to prevent condensation from forming in the tank.
- Use winter-grade windshield washer fluid to prevent freezing.

Simple tasks to keep your car running smoothly

While some maintenance requires a mechanic, many tasks can be done at home. Step-by-step guides for DIY tasks:

Oil change:

1. Warm the engine slightly to thin the oil.
2. Place a pan under the oil drain plug. Unscrew the plug and let the oil drain completely.
3. Replace the drain plug and fill the engine with the correct type and amount of oil.

Replacing air filters:

1. Open the bonnet and locate the air filter housing.
2. Remove the cover and take out the old filter.
3. Insert the new filter and secure the cover.

Checking tyre pressure:

1. Use a tyre pressure gauge to check each tyre's pressure.
2. Inflate or deflate the tyres to meet the manufacturer's specifications.

Replacing wiper blades:

1. Lift the wiper arms away from the windshield.
2. Press the tab on the wiper blade and slide it off.
3. Slide the new blade on until it clicks into place. Lower the wiper arm back onto the windshield.

Additional DIY tips:

- Replace cabin air filters every six months to maintain good air quality inside the car.
- Lubricate door hinges and locks to prevent them from freezing or sticking in winter.
- Regularly inspect belts and hoses for signs of wear or cracks.

Stay organised for long-term care

Maintaining a record of your car's servicing history helps ensure nothing is overlooked. Note the date and mileage for oil changes, tyre rotations, and fluid top-ups. Many manufacturers provide maintenance schedules in the owner's manual – following these can prevent premature wear and costly repairs.

Consider using a mobile app to track your car's maintenance history. These apps can provide reminders for upcoming services and ensure you never miss an important task.

Staying on top of seasonal car maintenance is essential for safe driving and prolonging the life of your vehicle. By following these checks and performing simple DIY tasks, you can keep your car road-ready no matter the season. A well-maintained car not only ensures your safety but also saves money on repairs and keeps your journeys stress-free.



SAVE ENERGY AND LOWER YOUR BILLS

Improving your home's energy efficiency not only cuts costs but also reduces your environmental footprint. With rising energy prices and growing awareness of climate change, making small changes can lead to big savings over time. This guide offers practical tips to help you improve energy efficiency in your home, whether you're looking for quick fixes or long-term investments.

Keep the cool in and the heat out

Insulating your home is one of the most effective ways to save energy. Poor insulation leads to heat gain in summer and heat loss in winter, making your cooling or heating system work harder and increasing your energy bills.

Where to focus insulation efforts:

- **Ceiling insulation:** A large portion of heat enters or escapes through the roof. Ensure you have sufficient insulation in the ceiling to maintain indoor temperatures.
- **Wall insulation:** Insulating walls, particularly those exposed to direct sunlight, reduces indoor heat.
- **Floor insulation:** In homes with suspended floors, insulating beneath the floorboards can help, though this is less common in South African homes.

Draught-proofing steps:

1. **Seal gaps around windows and doors:** Use weatherstripping or silicone sealant to close any gaps.
2. **Install draught excluders:** Place excluders along the bottom of doors.
3. **Use thermal curtains or blinds:** Thick curtains or blinds help insulate windows and keep cool air inside during summer and warm air in during winter.
4. **Seal cracks and gaps:** Check walls and ceilings for small cracks and seal them to prevent air leaks.

Cooling and heating efficiency

A well-maintained air conditioning system uses less energy to keep your home comfortable. Simple changes to how you cool or heat your home can lead to significant savings.

Tips for improving efficiency:

- **Install ceiling fans:** Ceiling fans use less energy than air conditioning and can help circulate air to keep rooms cool.
- **Service your air conditioner:** Clean filters and have the system serviced regularly to ensure it runs efficiently.

- **Use air conditioning wisely:** Set your air conditioner to 23-25°C for optimal efficiency. Every degree lower increases energy use.
- **Seal unused rooms:** Close doors to rooms you're not using to avoid cooling or heating unnecessary spaces.

Switch to LED bulbs

Lighting accounts for a noticeable portion of household electricity consumption. Switching to energy-efficient lighting reduces energy use and extends bulb life.

Lighting tips:

- **Replace incandescent bulbs:** Use LED bulbs, which consume up to 80% less energy and last longer.
- **Use motion sensors:** Install sensors in hallways or exterior spaces to reduce unnecessary lighting.
- **Maximise natural light:** Rearrange furniture to make the most of natural light during the day.
- **Turn off lights:** Cultivate the habit of switching off lights when leaving a room.

Choose energy-saving appliances

Household appliances contribute significantly to energy use. Investing in energy-efficient models reduces consumption and lowers bills.

Appliance tips:

- **Look for energy ratings:** Choose appliances with high energy ratings. In South Africa, look for appliances marked with the Energy Efficiency Label.
- **Use eco-modes:** Many appliances have eco-settings that use less energy without compromising performance.
- **Switch off standby:** Unplug devices or use smart plugs to turn off appliances when not in use.
- **Maintain appliances:** Regular cleaning and servicing improve the efficiency of fridges, washing machines, and dishwashers.

Save water and energy

Reducing hot water use not only saves water but also cuts down on the energy required to heat it.

Water-saving tips:

- **Install low-flow taps and showers:** These reduce water consumption without affecting performance.
- **Fix leaks:** A dripping tap can waste thousands of litres of water a year.
- **Use a water-efficient washing machine:** Look for models that use less water per cycle.
- **Limit geyser use:** Set your geyser to 60°C and switch it off when not needed. Install a geyser blanket to retain heat.

Harness the power of nature

Renewable energy sources reduce reliance on fossil fuels and lower long-term energy costs.

Renewable energy options:

- **Solar panels:** Generate your own electricity and reduce dependency on the grid. Many South Africans are turning to solar power to mitigate load shedding.
- **Solar water heating:** Use solar collectors to heat water, reducing the need for electric geysers.
- **Gas-powered solutions:** Consider gas stoves and water heaters as alternatives to electric models.
- **Inverters and batteries:** Backup power solutions like inverters store energy for later use, helping during outages.

Small daily habits

Small changes in daily routines can lead to noticeable savings over time.

Simple daily tips:

- **Wash clothes in cold water:** Modern detergents work well in cold water, reducing the need to heat water.
- **Only boil what you need:** Avoid overfilling the kettle.
- **Dry clothes naturally:** Use a washing line instead of a tumble dryer whenever possible.
- **Cook with lids on pots:** This reduces cooking time and saves energy.

Energy efficiency is a long-term investment

Improving energy efficiency is not just about saving money – it's about creating a more sustainable and comfortable living environment. By following these tips, you can reduce waste, lower your carbon footprint, and enjoy the long-term benefits of an energy-efficient home.



A man with a mustache, wearing a grey cap and a denim shirt, is in a workshop filled with tools. He is holding a large, curved, light-colored wooden piece, possibly a boat hull or a large sculpture, with both hands. The background shows shelves and walls covered with various woodworking tools and materials.

Integrating
technology into your
workshop.

SMART WOODWORKING

In a world where technology touches nearly every aspect of our lives, it should come as no surprise that woodworking is also experiencing a digital revolution. From precision measuring tools and computer-controlled routers to smart dust extraction systems, the contemporary woodworking workshop is steadily transforming into a hub of innovation. These advancements are not only for large-scale factories or professional joineries—many tools and techniques are now accessible to the everyday enthusiast.

For hobbyists and small-scale entrepreneurs alike, the opportunity to integrate digital solutions into a home workshop brings multiple advantages. Smart woodworking allows you to reduce waste through highly accurate cuts, speed up repetitive tasks, and expand your creative horizons in ways that traditional methods may not always allow. Of course, cost is a factor, but many entry-level products are surprisingly affordable, and local hardware stores are increasingly stocking tech-friendly options that can be purchased for a few hundred to a few thousand rand.

This article explores how to bring technology into your woodworking space without losing the essence that makes working with wood so satisfying. We'll cover everything from digital measuring systems and mobile planning apps, to CNC routers, 3D printing, and dust collection solutions. The goal is to help you create a smart, efficient, and safe workshop that still honours the craft's long tradition of artistry and skill.

The evolution of the modern woodworking workshop

Woodworking has a rich history that dates back centuries. Craftspeople relied on hand tools such as chisels, saws, and planes to shape timber into everything from functional furniture to intricate sculptures. Over time, technological developments—like the invention of power tools—redefined how woodworkers approached projects. The table saw, the bandsaw, and the drill press each brought speed and precision that were not possible when working solely by hand.

The 21st-century workshop is now taking another significant leap forward. Digital tools, automation, and connectivity are not just novelties: they're transformative forces. While some purists worry that digital technologies diminish the authenticity of woodworking, a growing number of enthusiasts argue that these advancements simply free up more time and mental space for creativity and design exploration. In other words, instead of spending hours perfecting a single repetitive cut, you can let a computer-aided machine handle the monotony while you focus on more artistic or conceptual elements.

Many established woodworkers who have embraced modern systems still rely on traditional hand tools for certain tasks. The synergy lies in balancing the best of both worlds: the tactile feel of hand tools and the laser-sharp accuracy of digital aids. This hybrid approach offers a path to better craftsmanship, improved efficiency, and even enhanced safety. It's easier than

ever to start integrating at least one or two smart elements into your home workshop, whether that's an inexpensive electronic angle gauge or a full-blown computer numerical control (CNC) setup.

SMART MEASURING AND LAYOUT TOOLS

One of the simplest ways to bring technology into your workshop is through digital measuring and layout tools. Precise measurements reduce the risk of expensive waste and rework, and these instruments are often easy to use. While classic steel rulers, tape measures, and framing squares are indispensable, adding a few digital options to your toolbox can make a noticeable difference in your workflow.

Digital calipers:

- **What they do:** Measure internal and external dimensions to the nearest 0.01mm.
- **How they help:** Perfect for ensuring a snug fit on joinery, checking material thickness, or verifying the diameter of a dowel or drill bit.
- **Cost considerations:** You can find budget-friendly models in the R200-R500 range, while higher-end versions might cost upwards of R1 000.

Laser distance meters:

- **What they do:** Instantly measure distances up to 30m (or more) with precision.
- **How they help:** Great for quickly checking the dimensions of a workshop space or even larger-scale projects like deck layouts.
- **Cost considerations:** Entry-level options start around R600, with more advanced models costing over R2 000.

Electronic angle gauges and protractors:

- **What they do:** Measure angles with digital readouts, often to a tenth of a degree.
- **How they help:** Ideal for setting up mitre saws, table saw blade angles, and even verifying the angle on hand-cut joints.
- **Cost considerations:** Expect to pay anywhere from R300 to R700, depending on brand and accuracy.

Laser line projectors:

- **What they do:** Project straight laser lines across a surface or workpiece.
- **How they help:** Perfect for aligning multiple pieces across a larger area, installing shelves or cabinets, and ensuring that layouts are square or level.
- **Cost considerations:** Basic models can be found for as low as R500, but professional-grade units can climb above R3,000.

By investing in even one or two of these tools, you'll likely see a noticeable uptick in both the speed and the accuracy of your woodworking. The learning curve for most digital measuring devices is minimal, often requiring just a quick read of the manual. Once you're familiar with the tool, the efficiency gains can be substantial.



DIGITAL PROJECT PLANNING: APPS AND SOFTWARE

Long gone are the days when every project had to be planned on graph paper or by scribbling rough sketches in a notebook. Today, a range of mobile apps and desktop software can help you design, budget, and visualise your projects in 3D, well before you ever pick up a piece of wood. This kind of digital forethought can be particularly useful if you have limited access to large tools or a smaller workshop space, as you can map out every detail beforehand.

3D modelling software:

- **Examples:** SketchUp, Fusion 360, FreeCAD
- **Key benefits:** Provides realistic visuals, precise measurements, and the ability to 'explode' components to see how they fit together.
- **How it helps:** Reduces trial-and-error by letting you refine your design before making a single cut.
- **Learning curve:** Varies by platform. SketchUp is known for its user-friendly interface, while Fusion 360 offers advanced features but requires more training.

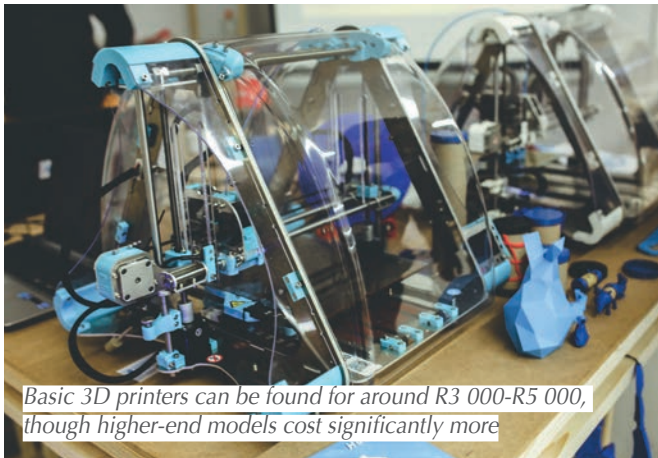
Cut list generators:

- **What they do:** Automate the process of determining how many board feet or linear metres you need, as well as the optimal way to cut your pieces to minimise waste.
- **How they help:** Particularly useful for larger projects, saving both time and money on material costs.
- **Cost considerations:** Many cut list tools are free or come as low-cost add-ons to existing design software.

Budgeting and cost-estimation apps:

- **What they do:** Track expenses in rand, helping you tally up costs for wood, hardware, finishes, and more.
- **How they help:** Enables you to price out multiple project variations and stick to a budget, which is crucial if you're selling your items or just looking to keep personal costs in check.
- **South African relevance:** Look for apps that allow you to set Rand as the default currency to avoid confusion.

Whether you're designing a small jewellery box or planning a custom cabinet installation, these tools can streamline your process. If you find yourself reluctant to go digital, consider starting small – perhaps by using a free online 3D modeller or a basic cut list generator – and then expand as you grow more comfortable. The ability to preview your concept in 3D can be a revelation, especially when you spot design flaws before you've spent any money on timber.



Basic 3D printers can be found for around R3 000-R5 000, though higher-end models cost significantly more

CNC ROUTERS AND 3D PRINTING

For many, CNC (Computer Numerical Control) routers represent the pinnacle of a smart woodworking workshop. A CNC router is essentially a computer-controlled cutting machine capable of carving intricate patterns, precise joinery, and even three-dimensional shapes out of wood, plastic, or other materials. While industrial CNC routers can cost hundreds of thousands of rand, hobbyist-level machines are far more affordable than they used to be, with some entry-level kits available for under R10 000.

How CNC routers work:

- **Basics:** You design a shape or pattern in CAD (Computer-Aided Design) software, export it to CAM (Computer-Aided Manufacturing) software, which then converts the design into instructions (G-code) for the router.
- **Main advantage:** Repeatability. Once a design is dialled in, you can produce multiple identical pieces, reducing human error.

- **Projects:** Signage, custom inlays, dovetail or box joints, furniture components, and more.

Entry-level vs. advanced machines:

- **Entry-level:** Smaller cutting areas (often around 300mm x 300mm), suitable for detailed work like signage or jewellery boxes.
- **Mid-range:** Larger cutting beds (often 600mm x 900mm or more), allowing you to tackle furniture parts or larger decorative pieces.
- **Advanced/professional:** Big enough for full sheets of plywood or MDF (around 1 220mm x 2 440mm), equipped with powerful spindle motors, vacuum hold-down systems, and advanced dust collection.

3D printing for woodworkers:

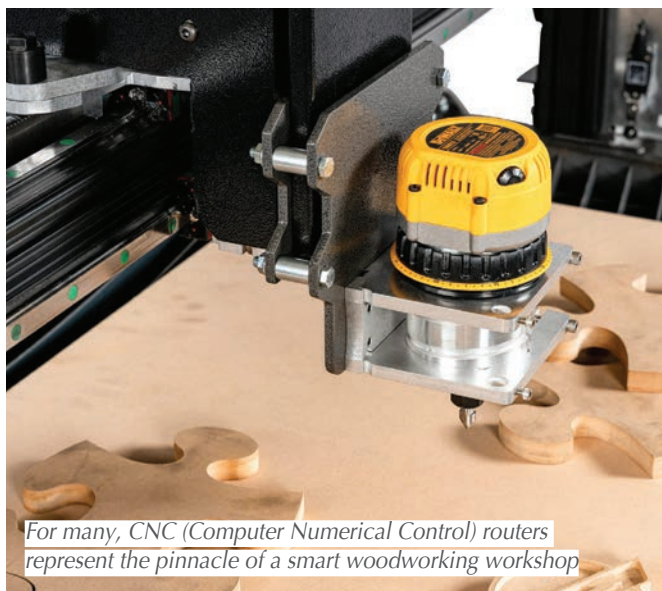
- **What it is:** Additive manufacturing using materials like PLA (polylactic acid), ABS (acrylonitrile butadiene styrene), or wood-infused filaments (a mixture of polymer and fine wood particles).
- **Woodworking synergy:** 3D printing can create custom jigs, clamps, knobs, and even decorative pieces to complement wooden projects.
- **Costs:** Basic 3D printers can be found for around R3 000-R5 000, though higher-end models cost significantly more.
- **Limitations:** Printed parts are generally not as structurally robust as solid wood or metal. Still, they can be functional for specialised jigs and fittings.

Software requirements and learning curve:

- **Design software:** Fusion 360, SketchUp, or specialised CNC programs like VCarve can be used.
- **CAM software:** Needed to convert designs into toolpaths (e.g. Easel, a web-based option from Inventables).
- **G-code basics:** You'll need a basic understanding of how G-code commands direct the machine. This may take some practice.

While CNC routers and 3D printers can appear intimidating, they open up a massive range of possibilities. Imagine cutting perfectly fitted finger joints in minutes or creating ornate carvings that would take days to complete by hand. If you're operating as a small business, these machines can help you standardise your product line and ramp up production without sacrificing quality. On the hobbyist side, they're simply a lot of fun, offering a gateway to more intricate design challenges.

Keep in mind that these machines also require maintenance and a dust-free environment to run optimally. You'll need to factor in the cost of replacement bits or nozzles, as well as the electricity usage. But for those serious about taking their woodworking to the next level, the payoff can be substantial.



For many, CNC (Computer Numerical Control) routers represent the pinnacle of a smart woodworking workshop

VOICE-ACTIVATED ASSISTANTS AND AUTOMATION

Voice-controlled smart devices, once relegated to living rooms and kitchens, can also find surprising utility in a workshop setting. Imagine you're in the middle of gluing a joint and you need to start a timer. Instead of fumbling with your phone or a manual timer, you could simply say, "Alexa, set a glue timer for ten minutes," and carry on with your work. This form of hands-free assistance can reduce downtime and keep you from accidentally contaminating devices with glue, sawdust, or finishes.

Smart speakers for music and timers:

- **Advantages:** Improve your workshop ambiance with music, set reminders to check on a drying finish, or even ask for metric conversions on the fly.
- **Safety aspect:** Hands-free operation prevents distractions. You don't need to remove safety gloves or step away from a running tool to change a setting.
- **Cost considerations:** Basic devices start around R600 to R1 000.

Wi-Fi-enabled switches and plugs:

- **What they do:** Allow you to switch power tools, lights, or air filtration units on and off using a smartphone app or voice command.
- **How they help:** You can automate lighting to turn on when you enter, set an extractor to run for a few minutes after you finish sanding, or kill the power to your workshop remotely for extra safety.
- **Implementation tip:** Make sure the tools you want to control are compatible with these switches – some machines need more robust power control solutions.

Routines and scenes:

- **Defined triggers:** Most smart home apps let you create routines such as "Workshop Opening," which could turn on the lights, power up your dust extractor standby mode, and play your favourite playlist.
- **Time-based actions:** If you consistently work in the evening, you can schedule your lights and ventilation system to activate 15 minutes before you arrive, ensuring a comfortable environment from the get-go.

While voice-activated assistants and automation might seem like luxuries, they can actually lead to smoother workflows and a safer environment. The ability to control multiple systems with a single command, or receive reminders without having to set timers manually, can make a difference in your day-to-day operations – especially when your hands are busy with clamps, stains, or other tasks.



For hobbyists and small-scale entrepreneurs alike, the opportunity to integrate digital solutions into a home workshop brings multiple advantages

Closing thoughts

Smart technology in the woodworking space is about more than just shiny new gadgets. It represents a shift in how we approach making things – one that blends creativity and craftsmanship with data-driven precision. From digital measuring tools that ensure perfect angles, to full-scale CNC routers that can carve complex designs in record time, these innovations have the potential to transform your workflow.

As you consider integrating technology into your workshop, remember that the goal is not to replace your love of craftsmanship, but rather to enhance it. Technology can handle repetitive tasks and ensure accuracy, while you focus on design, problem-solving, and the sheer joy of shaping raw timber into something you can be proud of. With careful planning and a balanced approach to cost, you can create a smart, efficient, and safe workshop that opens the door to a whole new world of woodworking possibilities.

5 things retirees must look for when buying an apartment

Choosing a coastal retirement apartment has become a preferred option for retirees seeking a low-maintenance, lock-up-and-go lifestyle. While this shift offers numerous advantages, it's important for retirees to consider several factors before investing in a new home tailored to their evolving needs.

Enhancing the living experience

An apartment should provide easy access to essential services and daily conveniences. Retirees should evaluate the proximity of the estate to shopping centres, medical facilities, and recreational spaces. On-site amenities such as sports facilities, community centres, and social programmes add immense value by encouraging active engagement and interaction. These features allow retirees to expand their living space beyond the apartment itself and enjoy a fulfilling, integrated lifestyle.

Convenience

Apartments designed for retirees should prioritise functionality and ease of use. Spacious layouts, single-level access, and step-free designs are essential for mobility and comfort. Coastal estates are particularly desirable for their natural light, fresh breezes, and scenic views. Thoughtful design elements, such as wide doorways and accessible bathrooms, make everyday living much simpler and more enjoyable.

Safety

Security is a key consideration for retirees seeking peace of mind in their new homes. Apartments in gated estates typically offer controlled access, daily patrols, and CCTV

surveillance, ensuring residents feel secure. Additionally, the proximity of neighbours within apartment complexes provides an added layer of safety and a sense of community.

Costs

Financial considerations are paramount when choosing a retirement apartment. Retirees should carefully review levies and ensure they cover essential services such as maintenance, gardening, waste removal, and insurance. Energy-efficient designs, including features like natural ventilation and solar geysers, can significantly reduce ongoing utility costs, making apartment living more affordable in the long run.

Natural spaces

While apartments may not come with private gardens, estates offering communal natural spaces and walking trails can compensate for this. Access to well-maintained outdoor areas allows retirees to enjoy nature without the burden of upkeep. Studies have shown that connecting with nature improves mental and physical health, making this a valuable consideration for retirees.

Renishaw Hills, a mature lifestyle estate on the KZN South Coast, offers retirees the opportunity to embrace an active, community-focused lifestyle. These two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartments, ranging from 71m² to 83m², are priced from R1,595,000 and include modern features such as SMEG appliances, solar geysers, and inverter systems for uninterrupted power. The step-free, wheelchair-friendly designs ensure accessibility and convenience for residents.

For more information, visit www.renishawhills.co.za

East Coast Radio House + Garden Show 2025: Fresh spaces, bright living

Get ready for the East Coast Radio House + Garden Show 2025, taking place from 28 June to 6 July at the Durban Exhibition Centre. This year's theme, "fresh spaces, bright living," inspires visitors to reimagine their homes and surroundings.

What to expect

The show offers a blend of décor trends, innovative

products, and practical solutions for home improvement. Whether you're planning a small refresh or a major renovation, you'll find plenty of inspiration and tools to bring your vision to life.

Visitors can look forward to legendary competitions, outdoor adventure activities, and expanded entertainment options for children. The show is designed to cater to families, making it a fun and enriching experience for everyone.

Foodies unite

This year's event will feature renowned chefs and exciting food brands, offering a variety of culinary experiences. Keep an eye out for special ticket offers as the event approaches.

Why attend?

The East Coast Radio House + Garden Show is more than just a showcase of products; it's a hub of creativity and innovation. Connect with industry experts, explore dynamic new concepts, and gather ideas to transform your living spaces.

For more information, visit www.housegardenshow.co.za



Safeguarding local furniture: SAFI takes action

South Africa's furniture industry is facing significant challenges due to an influx of undervalued imports. These imports, often misdeclared under incorrect tariff codes, distort market prices and undermine local manufacturers' ability to compete.

The true impact of undervalued imports

Illicit imports bypass duties, allowing these products to be sold at prices local manufacturers cannot match. This not only impacts profitability but also threatens jobs and the long-term stability of the industry. Furthermore, many imported products fail to meet quality and safety standards, eroding consumer trust. In contrast, local manufacturers adhere to stringent regulations, which add to their costs but ensure high-quality products.

Strengthening industry defences

To combat these challenges, the South African Furniture Initiative (SAFI) is working closely with the South African Revenue Service (SARS). This partnership includes targeted training for customs officials to improve valuation practices and reduce misdeclarations. SAFI is also urging SARS to investigate raw material imports declared under duty-free classifications, which are often misused.

Protective measures and advocacy

SAFI is advocating for anti-dumping and safeguard duties on specific furniture categories. By analysing trade patterns and import discrepancies, SAFI aims to present a robust case to stakeholders, including SARS and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition

(DTIC), in early 2025. These measures will create a fairer market environment and protect the local industry from the disruptive effects of undervalued imports.

Supporting local manufacturers

In addition to tackling imports, SAFI is collaborating with the DTIC to develop funding initiatives for local manufacturers. These programmes aim to help businesses modernise operations, improve efficiency, and navigate compliance challenges, ensuring their long-term viability.

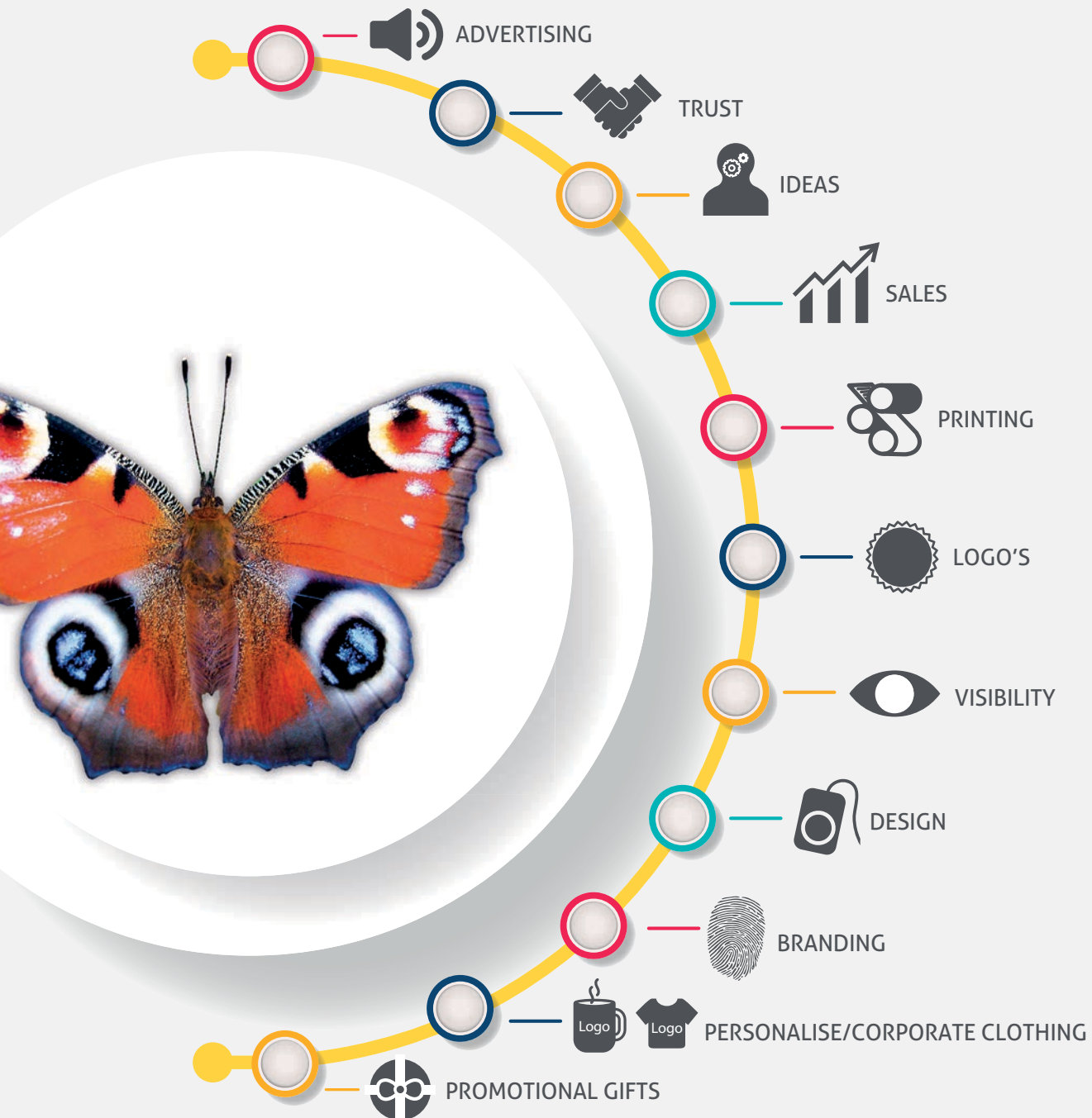
Industry-wide collaboration

SAFI calls on all stakeholders to unite in addressing these challenges. A thriving furniture industry supports jobs, communities, and economic growth, making collective action essential for its sustainability.

For more information, visit www.southafricanfurnitureinitiative.co.za



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8 things you don't need to worry about when working with wood.

WOODWORKING MYTHS DEBUNKED

Woodworking is a rewarding hobby that turns raw materials into beautiful, functional pieces. But it can also seem intimidating, especially with all the myths floating around. Let's bust some common misconceptions so you can get started (or keep going) without unnecessary stress.

1. You need every tool under the sun

It's tempting to think you need a fully equipped workshop to get started, but you really don't. A few basics like a saw, hammer, drill, and a measuring tape are enough for many projects. As your skills grow, you can add more tools to your collection.

2. Sanding has to take forever

Yes, sanding is important for a smooth finish, but it doesn't need to be a marathon. Use the right grits in sequence (start coarse, move to fine), and let the sander do the work. It's more about technique than time spent.

3. Expensive wood is the only way to go

While exotic woods have their appeal, they're not necessary for creating

stunning projects. Local timbers like pine, eucalyptus, or even reclaimed pallet wood can be just as beautiful when finished properly. Bonus: they're easier on the budget.

4. You must follow the plans exactly

Plans are helpful, but they're not gospel. Feel free to adapt them to suit your needs, materials, or style. Woodworking is as much about creativity as it is about precision, so don't be afraid to put your spin on a project.

5. Mistakes ruin everything

Every woodworker, no matter how experienced, makes mistakes. The good news? Most errors can be fixed or turned into design 'features.' A wonky cut can become a chamfered edge, and a small split can be patched with wood filler. Embrace the imperfections – they add character.

6. You have to know all the terminology

Does the thought of dovetails, mortises, and mitres make your head spin? Don't worry. Start with basic joints like butt joints or pocket holes

and learn the fancy stuff as you go. Even experienced woodworkers Google terms sometimes!

7. Woodworking is only for men

This outdated myth is long overdue for the bin. Woodworking is for everyone. In fact, many women in the craft are pushing boundaries with creative designs and innovative techniques. So, grab your tools and claim your space in the workshop, whoever you are.

8. You need years of experience to make something great

You don't need to be a master to create beautiful pieces. Start with small, simple projects like a birdhouse, a picture frame, or a basic shelf. Each project will teach you something new and build your confidence. Before you know it, you'll be tackling more complex builds.

Final thoughts

Woodworking should be fun, not a source of stress. By letting go of these myths, you can focus on the joy of creating with your hands. So grab some wood, fire up your tools, and make something you'll be proud of. The sawdust and satisfaction are worth it!

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