

The Home HANDYMAN

May/June 2025 • Vol 35 No 05



SA'S
ORIGINAL
DIY
MAGAZINE

**UNDERFOOT
PERFECTION:
EXPERT TIPS
FOR SELECTING
FLOORING**

**LEARN HOW TO FIX
COMMON PLUMBING
PROBLEMS**

**PROJECT:
MAKE A PERGOLA FOR
YOUR GARDEN**

**METALWORK:
BUILD A SUNBED**

**WOODWORK:
CREATE EASY NIGHTSTANDS**



ISSN 1610-0010 (Print)
0000-0000 (Online)
R43.00 (incl. tax)

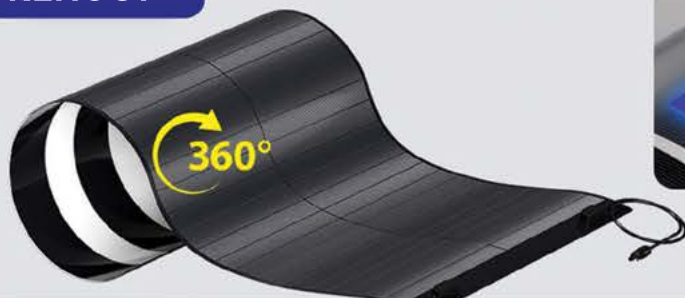
South Africa's go-to magazine for woodworkers, DIY enthusiasts and homeowners



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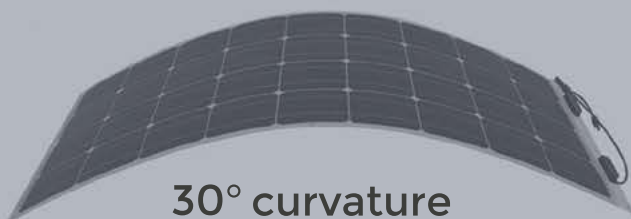
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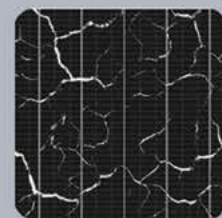
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FROM THE WORKBENCH

A shared DIY experience

Welcome to this vibrant space where your ideas and experiences take centre stage. At our magazine, we believe true inspiration comes from the creativity and passion that each of you brings to your projects. Whether you're brand-new to the DIY world or have a workshop full of tools, your unique perspective is what drives us forward.

We often receive letters and messages from readers who are eager to share their latest breakthroughs. Some have mastered new techniques, while others are looking for guidance as they navigate tricky corners of a renovation. Each person's story adds a fresh spark, reminding us that DIY is about more than hammering nails and applying paint. It's a journey of personal growth, problem-solving, and pride in what you can achieve with your own hands.

One of the biggest joys in our editorial team is discovering how you adapt projects which we have published to suit your needs, surroundings, and resources. When you send in a photo of your newly built plant stand, it inspires a reader on the other side of the country to try their hand at making one too – perhaps with a twist that suits their home. This is how ideas grow: one person's solution can blossom into another's inspiration, especially when we work with what we have, from local hardwoods to regionally available fittings.

Many of you have been telling us about clever ways to use offcuts or leftover materials. For instance, someone recently shared how they turned an old garden fence into frames for growing climbing herbs. Another reader turned a leftover plank into a stylish shelf that fits neatly into a small entryway. These examples remind us there's always an opportunity to be creative, save money, and reduce waste in the process.

When you write in, it gives us valuable insight into the challenges you face, whether it's dealing with humidity during the rainy season or figuring out how to keep woodwork in peak condition under strong sunlight. Your feedback helps us shape future articles that meet real-world needs, ensuring that this magazine remains relevant, helpful, and inspiring.

We especially love hearing how working on a project has brought families, friends, and neighbours together. There's something heart-warming about that sense of shared accomplishment, whether it's building a braai table in the garden or restoring a worn piece of furniture to its former glory. When you see a before-and-after photo from a reader who has tackled a daunting task, it proves that no challenge is too big when approached step by step.

As we continue to celebrate your achievements, don't hesitate to show us the outcome of your current undertakings, no matter how small they might seem. Often, what you consider a minor tweak might be exactly the idea someone else has been waiting for. You could spark a new project, motivate someone to recycle, or encourage a first-time DIY'er to pick up their tools and give it a go.

Thank you for trusting us with your stories and experiences. Your ingenuity fuels our enthusiasm and shapes the direction of this magazine. Keep those messages coming, and together, let's keep transforming ordinary spaces into something extraordinary – one creative project at a time.

Fregg



The Home HANDYMAN

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2025

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Please Note: There is an additional deposit fee of R65 if payment is made in CASH.

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

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

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About The Home Handyman magazine:

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

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

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FROM OUR READERS

Sharing letters, ideas, and questions from our community

Lessons I've learnt from four decades in the workshop

After more than forty years with a plane in one hand and a cup of strong coffee in the other, I've come to realise that woodworking has taught me more about life than I ever expected.

I started building furniture in my early twenties, mostly out of necessity – couldn't afford store-bought, and I'd always liked working with my hands. Back then, I thought the goal was perfection: flawless joints, silky finishes, symmetry that Michelangelo would approve of. It took me many years to understand that woodworking is more about patience than precision.

One of the first real lessons I learnt was to stop rushing. Wood doesn't care about

your deadlines. It moves, it warps, it cracks if you push it too hard – just like people do. You learn to slow down, to listen to the grain, and to accept that sometimes the piece decides what it wants to be.

Another lesson: mistakes aren't disasters. They're opportunities. A badly placed chisel cut? Turn it into a design detail. A glue line that didn't hold? Time to try a new joint. These little moments build resilience – not just in your hands, but in your mindset.

I've also learnt the joy of passing knowledge on. Nothing beats showing a grandchild how to use a spokeshave or watching someone's face light up when

their first dovetail finally fits. It's a kind of mentorship that doesn't need big words – just sawdust, time, and encouragement.

So if there's one piece of advice I'd give new woodworkers, it's this: enjoy the journey. The perfect piece might never exist, but the satisfaction of creation is always worth it.

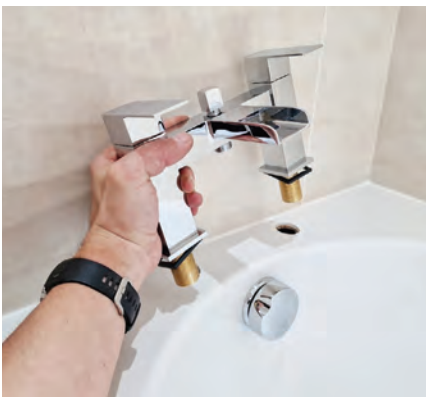
Pieter Lategan, Stellenbosch

***Ed replies:** Thank you, Pieter, for such a thoughtful and beautifully written letter. Your reflections are a reminder of why so many of us fall in love with woodworking in the first place – not just for the finished project, but for the lessons along the way. Here's to many more years of sawdust and shared wisdom!*

Small win, big smile

Just thought I'd share a small win. I've never considered myself handy, but last week I fixed our kitchen tap all by myself using your "leaking taps" advice from a past issue. Not only did I avoid calling in a plumber, but I actually enjoyed the process (apart from the water everywhere at first). My wife was well impressed, and now she's given me a list of other things to tackle!

Ruan Meyer, Bloemfontein



What's the safest way to strip old paint?

I'm restoring an old chest of drawers and need to strip back layers of paint. What's the safest method to do this without damaging the wood underneath? I've seen both heat guns and chemical strippers recommended, but I'm unsure which to go with.

Neil Jacobs, by email

***Our experts reply:** For old furniture, a heat gun can be effective but does require caution – it's easy to scorch the wood if you hold it too close or too long. Chemical paint strippers are useful too, especially those formulated for wood, but always use them in a well-ventilated area and wear gloves and eye protection.*

An alternative is to use a scraper and sanding combo after applying the

stripper, which reduces risk to the wood grain. Whichever route you choose, always test in a small, hidden area first.



Wall-mounted broom organiser

I came up with a super simple way to organise our brooms and mops. I used a leftover piece of wood, screwed in a few old curtain rod brackets, and mounted the board to the inside of our kitchen cupboard door. Now the brooms slot into place and stay put – no more falling over or leaning them in corners.

Hope this helps someone else!

Zanele Khumalo, Durban North

Great results with a budget bathroom update

I just wanted to say thank you for the bathroom makeover feature in a recent issue. Inspired by it, I decided to give our en-suite a bit of a facelift – without breaking the bank. I painted the tiles using a tile-specific paint (a bit fiddly, but worth it), swapped out the old cabinet handles for brushed brass, and replaced the mirror with one I found at a second-hand store. The transformation is amazing!

My tip for readers is to always look at what they already have before buying new. Sometimes, a bit of sanding and paint is all it takes to revive something dated.

Carla Rautenbach, by email

Should I be sealing my pine furniture?

I've built a set of pine shelves for our living room and they look great, but I'm wondering if I need to seal them? I like the natural look and would prefer not to stain them. Is a clear coat enough, or is it better to leave them as is?

Janine Cloete, by email

Our experts reply: Great question. Even if you love the natural look of pine, a clear sealer is a good idea, especially in living spaces where there's dust, moisture, or sunlight. A water-based polyurethane will keep the wood light in colour and protect it from stains or yellowing over time. It also makes cleaning easier. Just apply a few thin coats with light sanding between for a smooth finish.

Sanding in tight corners

I wanted to share a quick sanding hack that's helped me finish off a few furniture projects. When sanding into tight corners, I wrap a small piece of sanding paper around an old butter knife to get right into the nooks. It's especially handy for restoring old chairs with turned legs and finicky detail.

Adele van der Merwe, Potchefstroom

How do I fix chipped melamine board edges?

I've been building some kitchen cupboards using white melamine chipboard. I'm pretty happy with how it's going, but I've noticed a few of the edges have chipped slightly, especially where I didn't cut quite straight. Is there a way to repair these chips without starting over? Also, how can I avoid this happening again in future?

Wayne Dewbury, Edenvale

Our experts reply: Chipped melamine edges are a common frustration. For minor chips, a white melamine repair paste or white wood filler works well – apply carefully and smooth with a small spatula. For cleaner cuts next time, use a fine-tooth blade on your circular saw and apply masking tape over the cutting line to reduce chipping. Also, cut with the good side facing down when using a circular saw.



Thanks for getting me started!

I'm new to woodworking and just wanted to say how much your beginner tutorials have helped me. I started small – just a spice rack – but I now find myself sketching out ideas for more projects. The step-by-step format and clear diagrams really make a difference when you're figuring things out from scratch.

It's become a real stress reliever too. I work in a call centre and after a long day of talking, getting to work with my hands in the evening is a game changer. So just a quick thanks – keep doing what you do!

Mzi Sibeko, East London

Ed replies: We love that spice rack, great work!



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



SHADING IT

Turn your outdoor space into a relaxing retreat with this sturdy and stylish pergola, made from easily available timber and built using simple tools – perfect for any DIY enthusiast!



What you will need

- Wood: Construction-grade pine, which measures 100 x 100mm and 100 x 25mm after shrinkage.
- Hardware: Coach bolts, screws, post bases, and glue.
- Tools: A saw, jigsaw, drill, measuring tape, spirit level, and router.

For a 4 800 x 3 600mm pergola gather:

Wood:

- 4 x 100 x 100mm posts, 2 400mm long
- 4 x 100 x 25mm beams, 4 800mm long (joists)
- 13 x 100 x 25mm cross members, 3 600mm long

Hardware:

- 8 x 150mm coach bolts, nuts, and washers
- A box of 60mm screws
- 4 metal post bases

Other materials:

- Offcuts for braces, collars, and finials
- Outdoor wood paint or preservative

A pergola is a fantastic addition to any garden, offering shade, structure, and a touch of elegance. Whether you're looking for a quiet reading nook, a space to entertain, or a way to define your outdoor area, this simple pergola design is a great project for DIY enthusiasts.

The beauty of this build lies in its simplicity. Using readily available timber and a few basic tools, you can

create a structure that's both functional and visually appealing. Plus, by adding decorative elements like finials and braces, you can personalise the design to suit your garden's aesthetic.

This guide takes you through the entire process – from cutting and shaping the wood to assembling and securing the structure.

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Cut decorative ends on the cross members

Adding a decorative touch to the cross members gives the pergola a more polished look. Use a jigsaw to shape the ends – any design will work, but for consistency, create a plywood template.

To ensure a snug fit over the joists, cut recesses into the inner nine cross members to a depth of 25mm (the thickness of the wood) plus a few extra millimetres for adjustments. The outer two cross members remain uncut and will stand slightly taller for a layered effect.

Step 2: Add collars and decorative flutes to the posts

To enhance the design, use a 6mm radius router bit to carve three decorative grooves on each post. Chamfer the edges at 45° for a smooth, refined finish.

The collars serve both a functional and decorative purpose. They help align the joists and provide a stopping point for the router when cutting the flutes. Cut 45 x 45mm collars from offcuts and attach them:

- Upper collar: 250mm from the top
- Lower collar: 600mm from the bottom

The posts will be secured using metal post bases on concrete blocks, allowing flexibility to move the pergola later if needed.

Step 3: Make the braces

Braces add structural support and

aesthetic appeal. For a decorative look, glue two 100 x 25mm pieces together to form a 100 x 50mm piece, then use a jigsaw to cut the shape.

Use a router to chamfer the exposed edges at 45°. There are two different brace designs – one to support the 4 800mm joists and another for the higher cross members.

Step 4: Paint each piece

Painting before assembly saves time and ensures full coverage, especially in hard-to-reach areas. Use an outdoor wood paint or preservative. A gel-based fence paint works well and may require two coats for full protection.

Step 5: Make finials (Optional)

Finials add a finishing touch to the posts. You can either make or buy finials or simply choose to not have any. I wanted to “tart” my pergola up, so here is how I made them on a lathe. Turn 100 x 100mm offcuts on a lathe to create decorative shapes, leaving a stub to fit into a recess on a mounting plate. Once turned, glue and screw the finial to the plate before attaching it to the post tops.

Step 6: Assemble the structure

1. Attach the joists to the posts
 - Lay the 4,800mm joists on the ground and clamp them to the posts, aligning them with the collars.
 - Drill recesses for the coach bolts, then drill through and secure them with nuts and washers.



2. Raise the structure
 - Get a helper to lift the two halves into place.
 - Attach the outer cross members first using screws.
3. Secure the inner cross members
 - Space them evenly (approximately 410mm apart) and fit them into the recesses.
 - Secure them with screws and wood glue.

Step 7: Add braces and finials

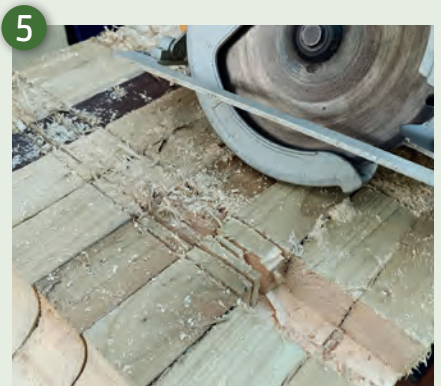
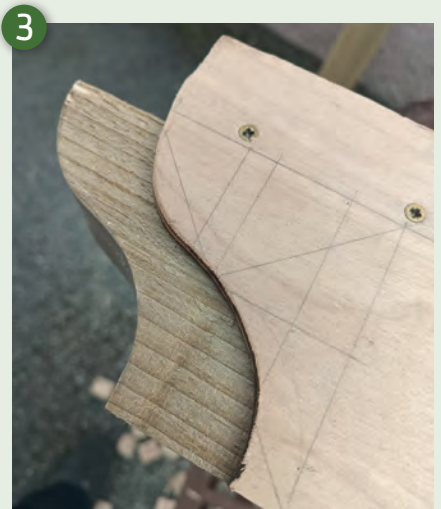
Finally, attach the braces between the posts and beams using 100mm blocks for support. If you’ve made finials, screw them into place on the tops of the posts.

For a neat finish, plug any visible screw holes with wooden plugs, then give the whole structure a final coat of paint.

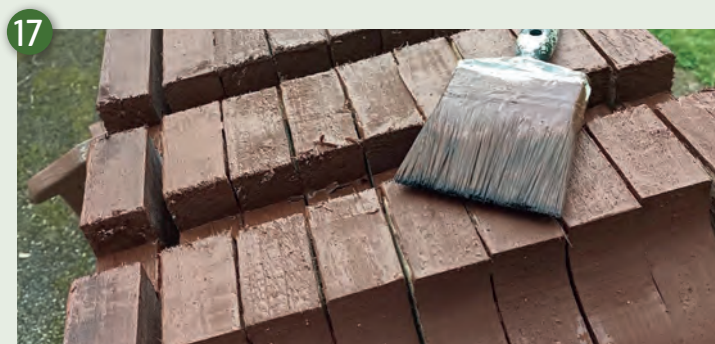
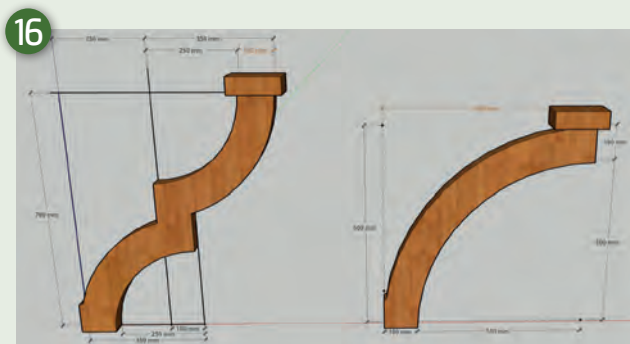
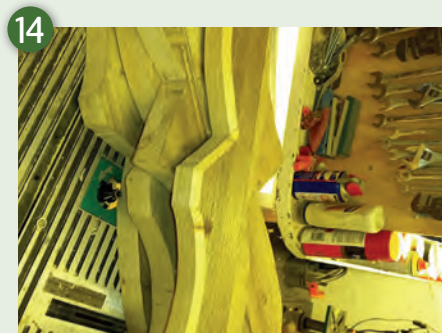
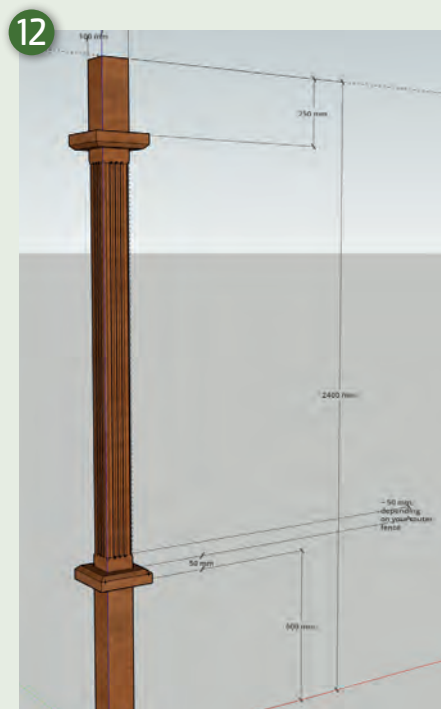
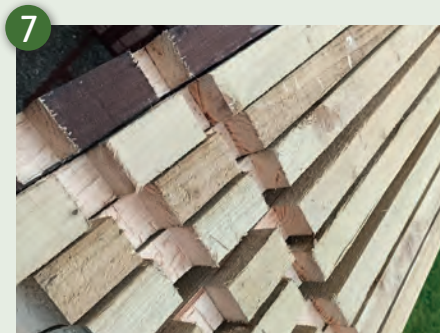
Step 8: Enjoy your pergola!

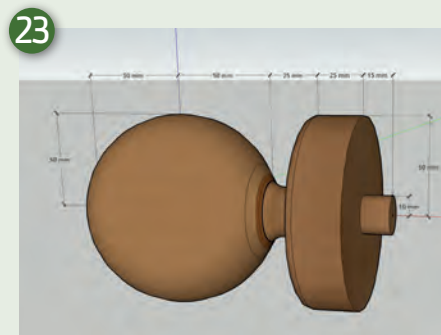
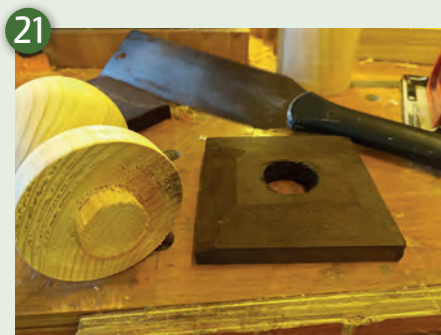
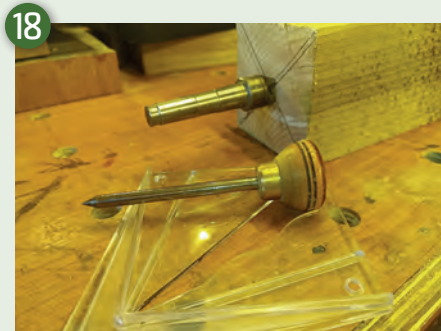
Your pergola is now complete! This sturdy, stylish structure will provide shade and character to your outdoor space for years to come. Add climbing plants, fairy lights, or even outdoor seating to make it even more inviting.-

Now, time to sit back and enjoy your handiwork – perhaps with a cup of tea under your brand-new pergola!



For a high res version of the drawings of this project, email editorial@homehandyman.co.za





1. Overall dimensions 2. Cut the decorative ends of the cross members using a jigsaw 3. Use any design, but keep it consistent by using a template 4. All the decorative ends cut 5. I recessed the inner nine cross members 6. I added a few additional millimetres to compensate for the vagaries of rough-sawn wood 7. I used lots of cuts with a circular saw and a chisel to make these recesses 8. This is how the recesses fit 9. Recess cut measurements 10. I used steel post bases and placed these on concrete blocks 11. I used a 6mm radius router bit and cut three grooves on all four sides of each post 12. Post dimensions 13. Creating a template for the post braces 14. I made fancy braces by glueing two spare pieces together 15. These braces were attached to the joists and cross members 16. Brace dimensions 17. If you plan to paint or otherwise treat your wood with a preservative, it is a good idea to paint each piece before putting the structure together 18. You can either make or buy finials or simply choose to not have any 19. I decided to make mine on the lathe 20. Making a sphere that does not turn out egg-shaped is not easy 21. Leave a stubby bit that will fit into a recess on a mounting plate 22. Painted and ready to be installed 23. Finial dimensions 24. Once the two halves are complete, raise the two halves of the construction and get a few helpers to hold them propped up while you do the next step



Turn a few planks of wood into a stunning, illuminated nightstand with this DIY guide – perfect for bedrooms, studios, or even a cosy reading nook.



With a sleek wooden frame and a built-in lighting element, this project is perfect for adding warmth and personality to your space. Plus, it's fully customisable – adjust the size, stain, or even the design to match your décor. While the cutting and assembly process requires patience, the finished piece will be well worth the effort!

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Crafting the main frames

Start by cutting all the necessary wood pieces according to the measurements listed. Mark the measurements carefully before making any cuts to ensure accuracy. If you have access to an electric saw, it will make the process much quicker, but a hand saw works just as well with patience.

Once all pieces are cut, it's time to assemble the two main frames. These will serve as the base structure of the nightstand.

Take two 50mm x 50mm pieces (560mm long) and place them parallel to each other. Attach a 25mm x 50mm pieces (380mm long) piece at the top and another at the bottom to create a rectangle.

Position and attach the remaining 380mm long 25mm x 50mm pieces evenly within the frame for added support and design appeal. Use nails or screws to secure everything in place, ensuring alignment with a square ruler.

After assembling both frames, you should have two identical rectangular side panels.

Step 2: Building the nightstand's structure

With the frames complete, it's time to join them together. Attach 430mm long 25mm x 50mm pieces across the top and bottom of the two frames to connect them.

NIGHTSTAND NIRVANA

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

Materials

4 x 50mm x 50mm wood	560mm length
12 x 25mm x 50mm wood	380mm length
12 x 25mm x 50mm wood	430mm length
1 x 25mm x 50mm wood (with 45° cuts)	108mm length
2 x 25mm x 50mm wood (with 45° cuts)	273mm length
1 x 25mm x 50mm wood (with 45° cuts)	445mm length
2 x 25mm x 50mm wood (with 45° cuts)	610mm length
1 x 25mm x 50mm wood (with 45° cuts)	115mm length
1 x 25mm x 50mm wood (with 45° cuts)	438mm length
1 x 25mm x 100mm wood	380mm length

Metal fittings

1 x 12mm flange (black steel)
1 x 12mm x 25mm long nipple (black steel)
1 x 12mm female threaded lamp adapter (black steel)

Secure additional 430mm long 25mm x 50mm pieces in the remaining gaps to form a solid frame. Check that all corners are square before finalising with nails or screws.

At this point, your nightstand should start taking shape, resembling an open cube structure.

Step 3: Making the top section

The top of the nightstand features a decorative grid pattern using angled pieces. Prepare the necessary pieces with 45-degree cuts as specified in the materials list.

Sand any rough edges for a smooth finish. Begin assembling the grid by attaching the longest pieces first, then filling in the smaller sections. Nail or screw everything into place, ensuring a symmetrical and even grid.

Once complete, the top section adds a stylish and modern touch to the design.

Step 4: Adding the electrical component

This nightstand isn't just a regular table – it includes built-in lighting! Securely fasten the lamp socket to a 380mm wooden piece.

Thread the electrical cable through a rubber contact before attaching it to the socket. Nail the 380mm wooden piece (with the socket attached) to the bottom of the main frame, ensuring it is secure and aligned properly.

This small addition brings both functionality and a touch of sophistication to your nightstand.

Step 5: The final touches

Now that the structure is complete, it's time to perfect the look.

Sanding: Smooth out all surfaces using fine-grit sandpaper. This step is crucial for achieving a professional-looking finish.

Varnishing: Apply your chosen wood stain or varnish for a polished appearance. Be sure to coat all surfaces evenly and allow adequate drying time.

Assembly check: Ensure all components are firmly in place and the structure is sturdy.

If you prefer a painted finish instead of varnish, choose a colour that complements your décor. Remember to wear a mask while painting or varnishing to avoid inhaling fumes.

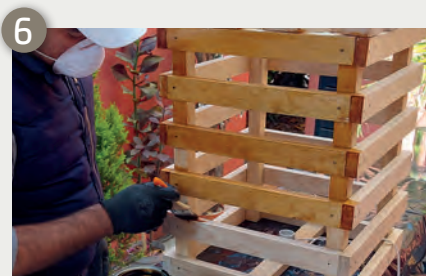
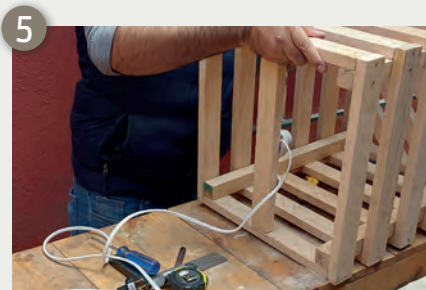
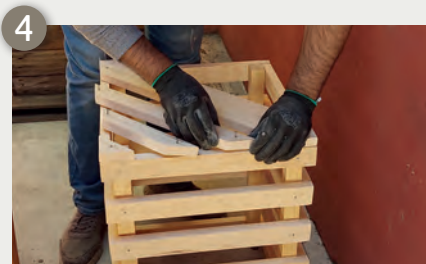
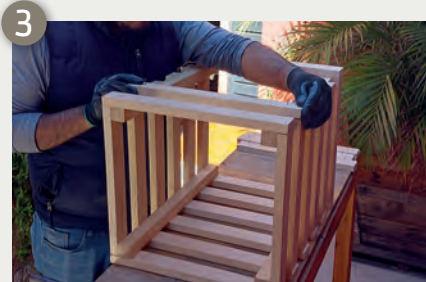
Your handcrafted nightstand is ready!

Congratulations! You've successfully built your own wooden nightstand, complete with an integrated lighting feature. Not only is this piece a practical addition to your bedroom, but it also showcases your DIY craftsmanship.

This project can easily be adapted to suit different spaces – paint it to match a modern aesthetic, stain it for a rustic feel, or even modify the size to fit a smaller or larger area.

Tip: Before assembling your nightstand, lightly sand all pieces to remove splinters and ensure a smooth, snug fit during construction. This small step can save time later and result in a cleaner finish. If you're staining or painting the wood, pre-sanding also helps the surface absorb the finish evenly. Don't forget to label each piece after cutting. This simple step will make the build quicker and far less confusing.

1. Attach a 25mm x 50mm pieces (380mm long) piece at the top and another at the bottom to create a rectangle 2. Position and attach the remaining 380mm long 25mm x 50mm pieces evenly within the frame for added support and design appeal 3. Secure additional 430mm long 25mm x 50mm pieces in the remaining gaps to form a solid frame 4. The top of the nightstand features a decorative grid pattern using angled 5. Securely fasten the lamp socket to a 380mm wooden piece 6. Apply your chosen wood stain or varnish for a polished appearance





PIN IT, POST IT, PLAN IT

My son wanted a bulletin board to help organise his room, but I couldn't bring myself to buy a cheap, generic one from the shop. At the same time, I wasn't particularly excited about making one either. So, I procrastinated – until I found inspiration in the work of Piet Mondrian.

Using his iconic grid-based paintings as a guide, I created a bulletin board with multiple surfaces, textures, and display options. This design doesn't just include a corkboard for pinning notes – it also features Lego base plates, a magnetic board, a whiteboard, and plenty of shelves for extra storage.

This project turned out to be both practical and visually striking, making organisation fun while adding a touch of artistic flair to the room.



What you will need

Tools:

- Table saw
- Drill
- Countersink bit
- Self-centring hinge drill bit
- Router
 - 1.5mm radius round-over bit
 - 6mm up-cut spiral bit
 - 12mm template bit
 - 12mm bowl bit

- Clamps
- Strap clamps
- Hacksaw

Miscellaneous:

- Keyhole hangers
- Wood glue
- Construction adhesive
- Hot glue
- Wood finish
- Acrylic paint

WOOD

All frame pieces were cut from 18mm cherry wood

Outer frame

18mm x 6.5cm x 105cm	2 pieces
18mm x 6.5cm x 67cm	2 pieces

Inner frame 1

18mm x 6cm x 53cm	1 piece
18mm x 6cm x 63cm	1 piece
18mm x 6cm x 67cm	1 piece

Inner frame 2

18mm x 5cm x 7.5cm	5 pieces
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Inner frame 3

18mm x 18mm x 53cm	1 piece
18mm x 18mm x 27cm	2 pieces
18mm x 18mm x 13cm	1 piece

Plywood

The back panel is made from 3mm plywood

3mm x 104cm x 65cm

Inserts

61cm x 91cm x 6mm cork sheet

13cm x 13cm Lego base plate

Whiteboard (I used shower board, but a true whiteboard would work better)

15cm x 30cm, 0.7mm sheet metal

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Building the outer frame Cutting the sides

The sides of the frame were cut from 18mm cherry wood. I cut these to their final length first, saving the mitred edges for the very last step.

A 3mm wide, 12mm deep rabbet (groove) was cut into the back edge of each piece to hold the plywood backing securely.

Routing storage trays

To add more functionality, I routed three small storage trays into the bottom frame piece. These were cut using a 6mm router bit with a 19mm bushing.

To ensure clean and accurate cuts, I made a jig with inside dimensions 19mm larger than the trays:

- Smaller trays: 12cm x 5.5cm
- Larger tray: 25cm x 5.5cm

After marking the tray positions, I secured the template using double-sided tape before routing each tray in multiple passes to a final depth of 6mm.

Alternatively, a bowl bit with a bearing could be used, with the template cut to the exact tray dimensions.

Mitre cuts and glue-up

Mitring the corners was the final step before assembly, ensuring a seamless join. To glue the frame together, I used wood glue and secured it with band clamps, though corner clamping blocks would also work well.

Step 2: Adding the inner frame

Preparing the inner frame pieces

These pieces are 6cm wide and sit flush with the front of the outer frame. They are slightly narrower to allow space for the plywood back panel. I measured and cut them based on the actual dimensions of the outer frame rather than relying solely on the plan.

- 18mm x 6.5cm x 53cm (1 piece)
- 18mm x 6.5cm x 63cm (1 piece)
- 18mm x 6.5cm x 67cm (1 piece)

Before installation, I sanded each piece to make final finishing easier.

Gluing in place

I cut several 7.5cm-wide MDF spacer blocks to ensure correct positioning and keep the shelves perfectly level.

Glue was applied to the ends of each piece before sliding them into place.

Rounding over edges

To soften the look and prevent sharp edges, I used a 1.5mm radius round-over bit to shape all the front-facing edges. The router couldn't reach fully into the corners, so I sanded these areas by hand.

Step 3: Installing the smaller dividers

Cutting and sanding

These pieces are 5cm wide and sit slightly recessed from the front. The back edges are flush with the rear of the inner frame.

- 18mm x 5cm x 7.5cm (5 pieces)

Each piece was sanded and given a 1.5mm round-over on the front edges before installation.

Gluing in place

Again, I used spacer blocks to maintain even spacing. While not strictly necessary, this helped ensure that every piece was square.

Step 4: Installing the smallest dividers and sheet metal

Cutting the final frame pieces

These dividers are made from 18mm x 18mm material and were positioned to accommodate the Lego base plates and sheet metal.

- 18mm x 18mm x 53cm (1 piece)
- 18mm x 18mm x 27cm (2 pieces)
- 18mm x 18mm x 13cm (1 piece)

Cutting the sheet metal

I cut the metal to size using a hacksaw. To ensure straight cuts, I clamped a scrap piece of wood along the cut line as a guide. This also reduced bending and deformation. I then smoothed the edges with a file.

Step 5: Final assembly and finishing

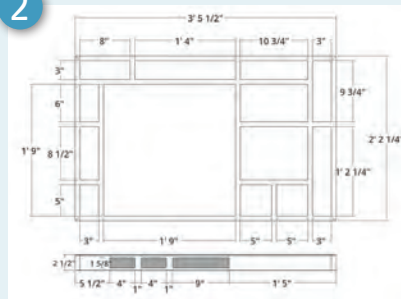
Attaching the back panel

The back panel was cut from 3mm plywood and screwed into place

1



2



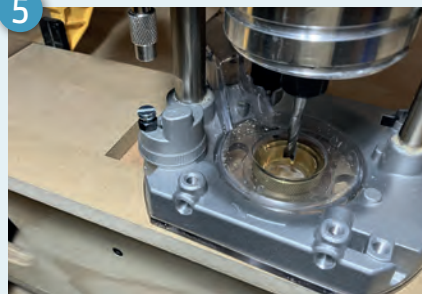
3



4



5



6



from the rear. Before attaching, I marked the frame positions, pre-drilled countersunk holes, and sanded the panel. I left most of it unfinished but painted one section for added contrast.

Installing keyhole hangers

To allow wall-mounting, I recessed the back panel for keyhole hangers.

A template and pattern bit were used for precise cutting, followed by a freehand router cut to create space for the screw heads.

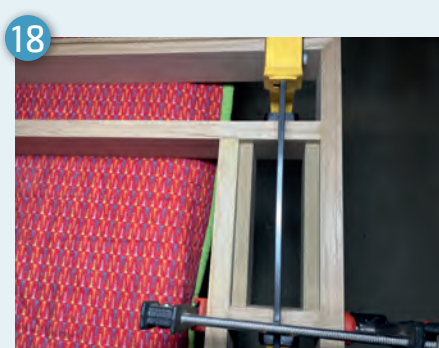
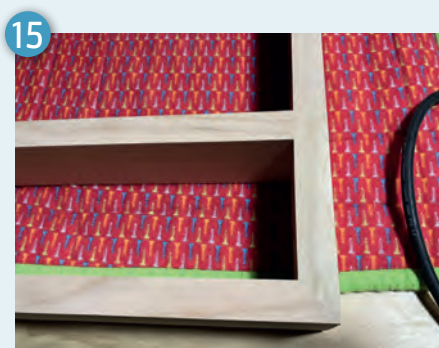
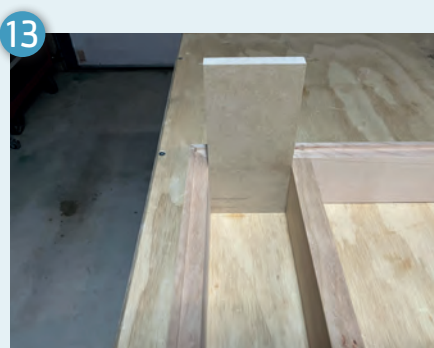
Adding the inserts

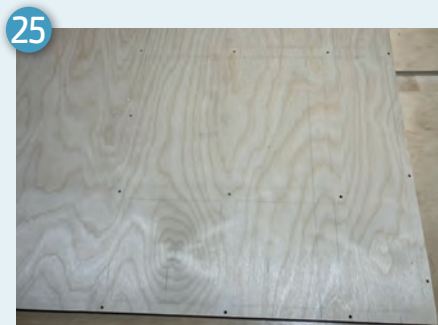
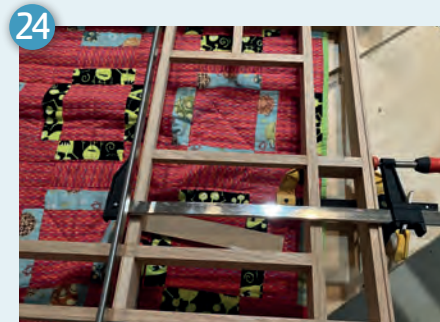
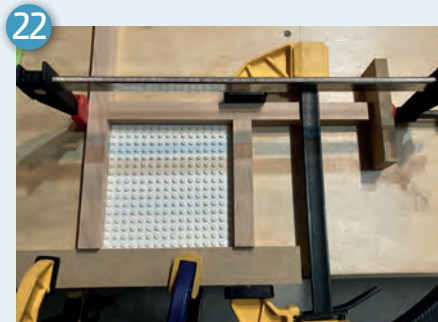
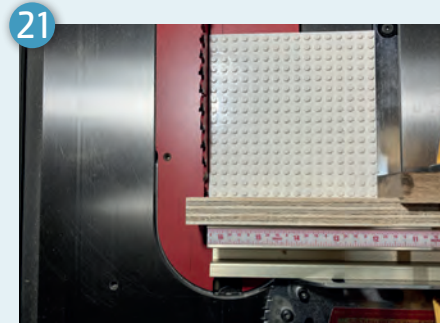
The corkboard, whiteboard, and sheet metal were cut to fit and glued into place. I used:

- **Construction adhesive** for the corkboard, whiteboard, and metal
- **Hot glue** for the Lego base plates

Final sanding and finishing

After inspecting the entire piece, I did some final sanding and applied an oil-based wipe-on finish to protect the wood while enhancing its natural grain.





Conclusion

What started as a simple way to organise my son's room became an engaging DIY project that blends art with function. Inspired by Mondrian's geometric style, this bulletin board offers multiple ways to pin, write, magnetise, and even build with Lego!

Not only is it a stylish addition to any space, but it also makes keeping track of notes, schedules, and reminders effortless. Whether you're looking for a unique organiser or a fun woodworking challenge, this project is a great way to add creativity and practicality to your home.

1. The design I came up with 2. Measurements (in inches) 3. All frame pieces were cut from 18mm cherry wood 4. A 3mm wide, 12mm deep rabbet (groove) was cut into the back edge of each piece to hold the plywood backing securely 5. To add more functionality, I routed three small storage trays into the bottom frame piece 6. These were cut using a 6mm router bit with a 19mm bushing 7. To ensure clean and accurate cuts, I made a jig with inside dimensions 19mm larger than the trays 8. The finished storage trays 9. Mitre the edges at the end 10. I used band clamps to apply clamping pressure, but corner clamping blocks can also be used 11. I sanded the next piece before I installed them 12. The inner frame pieces are 6cm wide 13. They sit flush with the front of the outer frame 14. I cut several 7.5cm-wide MDF spacer blocks to ensure correct positioning and keep the shelves perfectly level 15. Close up of the corner 16. To soften the look and prevent sharp edges, I used a 1.5mm radius round-over bit to shape all the front-facing edges 17. Glue was applied to the ends of each piece before sliding them into place 18. Clamp up until dried 19. The smaller dividers are 5cm wide and sit slightly recessed from the front 20. The back edges are flush with the rear of the inner frame 21. Cut the Lego board to size 22. Making sure the Lego board will fit before installation 23. The completed inner frame 24. Installing the inner frame 25. I used plywood for the back panel 26. A recess is cut in the back panel for the hangers to sit in. I used a template, and a pattern bit to cut this recess 27. Placing the hanger 28. Fitting the back panel

Discover how to make a twisted segmented bowl.



TURNING SCRAP INTO ART

I love finding new uses for scraps – some people call it trash, but I see hidden gems waiting to be reborn. It's always fun to take discarded materials and turn them into something interesting.

Over the years, I've experimented with bowls and pens made from plywood scraps (including old skateboard decks), crafted kazoos from flooring offcuts and cabinet doors, and even made rings using veneer scraps and layers of car paint. One of my more unusual projects was a pyramid table made from an old piece of wood.

My woodworking club makes toys for less fortunate children, typically producing 4000-5000 toys per year. I'm responsible for making 150-200 kazoos, but one of my club members, Len, builds a toy called a flip car. This little car goes down a ramp, flips over itself, and keeps going.

Part of the ramp requires cutting off a wedge to create a flat starting section. Since we make hundreds of these toys, we end up with countless wedge-shaped scraps that most people would discard. But not me!

At one club meeting, Len challenged me – in front of everyone – to make something creative from those scraps. So, I did!

The journey turned out to be an incredible learning experience. I tried several new techniques, and to my surprise, the final piece won the top award at my woodworking club and an additional prize at our county fair. I hope you enjoy this project as much as I did!



What you will need

Tools and materials:

I used standard woodworking tools, many of which I found online for a great price.

Tip: If you join a local woodworking club, many experienced members are eager to mentor and help you out – take advantage of their knowledge!

Materials:

- Wedge wood scraps (mine were 64mm high × 83mm long × 13mm wide at the thick end, tapering

to 1.5mm at the tip, with an 11–12-degree angle)

- Wood veneers (generously donated by a club member)
- Tons of glue

Tools:

- Table saw
- Lathe
- Sanders
- Clamps
- Press (to compress the veneer sandwich and the wedges into a tight tangential twist)
- Tennis ball or cone (to help with the glue-up process)

Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Designing with interesting geometry

This was the exciting part! One evening, while watching my usual YouTube woodworking videos, I stumbled upon a tangential twist technique. The concept was originally developed by Robert “Jerzy” Gryglaszewski Craig (you can find his article online).

I used a variation of this technique by orienting the wedges tangentially around a centre point. The idea is to arrange the pieces until they fit together perfectly flat against each other.

Tip: You might need to remove some wedges to achieve a seamless alignment.

This technique really fascinated me. One of the biggest challenges in making segmented bowls is cutting each piece to an exact angle – if you're even 0.1 degrees off per piece, a 12-piece bowl could end up with a 1.2-degree gap. With 30 segments, that would be a 3.6-degree error, making assembly a tedious process.

The tangential twist method supposedly guarantees perfect

alignment. So, you can imagine my excitement when I realised I had a whole box of little wedges to experiment with!

The challenge

I quickly discovered a problem – the wedges weren't identical. Their angles varied between 11 and 12+ degrees, and I wasn't sure if this method would even work. Spoiler alert: It did!

Step 2: Preparing the veneers

To create an eye-catching twist pattern, I made a veneer sandwich as a separator between the wedges. This not only made the pattern more visible but also enhanced the final spiral effect.

My veneer sandwich consisted of:

- Maple
- Two layers of walnut
- Another layer of maple

I pressed the veneers tightly in a vice before cutting them to match the size of the flat side of the wedges.

Step 3: Preparing the wedges

Next, I glued the veneer sandwiches to the wedges, making sure to apply plenty of glue on both sides in preparation for the tangential assembly.

Tip: Before gluing anything, I did a dry assembly to check if everything would align correctly. This step gave me confidence that the process would work.

Step 4: Glue-up – work fast!

Once the glue was applied, I had about 15-20 minutes to position all the wedges around a ball (or cone) to create the tangential twist structure.

To keep things tidy, I wrapped the assembly in plastic to contain any excess

glue, then secured it with band clamps at the top and bottom. Finally, I placed the entire assembly into a press, tightening it as much as possible.

Throughout the process, I kept checking the band clamps to ensure there were no gaps between the wedges.

The moment of truth

At this stage, I just had to hope and pray that it worked. Since the entire piece was wrapped in plastic, I had no way of knowing if the wedges were properly aligned.

I left it in the press for a full week before unwrapping. Since the plastic slowed down the drying process, I removed it and let the glue cure for another week.

When I finally unwrapped it, I was shocked – perfect alignment, despite using wedges with slightly different angles!

Step 5: Flattening the assembly

Before I could mount the piece on my lathe, I needed to create a flat bottom.

- I used a belt sander to level the base.
- Then, I ran it through a drum sander to smooth the top.

At this point, I started to see the hypnotic pattern emerging – it looked amazing!

Step 6: Shaping on the lathe

Believe it or not, the hardest part was already over! It took me three weekends to get to this stage, but the lathe work only took a few hours.

Looking at the pattern, the bowl reminded me of a cantaloupe, so I decided to shape it similarly.

For the base, I used a piece of exotic rosewood, gifted to me by a club member.

Step 7: Refining the design

I was nearly satisfied with the shape, but I felt something was missing. I brought the bowl to my wood club meeting to get feedback from experienced turners.

I was torn between angling the top slightly upward or downward. Someone suggested using a paper model to visualise different profiles – this was a great tip! In the end, I decided to add a gentle curvature to the top for a more refined look.

Step 8: Finishing

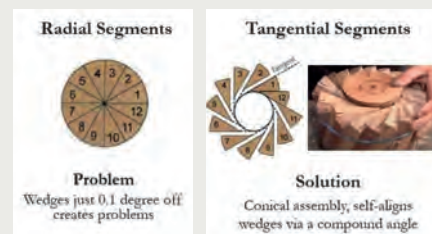
The best part of woodturning is applying the finish – it truly brings the piece to life! I used a homemade friction polish, made from:

- Denatured alcohol
- Boiled linseed oil
- Wax-free shellac

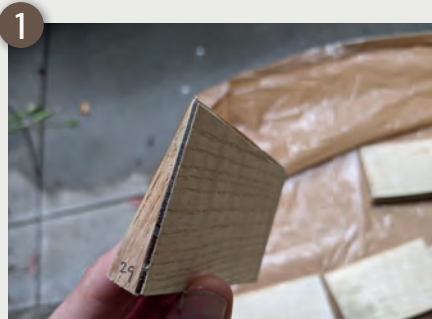
After applying multiple coats, I buffed the surface to a high gloss finish.

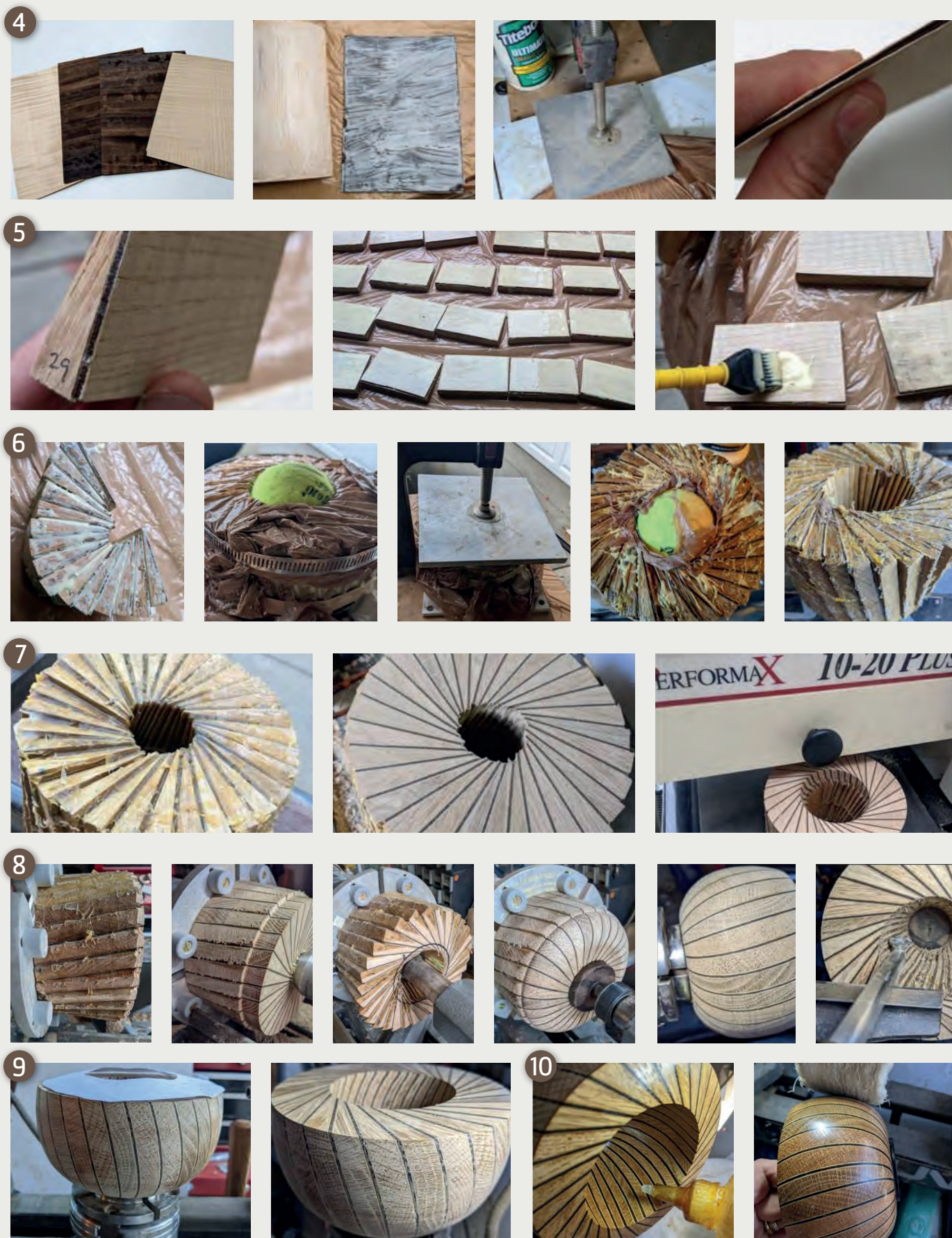
Step 9: The final reveal!

And there it is. I love how the twist pattern wraps around both the inside and outside of the bowl. It's also satisfying to hold, thanks to its weight and shape. I even added a small glass candle holder, which my wife finds hilarious because I still show the bowl off to every guest who visits.



A design with an interesting geometry





1. I was challenged to make something creative from these scraps 2. I borrowed many of the tools for this project from my local woodworking club 3. My wedge scraps were 64mm high x 83mm long x 13mm wide at the thick end 4. Prepare the veneers 5. Prepare the wedges 6. Glue up, but make sure you work fast 7. Flatten the assembly 8. Lathe to shape 9. Work on perfecting the shape 10. Add your finish



Imagine unwinding in your garden on a warm summer evening, stretched out on a sturdy, stylish sunbed, surrounded by the fresh air – without a single mosquito in sight! In this step-by-step guide, we'll show you how to build one.

NAP LIKE NEVER BEFORE

Why build a sunbed from metal with an anti-mosquito net and sun curtains? The answer is simple! A sunbed – or even a full-sized bed – allows you to sunbathe, read a book, sip coffee, or even sleep under the open sky. Trust me, it's an amazing experience to drift off outside on a summer evening, with stars above, Starlink satellites passing by, meteor showers, and the moon glowing overhead – all without mosquitoes biting you. Highly recommended!

Why choose metal over wood?

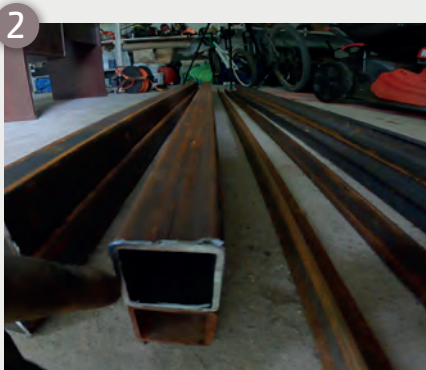
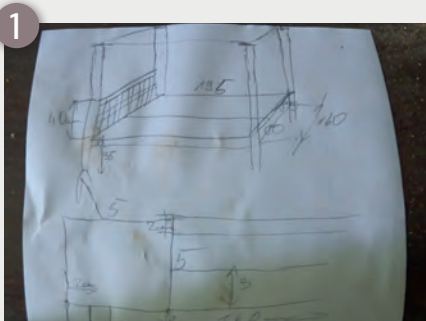
I understand why having a sunbed is appealing, but why build it from metal? The answer is durability. In many countries that experience winter, rain, and frost, a metal sunbed will last significantly longer than a wooden one. Wood is prone to weathering, warping, and rotting over time, whereas metal remains sturdy for many years with minimal maintenance. Simple!

Planning your sunbed

A metal sunbed isn't overly complicated to build, but it does require some planning. It's best to start with a clear design. I created a simple plan, determining the dimensions and choosing the right metal profiles for each part of the structure. Here's what I used:

- **Pillars (vertical frame parts):** 50mm x 50mm steel profiles (height: 2m)
- **Horizontal frame parts:** 50mm x 30mm profiles (dimensions: 1600mm x 2000mm)
- **Top section for sun curtains:** 10mm x 10mm profiles
- **L-shaped profile (for bed boards):** 50mm x 50mm

To the bed frame, I welded L-shaped profiles. These provide support for wooden boards, which in turn support the mattress.



Step-by-step guide

Step 1: Welding the frame – front and back pillars

The construction process is straightforward, though not as simple as you might expect – especially if working alone. Cutting and welding are relatively easy since all cuts are at 90-degree angles. However, it's crucial to ensure everything is aligned properly. Because I worked solo, I needed multiple clamps, angle brackets, and levelling tools to keep everything straight.

Start by assembling the front and back pillars with the horizontal frame on the floor. Ensure everything is level before welding them together.

Step 2: Welding the frame together

Once you have the front and back frame sections, it's time to connect them. This is the most crucial step, so use levelling tools to check both horizontal and vertical alignment before every weld. Also, ensure that all angles are exactly 90 degrees.

I recommend initially tacking everything in place with small welds. Once you're confident that everything is properly aligned, complete the full welds for a strong and stable frame.

Step 3: Adding frame details and painting

With the main frame assembled, I welded mounts for the sun curtains using lightweight 10mm profiles. At the top of the canopy, I added decorative metal spheres – the type commonly used for fencing. I also welded a headboard using leftover material. I highly recommend including a headboard! It makes reading more comfortable and prevents your pillow from falling off while you sleep.

Before painting, I sanded the entire frame using sandpaper and a grinder.

This step is essential to ensure a smooth, clean surface. Since I wasn't aiming for a highly polished look, I opted for a high-quality oil-based paint designed for rust protection. I applied three coats with a roller for a smooth and durable finish.

Step 4: Adding the mattress

With the frame complete, it was time to add the mattress. I placed it on lightweight pine boards that were cut to size and oiled for protection. You can purchase mattresses in almost any size; mine consists of two placed side by side, creating a sleeping area of approximately 1600mm x 2000mm. This provides ample space for two people to sleep comfortably.

Step 5: Installing curtains and mosquito netting

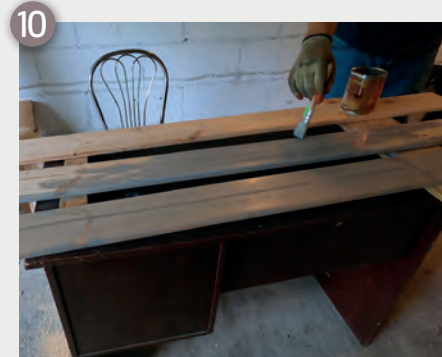
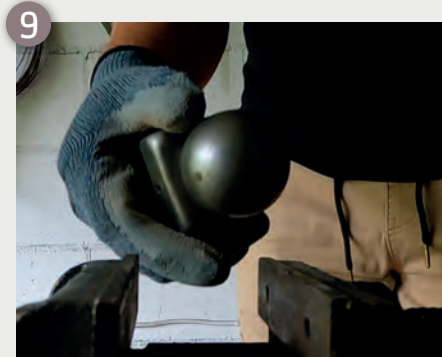
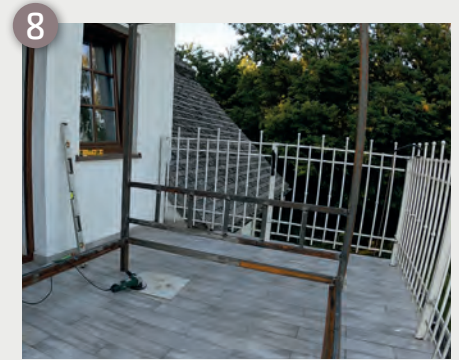
The canopy and mosquito net were a great find – my wife bought them online for a bargain price. The netting attaches to the decorative metal spheres on the bed's pillars. In addition, I installed waterproof, sun-blocking curtains, which can be adjusted as needed. The curtains fasten with buttons rather than Velcro, as Velcro wouldn't withstand strong winds.

Step 6: Time to relax and enjoy!

That's it! Your sunbed is ready for you to test out – or even sleep on during warm summer nights. This sunbed enhances relaxation and comfort, making it a perfect addition to any outdoor space. A glass of wine (or tea), a good book, and some quiet reading time – pure bliss!



For a high res version of the drawings of this project, email editorial@homehandyman.co.za



1. I created a simple plan, determining the dimensions and choosing the right metal profiles 2. The material I used for the sunbed 3. I also used an L-shaped profile for the bed boards 4. Cutting and welding are relatively easy since all cuts are at 90-degree angles 5. Because I worked solo, I needed multiple clamps, angle brackets, and levelling tools to keep everything straight 6. Once you have the front and back frame sections, it's time to connect them 7. This is the most crucial step, so use levelling tools to check both horizontal and vertical alignment before every weld 8. With the main frame assembled, I welded mounts for the sun curtains using lightweight 10mm profiles 9. At the top of the canopy, I added decorative metal spheres 10. I placed the mattress on lightweight pine boards that were cut to size and oiled for protection 11. The pine boards in place 12. Find yourself a suitable mattress 13. The netting attaches to the decorative metal spheres on the bed's pillars





Select flooring that suits your home and lifestyle.

UNDERFOOT PERFECTION

Flooring is one of the most important parts of any home improvement project, yet it's often overlooked when people consider DIY renovations. Many homeowners focus on repainting walls or upgrading furniture, but your floor endures the heaviest use. It's the foundation for every room's aesthetic and can dramatically affect how comfortable and welcoming the space feels. If you're walking across creaking boards or tiles that feel cold beneath your feet, you'll soon notice how vital it is to select the right flooring from the start.

Whether you're replacing worn carpet, upgrading old vinyl, or installing a fresh hardwood surface, the choices can seem endless. Each type of flooring has its own benefits, drawbacks, and maintenance needs. On top of that, you'll want to think about lifestyle factors, such as whether you have children or pets who regularly track in dirt and mud. Another key point is the local climate: some flooring materials hold up better in damp or humid conditions than others.

There's also the question of budget. While you don't want to break the bank, a cheap, short-term fix could cost you more down the line if it warps, chips, or fades too quickly. Plus, if your flooring doesn't suit your lifestyle, you may find yourself doing extra cleaning or dealing with annoying issues like noisy boards. It's better to invest in durable materials that offer long-term value, especially if you're handy enough to install them yourself.

In this article, we'll break down common misconceptions about flooring choices, offer practical advice on selecting the right material, and show you where to start with the tools and techniques needed for the job. We'll also share some of the most common mistakes DIY enthusiasts make when working with floors and how you can avoid them. Finally, we'll provide expert tips on installation, finishing, and maintenance practices

that ensure you get the most out of your new flooring. Let's get started.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SPACE

Before you jump into any DIY flooring project, spend time assessing the room or area you want to transform. Each space has its own challenges. For instance, kitchens and bathrooms deal with moisture, while living rooms and hallways encounter a lot of foot traffic. Bedrooms may benefit from softer, warmer surfaces. Also consider how each room connects to the rest of the house. If you have an open-plan design, you might want consistent flooring throughout for visual flow.

Moisture levels

Rooms like bathrooms and laundry areas see splashes, steam, and humidity changes. Materials such as solid wood might not be suitable here if it tends to swell or warp when exposed to moisture. Engineered wood or vinyl might be more stable in these conditions.

Foot traffic

Busy corridors, living rooms, and entrances get a lot of daily action. In such spaces, a tough, scratch-resistant surface may be essential. Tiles, laminate, and certain hardwoods can handle wear well.

Comfort and warmth

In bedrooms or cosy dens, the feel of a material underfoot may be a top priority. Carpets, cork, or rubber flooring can create a softer, quieter environment. If you prefer the look of wood, you might install area rugs to provide warmth in cooler months.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT MATERIAL

Hardwood flooring

Hardwood floors have a timeless appeal and can add real value to your home. They often last for decades if they're cared for properly. Various wood species are available, from domestic pines to robust hardwoods. You might find locally sourced varieties that are especially suited to your area's temperature and humidity shifts. Some of the most popular species include oak, walnut, and teak-like alternatives.

- **Benefits:** Durable, can be refinished multiple times, offers a natural and high-quality look.
- **Drawbacks:** More expensive upfront, can warp in humid conditions if not sealed properly, may show scratches from pets or heavy furniture.
- **Installation tips:** Ensure the subfloor is level and moisture-free. Acclimatise the planks by letting them sit in the room for a few days before installation. Use a suitable sealant or finish to protect against changing weather conditions.

Engineered wood

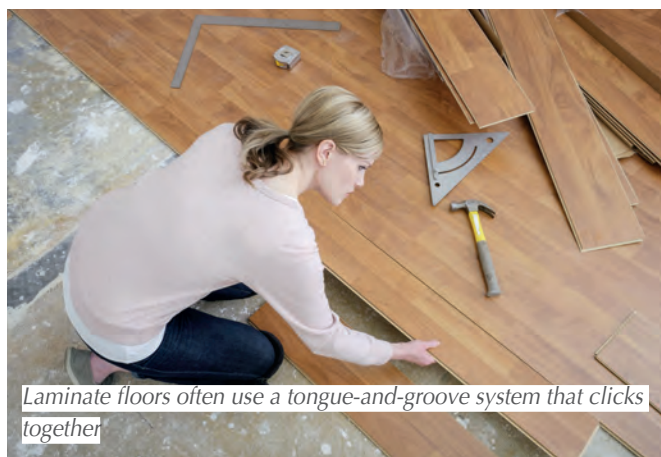
Engineered wood planks have a thin layer of genuine wood on top and layers of composite or plywood underneath. They look similar to solid hardwood but are more resistant to moisture and temperature changes. This makes them a strong choice where humidity levels fluctuate.

- **Benefits:** More stable than solid wood, often easier to install (some come with click-lock systems), and can still be sanded and refinished (though fewer times than solid wood).
- **Drawbacks:** Slightly less lifespan than solid hardwood if heavily used or scratched deeply.
- **Installation tips:** Follow the manufacturer's guidelines regarding underlayment. Some engineered wood floors can be floated (not glued or nailed) over a moisture barrier, making them quicker to put down.

Laminate flooring

Laminate is a popular choice for DIY enthusiasts because it's budget-friendly, relatively easy to install, and comes in designs that replicate wood or even stone. It consists of a photographic layer (showing the design) on top of a particleboard or fibreboard base. A protective coating guards against light scratches.

- **Benefits:** Affordable, easy to maintain, wide variety of designs, resistant to fading.
- **Drawbacks:** Can be less robust against heavy moisture, cannot typically be refinished (once it's scratched or worn, you may need to replace it).
- **Installation tips:** Laminate floors often use a tongue-and-groove system that clicks together. You'll need a good underlayment to soften footsteps and deal with minor subfloor imperfections. Be cautious with water spills – clean them up quickly to avoid swelling.



Laminate floors often use a tongue-and-groove system that clicks together

Vinyl flooring

Vinyl has come a long way from the thin sheets of yesteryear. Luxury vinyl planks or tiles (LVP or LVT) mimic the look of wood, stone, or ceramic, and they're much easier to install. They're highly waterproof and soft underfoot, making them good for kitchens, bathrooms, or laundry areas.

- **Benefits:** Durable, waterproof, easy to clean, quieter underfoot than tile or laminate, affordable.
- **Drawbacks:** Once damaged, it can be harder to repair seamlessly. Lower-end vinyls might look artificial or wear out faster.
- **Installation tips:** Luxury vinyl often has a peel-and-stick or click-lock system. Always make sure the subfloor is clean, smooth, and dry. Even small bumps can show through over time.



Vinyl has come a long way from the thin sheets of yesteryear. Luxury vinyl planks or tiles (LVP or LVT) mimic the look of wood, stone, or ceramic

Tile flooring

Tiles are extremely tough and come in a multitude of colours, shapes, and finishes. Ceramic and porcelain tiles are popular picks for wet areas or high-traffic zones, thanks to their resilience. Certain natural stone tiles, like slate or travertine, can also be visually stunning, though they may require more specialised care.

- **Benefits:** Durable, water-resistant, easy to clean, great for underfloor heating systems.

- **Drawbacks:** Can be cold or hard underfoot, challenging to install without prior practice, and may crack if the subfloor flexes.
- **Installation tips:** Proper preparation of the subfloor is vital; any unevenness can lead to cracked tiles later. Using high-quality tile adhesive and grout is essential to ensure a solid bond.

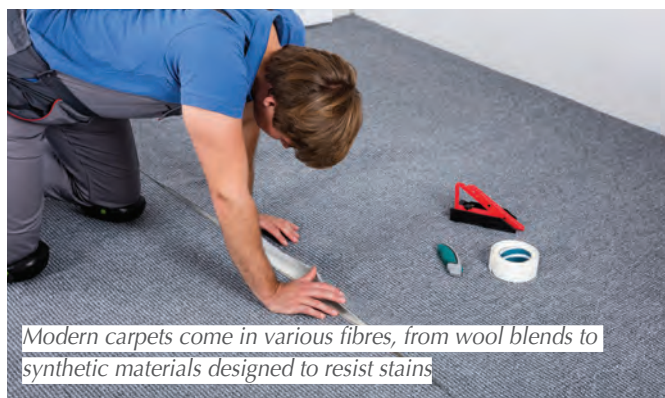


Tiles are extremely tough and come in a multitude of colours, shapes, and finishes

Carpet

Carpet offers comfort, insulation, and sound absorption. It's often preferred in bedrooms, lounges, and areas where warmth is a priority. Modern carpets come in various fibres, from wool blends to synthetic materials designed to resist stains.

- **Benefits:** Comfortable, quiet, and can help insulate a room. Available in a wide range of textures and colours.
- **Drawbacks:** Less suitable for high-moisture or high-traffic areas. Can trap dust, dirt, and allergens more easily. Stains can be harder to remove depending on the carpet type.
- **Installation tips:** Most DIY-friendly carpets come in tiles or squares with an adhesive backing. Larger rolls might require professional assistance for stretching and neat fitting.



Modern carpets come in various fibres, from wool blends to synthetic materials designed to resist stains

Subfloor and preparation

Regardless of the flooring you choose, the underlying surface must be clean, level, and dry. Subfloor preparation is often the most time-consuming part of a DIY flooring project. If you skip steps here, you could end up with squeaks, cracks, or gaps.

- **Levelling:** Check for dips or high spots using a long straightedge. Self-levelling compounds can help smooth out uneven areas.
- **Cleaning:** Vacuum or sweep thoroughly to remove dust, debris, and anything else that might interfere with adhesive or underlayment.
- **Moisture testing:** In damp environments, use a moisture metre or place a piece of plastic on the floor overnight to check for condensation. If the area is too damp, consider waterproof membranes or choose a moisture-resistant material.



Proper preparation of the subfloor is vital when tiling; any unevenness can lead to cracked tiles later

Installation approaches

While each flooring type has its own specific installation technique, there are a few broad methods:

- **Floating floors:** Boards or tiles are not fastened to the subfloor. Instead, they "float" on top of an underlayment and lock together via tongue-and-groove or click systems. Common with laminate, engineered wood, and some vinyl.
- **Glue-down method:** Materials like certain vinyl tiles, carpets, or even solid hardwood can be glued using adhesives designed for that flooring. Make sure the adhesive suits your climate.
- **Nail or staple:** Primarily used for hardwood flooring, special flooring nails or staples attach the boards to a wooden subfloor.
- **Mortar and grout:** Used for tile installations, where a thin-set mortar bonds the tile to the subfloor and grout fills the spaces in between.

Essential tools

1. **Measuring tape and ruler:** Accurate measurements are the key to well-fitted flooring.
2. **Spirit level or laser level:** Ensures the subfloor and installed flooring are even.
3. **Utility knife:** For trimming underlayment, vinyl planks, or carpet edges.
4. **Saw (circular, jigsaw, or mitre saw):** Needed for cutting hardwood, engineered planks, or laminate boards.
5. **Flooring roller or weighted tool:** Helps press down adhesive floors, removing air bubbles and ensuring a strong bond.

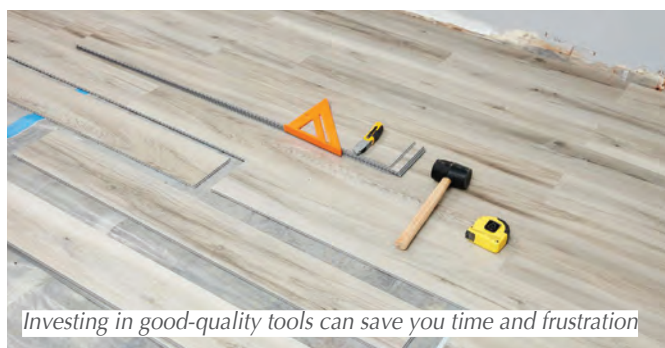
6. **Rubber mallet:** Useful for tapping pieces into place without damaging edges.
7. **Trowel:** Needed for applying tile adhesive, or for smoothing out self-levelling compound.
8. **Knee pads:** Comfort is crucial when you spend hours on the floor.

Materials checklist

- **Underlayment (where applicable):** Foam or rubber sheets for laminate or engineered wood, or cement backer boards for tiles.
- **Adhesives and grout:** Chosen based on the flooring type and the room's moisture conditions.
- **Sealants and finishes:** Polyurethane or water-based sealants for wood floors, specialised sealers for tile or stone.
- **Skirting boards or edging strips:** These give your floor a neat, professional finish.
- **Protective equipment:** Dust masks, gloves, and safety glasses to protect against sawdust or chemical fumes.

Tips for tool selection

- If you're unsure about the right saw blade or trowel size, ask for advice at your local hardware store. They often know which accessories work best with the products they sell.
- Investing in good-quality tools can save you time and frustration. Cheap tools might break or give poor results, leading to uneven cuts or improperly laid flooring.



EXPERT TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

Plan your layout carefully

Before you cut or place a single piece, map out your installation sequence. For planks or tiles, decide on your starting point and the direction in which you'll lay them. Think about how the lines will look in the finished room. Some find it helpful to do a "dry run" by positioning a few boards or tiles without adhesive to check the pattern or alignment.

- **Pro tip:** If the room is a regular rectangle, start along the longest straight wall. This helps keep your rows aligned. For irregular rooms, consider focusing on the most visible area first to ensure it looks even.

Work in manageable sections

It's tempting to spread glue across an entire floor, but adhesives can dry quickly. Work in smaller sections, laying flooring as you go. This ensures you don't feel rushed to stick everything down before the glue sets.

- **Pro tip:** For tiles, lay and set them a few rows at a time, then grout once the adhesive has cured. This way, you won't accidentally shift tiles while reaching across large areas.

Mind the climate

In certain parts of the southern hemisphere, the weather can change rapidly – hot summers, cooler winters, and possibly heavy rains. Materials like wood are sensitive to humidity swings. If you live in a region prone to sudden damp or dryness, invest in moisture-resistant variants or plan your installation during a more stable season.

- **Pro tip:** If possible, store your flooring materials in the room where they'll be installed for at least 48 hours (or follow the manufacturer's guidelines). This allows them to reach the same moisture level as the environment.

Focus on edges and transitions

Doorways, thresholds, and corners can be tricky. Plan how you'll handle these transitions early on, whether you need to trim the bottom of a door or install a threshold strip to transition smoothly from one type of flooring to another.

- **Pro tip:** Use transition strips made for the type of flooring you have. They not only make the shift between floors look professional but also reduce the chance of tripping.

Seal and protect

Whether you've chosen wood, tile, or another material, the final seal and protection step can extend its life significantly. Wooden floors may need periodic re-sealing to stay water-resistant, while grout can be sealed to keep out stains.

- **Pro tip:** For wooden floors, consider a good-quality polyurethane finish if you expect heavy foot traffic. Water-based sealants often dry faster and have less odour, but may not be as durable as oil-based finishes over time. Always follow drying times carefully before placing furniture back in the room.

Regular maintenance

Flooring is a long-term investment, so establish a simple cleaning and maintenance routine. For wood and laminate, keep water use to a minimum to prevent swelling. For tiles, sweep and mop regularly, and occasionally reseal grout lines. Carpets can benefit from deep cleaning once or twice a year to remove embedded dirt.

- **Pro tip:** Use felt pads under furniture legs to reduce scratches. Place doormats at entrances to catch dirt and moisture, prolonging the lifespan of your floors.

Consider your future plans

Maybe you're installing a floor for the long haul, or perhaps you plan to switch up the design later. If you're likely to renovate again, floating floors can be removed more easily than fully glued or nailed surfaces. On the other hand, if this is a permanent upgrade, a more labour-intensive approach might be worthwhile for maximum durability.

- **Pro tip:** Keep leftover planks, tiles, or carpet pieces in a dry place. They can come in handy for future repairs or if you decide to extend the same flooring into an adjacent area later.

Key takeaways

Selecting flooring for your home is about finding the perfect balance between style, comfort, and practicality. From the warm and classic appeal of hardwood to the modern convenience of luxury vinyl, each material serves a distinct purpose. The key is understanding your space, your budget, and your long-term needs. Ask yourself how much traffic the floor will endure, whether moisture is a concern, and what level of maintenance you're willing to undertake.

A well-chosen floor can make all the difference in how a room looks and feels. Beyond aesthetics, think carefully about the subfloor, the climate, and the tools you'll need to install the material correctly. Taking the time to prepare will pay off, ensuring your floor lasts for years without warping, staining, or wearing out prematurely. And let's not forget the finishing touches – edges, skirting boards, and transition strips – that give your project that polished, professional look.

Whether you're a seasoned DIY enthusiast or a newcomer eager to learn, remember that every challenge offers the chance to sharpen your skills. Mistakes may happen, but with the right advice, you can avoid many common pitfalls – like uneven subfloors, poor measurements, or the wrong adhesive choice. Don't rush the important steps, such as acclimatising wooden boards or allowing tile adhesive to cure. Pay attention to small details like sealing grout or cutting boards precisely.

The beauty of tackling your own flooring project is the immense satisfaction that comes when you finally step back and admire the finished result. Not only will you save money by doing it yourself, but you'll also gain a deeper appreciation for the craft and the effort behind a lasting, comfortable, and visually appealing floor.

As you wrap up your flooring adventure, remember to keep up with simple ongoing maintenance. Sweep or vacuum often to remove grit that can scratch the surface, and use gentle cleaners to preserve the finish. If needed, reseal

wooden floors or reapply grout sealant to tiles. Small efforts like these will keep your floor looking fresh and vibrant for many years.

So, gather your tools, plan your approach, and dive in with confidence. With careful planning and the right materials, you can create a floor that not only suits your home's style but also stands the test of time. Along the way, you'll pick up valuable DIY know-how – skills that can help you tackle future projects, large or small. Here's to a successful flooring upgrade that puts a new spring in your step every time you walk across it!

Common mistakes & how to avoid them

1. Skipping subfloor preparation

A bumpy or dirty subfloor can lead to issues like squeaking boards, cracked tiles, or peeling vinyl. Spend time levelling, cleaning, and ensuring moisture isn't a problem before you start.

2. Poor measurement

One of the biggest frustrations in flooring is cutting pieces the wrong size, then realising too late. Always measure multiple times—don't rely on rough estimates. Keep track of angles and corners, especially in older houses where walls may not be perfectly square.

3. Using the wrong adhesive or underlayment

Different floorings need different adhesives and underlayment materials. For instance, using a standard underlayment in a wet area can lead to mould or rot. Always read product labels or consult knowledgeable staff if you're unsure.

4. Rushing the acclimatisation process

Wooden products need time to adjust to the room's temperature and humidity. Skipping this can cause boards to expand or shrink after installation, leading to gaps or warping.

5. Incorrect grout application

When tiling, it's easy to apply grout too thickly or wipe it off too soon. This can leave you with weak joints or visible discolouration. Follow the recommended wait times and clean off excess grout carefully with a damp sponge.

6. Neglecting to leave expansion gaps

Wood and laminate floors expand and contract with weather changes. Failing to leave enough space along the edges can cause buckling. Use spacers as you lay the boards to ensure a neat, hidden gap near the walls.

7. Lack of finishing touches

Even the best-laid floor can look untidy if you skip the finishing details. Fitting skirting boards or edge trims not only improves the final appearance but can also protect the edges of your flooring from damage.

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Why pressure washers deserve the spotlight.

UNDER PRESSURE

When it comes to outdoor cleaning, pressure washers stand out as a highly efficient solution. They can remove layers of grime in a fraction of the time it would take with manual scrubbing and soapy water. Surfaces such as driveways, patios, cars, and even outdoor furniture can look almost new after a thorough wash. This impressive cleaning power comes from a focused jet of water that blasts away dirt. Instead of spending hours on your hands and knees, you can clean large areas swiftly and effectively.

However, the force that makes a pressure washer so valuable also requires careful handling. Without the right knowledge, you might damage surfaces, harm plants, or even injure yourself. Fortunately, learning how to choose the right machine and use it effectively isn't complicated. In this guide, we'll explore the essential features of pressure washers, the difference between various models, and techniques to help you get the best results. By the time you finish reading, you'll be ready to tackle everything from stained decking to muddy car wheels – safely, efficiently, and with confidence.

The basics: How pressure washers work

A pressure washer relies on a motor (electric or petrol) that powers a water pump. The pump takes in water from a hose or container and speeds it up, shooting it out through

a nozzle at high velocity. The intensity of the spray is measured in pounds per square inch (PSI) or, sometimes, bars. You might also see a measure called “litres per minute” or “gallons per minute,” which tells you the flow rate of the water. A balance of both pressure and flow rate determines how quickly and effectively the machine will clean.

Pressure (PSI or bar)

- Refers to how forceful the water jets out of the nozzle.
- Higher pressure helps blast off tough grime but can also damage delicate materials if not used carefully.

Flow rate (litres per minute or gallons per minute)

- Indicates the amount of water the machine can expel in a set period.
- A higher flow rate can rinse away debris more quickly but may also consume more water overall.

The key to successful pressure washing is matching the right combination of pressure and flow rate to the job at hand. Most people use electric pressure washers for light to medium tasks, while petrol-powered models, which tend to have higher pressure and flow rates, are preferred for bigger or more stubborn cleaning challenges.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TYPE OF PRESSURE WASHER

There are two main categories of pressure washers: electric and petrol. Within these, you'll find a wide range of power levels and additional features.

Electric pressure washers

These models are often a popular choice for homeowners. They're generally lighter, quieter, and easier to store. Ideal for cleaning cars, bicycles, garden furniture, and small patios, electric washers usually provide enough power for typical domestic tasks. They're also more eco-friendly in terms of emissions, as they don't burn fuel. However, you'll need access to a nearby electrical outlet and may have to manage an extension lead. Some mid-range electric models can tackle more demanding tasks like removing moss or lifting dirt from brickwork, but truly heavy-duty work may require petrol power.

Pros

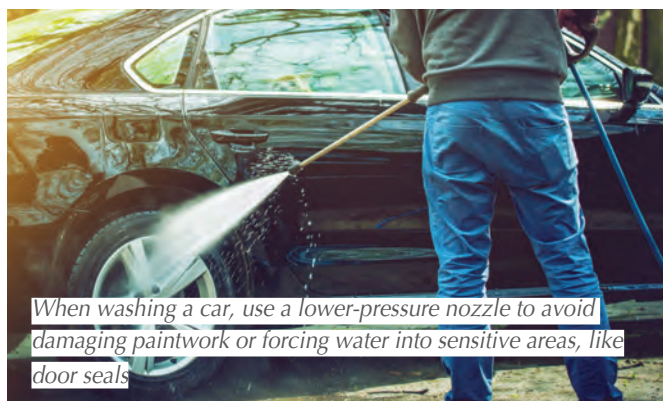
- Easier to maintain and operate (no dealing with fuel or spark plugs)
- Lighter, more compact, and quieter
- No fumes, so better for the environment
- Suitable for most routine household cleaning tasks

Cons

- Limited by the location of power points unless you use a longer cable or generator
- Typically lower pressure and flow rate compared to petrol models
- Less suitable for large-scale, commercial-level jobs

Petrol pressure washers

If you need extra power for deep-cleaning tasks such as large driveways, heavily stained decks, or building exteriors, petrol washers are worth a look. These machines don't rely on electrical connections, so they're easier to move around large properties or remote areas. However, they tend to be heavier and noisier, and they emit fumes, so ventilation is crucial if you're working near enclosed spaces.



When washing a car, use a lower-pressure nozzle to avoid damaging paintwork or forcing water into sensitive areas, like door seals

Pros

- Generally more powerful, with higher pressure and flow rate
- Greater mobility – no tether to a power outlet
- Suitable for large, heavily soiled areas and professional applications

Cons

- Heavier and bulkier, sometimes requiring a sturdy trolley or wheels for transport
- Regular maintenance needed for the engine (oil changes, spark plug replacements)
- Produces exhaust fumes and higher noise levels

Key features to look out for

Whether you're eyeing up an electric model for its convenience or a petrol one for its power, keep the following features in mind:

Adjustable or interchangeable nozzles: Different nozzles control the angle and intensity of the spray. A wide-angle nozzle covers a larger area with gentler pressure, while a narrow-angle nozzle delivers more focused cleaning power.

Detergent injection or detergent tank: Some pressure washers can draw cleaning solution from an onboard tank or a separate container. This feature helps loosen stubborn dirt or mould on surfaces like driveways and patios.

Hose length and cord length: The flexibility to move around without constantly shifting the machine is crucial. A longer hose or power cord provides better reach, though you don't want so much hose that you lose pressure efficiency.

Wheels and handles: If the unit is on the heavier side, look for sturdy wheels and a comfortable handle. This is especially important with petrol models, which can be quite weighty.

Auto stop/start: Many modern pressure washers include a system that stops the motor when you release the trigger. This not only saves wear on the pump but also helps reduce energy consumption.

Water filter or inlet filter: Keeping debris out of the pump is essential for long-term reliability. A built-in filter ensures the water entering your machine is as clean as possible.



PREPARATION AND SET-UP

A bit of preparation goes a long way to ensure that your pressure washing session runs smoothly:

Inspect the surface

- Check for cracks, loose paint, or other vulnerabilities. Pressure washing can worsen existing damage if you're not careful. Mark any spots that need a gentler approach or repairs before cleaning.

Clear the area

- Remove obstacles like garden furniture, potted plants, or children's toys. This prevents damage to your belongings and allows for more efficient cleaning.
- If you're washing a driveway or path, sweep away loose debris first.

Protect nearby structures

- If you're cleaning close to windows or doors, ensure they're securely shut. The high-pressure spray can push water through small gaps, leading to potential leaks.
- Cover any delicate flower beds or ornamental plants near the cleaning area, as the forceful spray can damage stems or leaves.

Read the manual

- Every pressure washer has specific instructions. Spend a few minutes reviewing the manual to understand recommended nozzles, maintenance advice, and start-up procedures. This step is particularly important for petrol models, which may need a certain fuel-oil mix or choke settings to start.

Techniques for effective cleaning

Pressure washing is as much about technique as it is about raw power. Master a few simple methods, and you'll get better results while reducing wear on both the machine and the surface.

Use a consistent, sweeping motion: Rather than focusing on one spot for too long, move the wand back and forth, overlapping each pass by a small margin. This approach ensures even cleaning and helps avoid leaving "striped" patterns.

Work from top to bottom: Whether it's a wall, fence, or car, start at the top and let gravity help you rinse away dirt and detergent. This technique also helps prevent streaking, as dirty water flows down over uncleaned areas.

Control your distance: Begin by standing slightly farther from the surface, and gradually move in if you need more

power. If you see surface damage starting to occur, step back. Each pressure washer's optimal distance varies, so test yours carefully.

Apply detergent or soap if needed: If you're dealing with particularly stubborn grime, a suitable cleaning solution can make your job easier. Ensure you're using a pressure washer-friendly detergent, and follow the instructions for mixing or applying. Let the soap soak for a few minutes before rinsing, but don't allow it to dry fully.

Rinse thoroughly: Any remaining detergent left on a surface might lead to streaks or residue, so take the time to rinse well. Switch to a wider-angle nozzle if you need to cover more area more quickly.

COMMON CLEANING TASKS AND ATTACHMENTS

Pressure washers aren't just for paths and patios. With the right attachments, they can handle a broad range of chores around the home:

Cars and vehicles

A brush or foam cannon attachment helps you create a thick lather over the paint, loosening dirt and grime. Use a lower-pressure nozzle to avoid damaging paintwork or forcing water into sensitive areas, like door seals.

Decking and wooden surfaces

Timber can be vulnerable to high pressure. Choose a wider spray tip and keep the wand moving. If you need to remove algae or mould, a gentle detergent designed for wood is helpful. A specialised "surface cleaner" attachment with a rotating set of nozzles can clean decking more evenly without gouging the wood.

Driveways and pavements

A high-pressure setting or a narrower nozzle might be necessary to shift stains like oil or moss from concrete or paving slabs. If you find dark spots that resist water alone, apply a biodegradable degreaser beforehand.



The key to successful pressure washing is matching the right combination of pressure and flow rate to the job at hand



A moderate pressure usually works best to clear dirt and mildew from fence panels and brick surfaces

Fences, walls, and brickwork

A moderate pressure usually works best to clear dirt and mildew from fence panels and brick surfaces. Avoid focusing on mortar lines directly, as too much force can dislodge mortar. A rotating nozzle, often called a “turbo nozzle,” can be highly effective for tough stains – but use caution to prevent damage.

Guttering and roof overhangs

Some manufacturers offer a curved extension wand that reaches gutters from ground level. It blasts out leaves and debris without requiring a ladder, which can be a safer option. However, be cautious with older gutters, as the force can sometimes dislodge or crack brittle sections.

MAINTENANCE AND STORAGE

A little upkeep helps your pressure washer last longer:

Flush out the system

After each use, run clean water through the pump to clear out detergent or residue. This step prevents blockages or corrosion, especially if you’ve used soapy or hard water.

Check filters

Regularly inspect the inlet filter or any additional strainers for grit that could damage the pump. Rinse them under running water if you spot dirt.

Inspect hoses and seals

Look for leaks, cracks, or worn-out O-rings. Replacing a faulty seal is far cheaper than repairing pump damage caused by a leak.

Store in a dry, frost-free area

Freezing temperatures can crack hoses or internal components if water is left inside. If you live in a region with cold winters, ensure the machine is drained and kept in a place where it won’t freeze.

Service petrol engines

If you use a petrol model, remember routine tasks like changing the oil, cleaning the air filter, and checking spark plugs. Stale fuel can also cause starting problems, so empty or treat the fuel tank if you’re storing the washer for an extended period.

TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON ISSUES

Like any machine, pressure washers can occasionally run into hitches. Here are a few typical problems and possible remedies:

Fluctuating or low pressure: Check for blockages in the nozzle or the inlet filter. A kinked hose can also reduce water flow. If you’re using a long extension hose, ensure it’s rated for high-pressure use.

Machine won’t start or keeps stalling: For an electric model, ensure the power supply is working and the extension lead isn’t too long. Petrol engines often refuse to start if the spark plug is dirty or the fuel is old.

Water leaks from the pump area: Inspect seals, O-rings, and connections. It may be as simple as a loose fitting or as involved as replacing internal seals. If in doubt, contact a service centre or follow the manufacturer’s guidance.

Overheating: Some washers shut down if they get too hot. Give the machine a rest, check the water supply temperature, and ensure you’re not running it continuously at maximum pressure for an extended time.

Excessive vibration: A slight vibration is normal with any pump, but strong, unusual shaking suggests something’s unbalanced. Check the fan, pump housing, and attachments for signs of wear or damage.

Environmental considerations

Using a pressure washer doesn’t have to conflict with eco-friendly practices. Keep these points in mind:

• Water usage

Although pressure washers look like they spray a lot of water, they often use less water than a standard garden hose doing the same job. The force of the spray means you can accomplish the task more quickly, reducing the total volume of water used.

• Detergents and run-off

Choose biodegradable soaps and cleaners when possible. Avoid chemicals that can harm lawns, plants, or local water sources if they flow into drains. If you’re working near a stormwater drain, try to block off or divert run-off so detergents don’t flow directly into natural waterways.

• Fuel management

If you’re using a petrol washer, store fuel properly to prevent spills or evaporation. Regularly check for leaks around the tank and engine, and never refuel a hot engine.

By balancing efficient cleaning with environmental awareness, you can keep your outdoor spaces looking great while minimising negative impacts on the planet.

Insulation and energy-saving tips: Stay cosy while reducing energy costs.

WINTER WARMTH



Winter often arrives quickly, and if your home isn't prepared, you might find yourself layering up on the sofa. By choosing effective insulation, sealing draughts, and making a few smart changes, you can stay warm without racking up high heating bills. Below, we explore practical ways to insulate your home, manage heat loss through windows and doors, and maintain proper ventilation so you can stay snug all season long.

Why insulation matters

When temperatures drop, warm air naturally tries to escape to cooler areas. Without enough insulation, heat slips away through roofs, walls, floors, and windows. By slowing that transfer, you allow your heating system to run more efficiently. Think of insulation as a protective shield for your interior, keeping warmth in and cold air out. The more thorough your approach – covering the attic, walls, and small gaps – the more comfortable your home will feel.

Starting with the ceiling space

Because warm air rises, the loft or ceiling space is often a key source of heat loss. Rolls of fibreglass or mineral wool placed between rafters create a barrier that stops heat from drifting upward. Wear gloves and a mask, as fibreglass can irritate skin and lungs. If you have recessed lights in the ceiling below, maintain safe clearances so heat doesn't build up around them.

Insulating walls and floors

Your choice of insulation depends on your home's design and your budget. Fibreglass batts are common but can be itchy to handle. Mineral wool is moisture-resistant, which is helpful in

damper climates. Foam boards are excellent beneath floors or against walls but can cost more initially. In older houses with timber floors, even a thick rug helps prevent chilly air from creeping up. Sometimes, a simple floor covering can mean the difference between constantly wearing slippers and walking comfortably in socks.

Sealing windows and doors

Windows and doors are classic weak points for retaining warmth. If double-glazing isn't feasible right now, window insulation film can cut heat loss. It's applied with double-sided tape, then tightened with a hairdryer. Weatherstripping around frames also helps, and a brush or rubber sweep beneath your exterior door blocks cold draughts. Small improvements like these can have an outsized impact on how cosy your rooms feel, especially at night.

Small steps for big gains

Often, tiny cracks and gaps let in more cold air than you'd suspect. Look around pipes under sinks or behind appliances, and seal any holes. A snug cover on your ceiling hatch prevents warmth escaping upstairs. Thick curtains or thermal blinds keep bedrooms and living areas cosy at night, while opening them by day lets in sunshine. If you use radiators, place reflective panels behind them so heat bounces back into the room.

Choosing efficient heating

No insulation plan works without a reliable heating system. Whether it's gas, electric, or a heat pump, keep it in good condition. A clogged filter or dusty vent makes the unit work harder. If you have radiators, bleed them occasionally

to remove trapped air that hinders heat distribution. A programmable thermostat lets you schedule heating times, so you're not warming empty rooms all day. Even shifting the temperature down by one degree can yield surprising savings over time.

Balancing warmth and fresh air

Sealing gaps traps heat, but you also need decent airflow to avoid condensation and mould. Extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms remove steam before it circulates. Briefly opening windows for a quick exchange of air helps as well. The aim is to retain heat while preventing damp, so keep an eye out for any musty odours or excessive condensation on glass.

Daily habits that help

Insulation does a lot of the heavy lifting, but small behavioural changes maintain a comfortable environment. Close off rooms you're not using, so heat stays where it's needed. Pull on a jumper or use a warm blanket rather than cranking up the thermostat whenever you feel a chill. Position furniture so it doesn't block heaters, and switch off unused appliances to trim your energy consumption overall.

Watch out for common oversights

People sometimes overlook small cracks around windowsills or fail to seal under skirting boards, allowing draughts to persist. Others focus on insulating the loft yet forget the loft hatch. Avoid packing insulation too tightly – many materials rely on air pockets to work well. Also, don't block vents needed by gas appliances, as that can lead to safety hazards. Taking a balanced, thoughtful approach leads to better long-term results.

Cost-effective solutions

If money is tight, start with low-cost fixes. Self-adhesive foam strips and door sweeps are cheap yet effective. Bubble wrap on windows might not be stylish, but it can reduce heat loss in a pinch. Thick curtains help a great deal, as do rugs over bare floors. As you save on heating bills, consider bigger insulation upgrades like underfloor insulation or better wall coverage.

Benefits beyond winter

Insulation pays off throughout the year. The same barriers that keep cold out in winter also help slow the entry of heat in

summer, reducing the need for air conditioning. An energy-efficient home has a smaller carbon footprint too, which benefits the environment. If you decide to sell later, potential buyers often appreciate well-insulated properties that promise lower running costs.

Using technology to manage your heating

In an increasingly connected world, technology can make staying warm much simpler. A smart thermostat, for example, allows you to schedule temperature changes and even adjust the heat from your phone. Some models learn your routine over time, automatically lowering the temperature when you leave for work and raising it just before you get home. This precision minimises wasted energy, since you're not keeping empty rooms heated all day. If you have multiple floors or separate living spaces, consider zoned systems that heat each area independently. Such an approach accommodates different comfort levels and reduces overall bills. Some homeowners also use smart plugs for portable heaters, shutting them off remotely or linking them to motion sensors. While these gadgets come with an upfront cost, the long-term savings can be substantial. By combining technology with proper insulation and daily habits, you create a comprehensive plan that keeps you cosy and your energy usage under control.

Bringing it all together

Making your home comfortable for winter doesn't require expensive overhauls. By insulating the loft, sealing gaps around windows and doors, choosing the right floor coverings, and keeping your heating system in top shape, you create a warmer living space with lower energy bills. Remember to allow just enough ventilation to avoid damp, and refine your daily habits by closing unused rooms and wearing warm clothing indoors. Step by step, these efforts add up to a snug, cost-effective solution you'll appreciate each time the weather turns cold.

In the end, insulating isn't just about comfort today – it's about a healthier, more sustainable home for the future. With relatively simple do-it-yourself measures and some basic know-how, you can transform a draughty house into a welcoming haven. Once you feel that steady warmth indoors, you'll see how good insulation, thoughtful heating use, and mindful ventilation work together to make winter both easier on your wallet and far more enjoyable.



Learn how to achieve smooth finishes with the right abrasives.

THE DAILY GRIND

Nothing elevates a project quite like a perfectly smooth finish. Whether you're painting a door, refinishing a piece of furniture, or restoring wooden floors, sanding is often the step that determines how professional the end result looks. Yet many DIY enthusiasts see sanding as a dull chore – just a matter of rubbing a surface until it feels “good enough.” In truth, there's more to sanding than meets the eye. Understanding abrasives, grit sizes, and technique can make a startling difference to your finished project, saving you time, energy, and potential frustration later. Below, we'll explore what makes sanding such a vital skill and how you can approach it with confidence.

The importance of sanding

A surface might appear clean at first glance, but it can still have bumps, dents, or residue that stops paint or varnish from adhering properly. Sanding smooths out these imperfections, allowing subsequent layers – such as primer, paint, stain, or sealer – to bond effectively. Imagine painting a wall covered in bumps and divots: the paint might hide some flaws, but the overall look still suffers. By taking time to sand properly, you create a solid foundation that ultimately leads to a neater, more durable finish. The effort you invest up front often pays off by reducing the need for repeated coats or fixes later.

Sanding also helps remove old finishes. For example, if you're revitalising a piece of wooden furniture with layers of chipped paint, sanding clears away the uneven patches so the new coat can shine. Beyond aesthetic concerns, a properly sanded surface often holds up better to wear and tear, because the new coating can grip onto the wood more effectively. In short, sanding is about more than appearances – it's about longevity and reliability, too.

GETTING TO KNOW ABRASIVES

Modern abrasives come in diverse materials and forms. Despite their variety, they all serve the same basic function: to wear down or smooth out a surface. Sandpaper is the most common option, though the term “sandpaper” can be misleading – actual sand isn't typically used these days. Instead, particles like aluminium oxide, silicon carbide, or garnet are bonded onto paper or cloth backings. Here's a quick introduction to some popular types:

- **Aluminium oxide:** Common in general-purpose sandpaper, especially suitable for sanding wood or removing old finishes. It's durable, can self-sharpen slightly during use, and is often seen in belts for belt sanders or discs for orbital sanders.
- **Silicon carbide:** A sharper, harder abrasive usually used on tough materials like metal, masonry, or ceramics. Its structure can handle more friction without breaking down too quickly, making it ideal for smoothing concrete or stone.
- **Garnet:** Favoured for finer woodworking and hand-sanding tasks. Although garnet wears out faster than aluminium oxide, it tends to produce a smoother finish, which is important if you're doing detail work on furniture or musical instruments.

Choosing the right abrasive often boils down to the task and the material you're working on. For a standard wooden furniture project, aluminium oxide or garnet sandpapers are popular. For metal or tile surfaces, consider silicon carbide. If in doubt, check the labels on abrasives at the hardware shop; they typically list recommended uses.

PREPPING YOUR WORKSPACE

Before diving in, set up a safe, organised workspace. Sanding generates dust, sometimes in substantial quantities, which you don't want to inhale or allow to settle in your home.

Ventilation

- Work outdoors if you can, or open windows and use fans to direct dust away.
- If you're working indoors, consider using a dust mask or respirator, especially with power tools.

Surface protection

- Lay down dust sheets or cardboard to catch debris and make clean-up easier.
- Remove or cover nearby items that might get coated in fine dust.

Personal safety

- Goggles or safety glasses keep grit out of your eyes.
- Protective gloves are optional but can help if you're dealing with rough materials or are concerned about splinters.
- Ear protection is wise for extended power-sanding sessions, as some tools can be quite loud.

Gather materials

- Have a range of sandpaper grits on hand so you can switch as needed.
- If you're using a power sander, ensure the discs or belts match the recommended size and attachment method.



TECHNIQUES FOR CONSISTENT RESULTS

Even with the right sandpaper and tools, technique matters. Here are some pointers to get the best outcome:

- **Keep a light, even pressure:** Pushing too hard can tear sandpaper, wear it out prematurely, or produce uneven results. Let the abrasive do the work. You only need to guide it; you don't need to force it.
- **Change grits progressively:** Jumping from coarse to super-fine in one step can leave intermediate scratches. Instead, work through the sequence methodically, wiping off dust between each grit change so you don't carry coarser particles onto your next stage.
- **Move with the grain (for wood):** Sanding diagonally or against the grain can leave scratches that become more visible once you apply a finish. Where possible, follow the natural direction of the wood.
- **Watch out for edges:** Edges sand faster than flat surfaces because pressure concentrates in a smaller area. A heavy-handed approach can quickly distort shapes or weaken corners, so check them frequently.
- **Test on a spare piece:** If you're unsure about how a certain grit or tool will affect your material, try it on a scrap piece first. This avoids unwanted gouges on your final piece.



OVERCOMING COMMON SANDING ISSUES

It's not unusual to run into hiccups along the way. Here's how to tackle a few typical problems:

Grit clogging

- Sandpaper can become clogged with paint or resin, which reduces its effectiveness.
- Try using a specialised “non-clogging” abrasive or occasionally knock debris out of the paper.
- If you're sanding resinous woods like pine, switching to a coarser grit or a paper specifically designed for that purpose may help.

Uneven sanding

- Frequent dusting or vacuuming helps you see the surface clearly.
- If you notice high or low spots, adjust your technique—perhaps switching to a sanding block or adopting lighter pressure.

Swirl marks

- Common with random-orbit sanders when the pad keeps turning in one spot, or if the abrasive disc is worn out.
- Keep the sander moving in slow, overlapping motions, and replace discs at the first sign of wear.
- Soft pads can help reduce swirl marks.

Burn marks

- Excessive friction on hardwoods or pressing too hard can heat the surface, leaving scorch marks.
- Use a fresh sheet of sandpaper, lighten up on pressure, and allow better cooling airflow.
- Moving to a coarser grit may help remove material faster with less heat build-up.



Deciding when to stop

One of the trickiest parts of sanding is knowing when you've done enough. If you're going for a painted finish, you want the surface free of major scratches or dings, but you don't need it polished to perfection. Conversely, if you plan to stain or apply clear varnish on a tabletop, every small scratch may show. A good rule of thumb is to wipe the surface with a damp cloth (or use mineral spirits on bare wood) to highlight any flaws or scratches that remain. If they're still visible once it dries, keep sanding with the same grit until they're gone. Then you can move up to the next grit level.

Post-sanding clean-up

Once you're satisfied with the smoothness, it's time to prepare for finishing:

- **Vacuum or brush:** Remove the bulk of the dust with a vacuum or a soft brush. Make sure you clear corners and crevices thoroughly.
- **Tack cloth:** A tack cloth (a slightly sticky cloth) or a microfibre cloth can pick up any fine dust that remains. This is especially important before painting or varnishing, as stray dust can mar the final coat.
- **Inspect once more:** Look over the surface for any missed imperfections. At this stage, a minor return to sanding is easier than realising the error after you've started painting.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR SANDING TOOLS

To get the most out of your sandpaper and machines, a little maintenance goes a long way:

- **Store sandpaper flat:** Keep sheets in a dry place, out of direct sunlight. Bent or damp paper won't lie smoothly on the tool or block.
- **Clean sanding pads:** If you're using a power sander, clear away dust from the hook-and-loop pad. Clogged pads reduce grip and can cause discs to fly off mid-use.
- **Replace consumables:** Dull, overused abrasives can't do their job effectively. Check your discs or sheets regularly—when they lose their bite, swap them out.
- **Lubricate moving parts:** For orbital sanders or belt sanders, follow manufacturer guidelines for lubrication and part replacement to keep them running smoothly.



Your goal: sanding success

Although it can be dusty and repetitive, sanding lays the groundwork for professional-looking results. The right abrasive choice, methodical grit progression, and a patient, consistent technique can transform uneven surfaces into flawless ones. Whether you're renovating a treasured family heirloom or simply giving your front door a fresh coat of paint, well-executed sanding is the key that unlocks a high-quality finish.

Remember to approach each project with the surface's unique characteristics in mind. Different woods, metals, or plastics need slightly different methods, and your choice of abrasive will vary accordingly. Keep safety a priority: if you must sand

older painted surfaces, especially those that might contain lead, consult local regulations or experts for proper disposal and protection.

With careful attention to detail and respect for the process, you'll soon discover that sanding isn't just busywork – it's an artful step that brings out the best in any material you're working with.



UNDERSTANDING GRIT SIZES

Alongside abrasive type, grit size is crucial in determining how aggressive the sandpaper will be. Grit numbers tell you roughly how many abrasive particles fit within a specific area. A lower grit (e.g., 40 or 60) means fewer, larger particles that remove material quickly. A higher grit (e.g., 220 or 320) means smaller, more numerous particles that refine surfaces to a smoother finish.

Coarse grits (40–60)	These rapidly strip away old paint or smooth down very rough surfaces. However, they can leave noticeable scratches, so they're typically followed by higher grits.
Medium grits (80–120)	Great for general sanding tasks, such as lightly smoothing hardwood or prepping surfaces for paint. They can still remove material effectively but won't mar the wood as much as coarse grits.
Fine grits (150–220)	Used for final smoothing before finishing coats. They help create a surface that's uniform to the touch, suitable for paint, stain, or varnish.
Very fine grits (240–400+)	Often deployed between coats of finish or for delicate tasks. They produce a nearly polished result on wood, metal, or plastic, though they remove material slowly.

A typical sanding job on a wooden item might progress through two or three grit levels. For instance, you might start with an 80-grit paper to remove imperfections, move to 120 for smoothing, and finish with 180 or 220 before applying a finish. Some people go even finer on surfaces that need an ultra-smooth touch, like a tabletop or wooden toy.

HAND VS. MACHINE SANDING

There's a place for both hand-sanding and power-sanding, and each has its pros and cons.

Hand-sanding	Power-sanding
• Ideal for smaller projects or curved edges and corners that machines struggle to reach without over-sanding. • Offers more control and precision, particularly on fragile surfaces. • Takes longer and can be physically tiring if the area is large.	• Tools like orbital sanders or belt sanders excel at covering large areas quickly. • Useful for removing old finishes or smoothing out rough wood. • Can accidentally gouge surfaces if you press too hard or linger too long in one spot. • Requires dust extraction (often built-in or attached to a vacuum) for a cleaner work environment.

If you're new to power tools, start with a random-orbit sander. Its motion helps reduce swirl marks, and it's fairly user-friendly. Always pay attention to how much pressure you apply, and keep the sander moving instead of focusing on one area. Many sanding mishaps happen when a user leans into the machine or stays in a single spot, which can dig into the wood.



Maintaining your home's first line of defence – Inspecting and repairing roofing issues.

TOP PRIORITY

A roof plays one of the most crucial roles in any property, protecting you and your home from the elements. Yet, many homeowners overlook regular roof checks, assuming that if it looks fine from the ground, there's nothing to worry about. In reality, roofs endure constant exposure to the weather and can deteriorate over time. Spotting early signs of damage and carrying out timely repairs can help extend its lifespan and prevent costly replacements. This guide explores essential inspection methods, common roofing problems, and straightforward fixes to keep your roof in top condition.

Why roof maintenance matters

Your roof takes the brunt of wind, rain, and temperature shifts. Over time, sunlight weakens roofing materials, moisture seeps under tiles, and storms may loosen sections. If left unchecked, water can infiltrate the structure, leading to damaged insulation, rotting rafters, and even electrical issues. In severe cases, leaks can result in mould growth, which compromises both structural integrity and indoor air quality.

A well-maintained roof not only prevents these problems but also adds value to your property. Potential buyers see a sound roof as a major advantage, knowing they won't have to deal with immediate repairs. In the long run, routine roof care provides both financial and practical benefits.

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT ROOF TYPES

Roofs come in various shapes and materials, each with different strengths and vulnerabilities:

Pitched roofs

- Typically covered in tiles (ceramic, concrete, or slate) or shingles.
- Easier to spot missing or cracked tiles.
- Benefit from good drainage, although steep angles can make DIY checks more challenging.

Foot traffic

- Often constructed with felt, rubber membranes, or fibreglass layers.
- More susceptible to standing water, which leads to leaks if the surface is not well-sealed.
- Require clear drainage outlets to prevent pooling.

Metal roofs

- Lightweight and durable, but subject to corrosion if protective coatings wear off.
- Can be noisy during heavy rain or hail.
- Relatively easy to spot rust patches and other signs of wear.

Understanding what kind of roof you have helps you choose the best inspection techniques, tools, and repair materials. Always consult your roof's specific guidelines for safe working loads or recommended repair products.

How to inspect your roof

A thorough inspection should include both interior and exterior checks. Inside, head to the loft or attic on a bright

day, turn off the lights, and look for beams of sunlight breaking through cracks. Damp patches, water stains, or mould indicate leaks or condensation issues, while sagging timbers may suggest structural weaknesses.

Outside, examine the roof from different angles using binoculars to spot cracked or missing tiles. Look for dips in the roofline, which could indicate rotten decking. Pay special attention to areas around chimneys, vents, and skylights where flashing might have loosened. If you have a flat roof, check for pooling water, cracks, or damaged seams. Gutters should be clear and properly attached to prevent water from backing up under the roof edge.

Common roof problems and their causes

Roofs are exposed to a variety of issues, including damaged or missing tiles, leaks from failed flashing, and moss or algae growth. High winds and storms can loosen tiles, while freezing and thawing cycles weaken them over time. Clogged gutters force water to back up, causing leaks, and excess moisture trapped by moss accelerates wear. Structural sagging may be caused by long-term water damage or excessive weight from debris or snow. Poor ventilation can also lead to mould growth in the attic, impacting the entire roofing system.

DIY repairs you can handle

Some roofing repairs are straightforward and manageable with basic DIY skills. A broken tile can be replaced by carefully lifting overlapping tiles and sliding a new one into place. Loose flashing around chimneys or vents should be cleaned, reattached, and sealed for a watertight bond. Small cracks in flat roofs can be patched using roofing compound. Moss removal requires a stiff brush or low-pressure hose to avoid damaging tiles. Gutters should be regularly cleared to maintain proper drainage.

When to call a professional

While many minor repairs are manageable, some issues demand professional attention. Extensive water damage, major tile loss, and structural problems require expertise to ensure safety and long-term stability. If you suspect asbestos in older roofing materials, specialist handling is essential. Large-scale flat roof replacements also require skilled installation to prevent future leaks. Investing in professional services can prevent small issues from escalating into costly repairs.

Balancing appearance and function

A well-maintained roof enhances a home's visual appeal while providing essential protection. Choosing materials suited to your climate – such as UV-resistant tiles for hot areas or moisture-resistant options for wet climates – can

improve performance. For older homes, sourcing matching replacement tiles helps retain the property's character. Professional cleaning can remove algae and restore the roof's original look without causing damage.

Final thoughts

Your roof is your home's first line of defence against the elements. Regular inspections, prompt repairs, and consistent maintenance help prevent costly damage while ensuring long-term protection. Many minor fixes can be handled with DIY skills, but knowing when to call a professional is equally important. Staying proactive with roof care will keep your home secure, dry, and looking its best for years to come.

Maintenance tips for long-lasting protection

Just like any other part of your home, your roof thrives under consistent, mindful care. The following pointers help preserve roofing integrity for years to come:

Schedule regular checks

- Inspect your roof at least twice a year – ideally during spring and autumn.
- Perform extra checks after severe weather, when damage can be more likely.

Improve attic ventilation

- Keep vents clear of cobwebs and insulation.
- Consider adding roof vents or soffit vents if you notice persistent heat and moisture build-up.

Trim overhanging branches

- Tree limbs can scrape against tiles in high winds, or fall and damage the roof.
- Minimising debris from nearby trees also reduces gutter clogs and moss formation.

Clear leaves and debris

- Don't let piles of leaves or branches collect. They trap moisture and invite pests.
- Clean gutters regularly, especially if you live in an area with many trees.

Maintain proper drainage

- Ensure downpipes direct water well away from the foundation.
- Pooling water near the base of your home can undermine walls and eventually affect the roof structure.

Use suitable repair materials

- Mismatched tiles or poor-quality sealants can fail prematurely.
- Stick to products recommended by roofing professionals or the tile manufacturer.

Learn how to fix common plumbing issues like leaks, clogs, and pressure problems.

PLUMBING BASICS

A sound plumbing system is essential for a comfortable home. From delivering clean water for cooking and drinking to disposing of wastewater efficiently, plumbing underpins many daily routines. When things go wrong, however – be it a minor leak, a clogged pipe, or erratic water pressure – most of us notice the impact immediately. Hiring a professional plumber is perfectly valid for complex or large-scale issues, but having a grasp of basic repairs can save both time and money.

This guide focuses on three common trouble spots: leaks, blockages, and pressure problems. You'll learn how to diagnose issues, gather the correct tools, and follow simple steps to get your water flow back on track. By the end, you should have the confidence to take on basic plumbing tasks, understanding when it's fine to DIY and when it's best to call in an expert.

PLUMBING FUNDAMENTALS

Understanding your home's plumbing layout

Before diving into fixes, it's helpful to know how water circulates through your house. Generally, a main supply pipe brings fresh water into the home; from there, smaller pipes route it to taps, toilets, and appliances like washing machines or dishwashers. Meanwhile, drainpipes carry wastewater away to a sewer system or septic tank. Gravity assists drainage, but air vents keep water flowing smoothly by maintaining pressure balance in the pipes.

- **Shut-off valves:** These are crucial. A valve near your water metre (often outside in a small box, or in a cupboard indoors) lets you turn off the main water supply if a big leak occurs. Individual fixtures – sinks or toilets – often have their own shut-off valves called isolation valves. Familiarise yourself with where these are located so you can act quickly if you need to stop water flow.

- **Geyser:** Most homes have a central unit – electric or gas-fired – that heats water stored in a cylinder. A leak here may affect your entire hot water supply. Knowing how to turn off the heater or isolate it can be useful for certain repairs.

Basic tools for DIY plumbing

Having the right tools and supplies ensures you're prepared for typical problems. Consider keeping the following on hand:

- **Adjustable spanner (or adjustable wrench):** Ideal for tightening or loosening various-sized nuts.
- **Pipe wrench:** Heavier and serrated, it offers extra grip for metal piping.
- **Plunger:** A standard cup plunger works for sinks, whereas a flange plunger is designed for toilets.
- **Plumber's tape (PTFE tape):** Wrapped around threads to create a watertight seal.
- **Plumber's putty or silicone sealant:** Helps form watertight seals around fixtures.
- **Pipe cutters or hacksaw:** Useful for cutting through metal or plastic pipes.
- **Basin wrench:** Handy for tightening or loosening nuts in cramped spaces, such as under sinks.
- **Auger (drain snake):** Helps clear deeper clogs that a plunger can't budge.
- **Bucket, rags, and gloves:** For safety and clean-up.

Safety measures

Plumbing might not seem as hazardous as electrical work, but caution is still essential:

- **Turn off the water:** Whenever you're unsure or working on a fixture, shut off the relevant valve.
- **Protect your eyes:** Debris can fly out unexpectedly if you're cutting pipe or removing clogs.

- **Watch for geyser risks:** If you're working near the cylinder, be mindful of hot pipes and scalding water.
- **Check for electrical hazards:** Water and electricity can be a dangerous mix. Be especially vigilant in areas near outlets or switches.

DEALING WITH LEAKS

Leaking water can drive up bills, promote mould growth, and cause structural damage. Identifying and fixing small leaks early saves considerable trouble later. Below are the most common leak scenarios and straightforward ways to address them.

A. Pinhole or small pipe leaks

Diagnosis and preparation

- Look for rusted or corroded spots on copper or steel pipes.
- Sometimes you'll see a fine spray of water or a small bead forming around the pipe.
- Turn off the water supply to that section of the pipe or the main shut-off if necessary.

Step-by-step repair using epoxy putty or pipe repair tape

1. **Drain the pipe:** Open nearby taps to release pressure and let standing water flow out.
2. **Clean the area:** Wipe away any dirt or moisture. Roughen the pipe surface with sandpaper for better adhesion.
3. **Mix epoxy (if using):** Follow the product instructions – usually you'll knead or blend two parts to form a uniform colour.
4. **Apply to the leak:** Mould the epoxy over the hole, extending beyond the damaged area for a solid seal. If using pipe repair tape, wrap it tightly around the leak several times.
5. **Smooth and shape:** Use your fingers to remove air pockets and shape the epoxy.
6. **Wait to cure:** Give it time to set – anywhere from 5 minutes to a full day, depending on the product.
7. **Restore the water:** Turn the supply back on and inspect for further leaks.

When to replace the pipe

- If the pipe is old and the leak is part of widespread corrosion, consider replacing that section entirely.
- Persistent, repeated leaks signal that a professional assessment may be needed.

B. Leaking taps

Diagnosis and preparation

- A dripping tap wastes water and can be caused by a worn-out washer, cartridge, or O-ring.

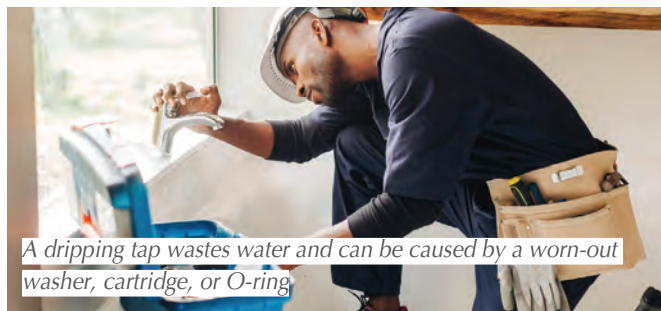
- Turn off the water supply to the tap (usually an isolation valve under the sink) or the main supply if no dedicated valve exists.

Step-by-step guide for a compression-style tap

1. **Disassemble the tap:** Remove the decorative cap and unscrew the handle, exposing the valve stem.
2. **Loosen the packing nut:** Use an adjustable spanner.
3. **Check the washer:** At the bottom of the valve stem is a rubber washer. If it's cracked, flattened, or missing, it's likely the culprit.
4. **Replace the washer:** Fit a new washer of the same size. This is often a cheap, easy fix.
5. **Reassemble:** Re-tighten the packing nut, reposition the handle, and screw it back together.
6. **Test:** Turn the water back on, and check if the drip has stopped.

Cartridge and ceramic disc taps

- These may need a new cartridge or ceramic disc rather than a rubber washer.
- The process is similar: turn off water, disassemble the tap, remove the old component, and install a matching replacement.
- Always take the old cartridge to the shop to find an identical model.



C. Toilet leaks

Diagnosis

- Water pooling around the base might indicate a seal or flange issue.
- Constant water running into the bowl suggests a faulty fill valve or flapper.
- Check the cistern (tank) for cracks, especially if the toilet is older.

Step-by-step guide for a running toilet

1. **Remove the cistern lid:** Look for water flowing into the overflow tube.
2. **Check the flapper:** If it's warped or no longer sealing well, replace it.

3. **Adjust the float:** If the float is set too high, water spills into the overflow tube. Bend the float arm or adjust the float's setting.
4. **Inspect the fill valve:** If adjusting the float doesn't help, the fill valve might be broken or clogged. A universal replacement can usually be fitted.
5. **Turn water on:** After each adjustment or part replacement, let the tank refill and confirm whether the running stops.

Addressing leaks at the base

- The wax ring (or rubber seal) under the toilet might need replacing.
- This can be more involved: shut off water, empty the cistern, disconnect the supply line, unbolt the toilet from the floor, and lift it carefully.
- Remove the old ring, clean the flange, and place a new ring. Re-seat the toilet, tighten bolts, and test.

TACKLING CLOGS

Clogs disrupt daily routines, whether they're in the kitchen sink, bathroom basin, or toilet. While some blockages can be stubborn, many can be cleared with simple tools and methods.

A. Kitchen sink clogs

Common causes

- Grease, fat, or oil that solidifies in the pipes.
- Food scraps or coffee grounds accumulating over time.
- Improperly installed waste disposal units, if applicable.

Step-by-step guide for unclogging

1. **Boiling water flush:** Start with something simple – pour a kettle of boiling water into the drain to dissolve minor grease build-ups.
2. **Use a plunger:** Block the overflow opening (if present) with a damp cloth. Position the plunger over the drain and press down, then pull up sharply, maintaining the seal. Repeat several times. You may feel the clog shift or see water drain away.
3. **Check the U-bend (P-trap):** Place a bucket under the trap. Unscrew the trap carefully, letting the water and debris fall into the bucket. Clear out any gunk, then reinstall and test.
4. **Use a drain snake (auger):** If the clog persists further along the pipe, feed the auger into the drain and rotate clockwise. Gently push it forward until you feel resistance, then crank the handle to break up or hook the clog. Withdraw the auger, cleaning off debris.
5. **Rinse thoroughly:** Run hot water to check if the blockage is cleared. If still blocked, repeat or consider a chemical drain cleaner as a last resort (always follow safety instructions).

B. Bathroom sink or shower clogs

Hair and soap scum

- These are the most frequent culprits in bathroom drains.
- Fitting a drain cover to catch hair can prevent frequent blockages.

Step-by-step guide using a plunger or drain snake

1. **Remove visible hair:** Use a bent wire or a hair catcher tool to pull out what you can see.
2. **Plunge:** Fill the basin or shower tray with a small amount of water to cover the plunger's rim. Plunge vigorously.
3. **Snake if needed:** Insert a small auger if the plunger doesn't work. In showers, you might need to remove the drain cover first.
4. **Flush with hot water:** Confirm the clog has cleared. If it's a bath or shower, watch to ensure water drains without pooling.

C. Toilet clogs

Common reasons

- Excess toilet paper, foreign objects, or a slow drainage system.
- Low-flow toilets sometimes struggle to clear waste if not used properly.

Step-by-step unclogging

1. **Choose the right plunger:** A flange plunger creates a tighter seal in the toilet bowl.
2. **Position the plunger:** Ensure the flange extends into the drain opening.
3. **Press down gently:** Doing so too hard might splash water out.
4. **Pull up quickly:** The goal is to create a push-pull action that dislodges the clog.
5. **Repeat:** It may take several attempts to free the obstruction.
6. **Check water level:** If water drains away slowly, keep plunging. If it disappears fully, flush to see if the problem is resolved.
7. **Auger alternative:** A toilet auger has a curved end to navigate the bowl shape. Insert it carefully, twist the handle, and push gently until you find resistance, then rotate to break up the blockage.

SOLVING WATER PRESSURE PROBLEMS

Irregular or weak water pressure can hamper showers, slow down washing dishes, and generally make daily tasks frustrating. Meanwhile, excessively high pressure risks pipe damage and leaks. Let's look at some common pressure issues and how to address them.



A. Diagnosing low pressure

Check multiple fixtures

- If one tap has low pressure, the aerator might be clogged. If all fixtures have low pressure, the issue might be more widespread.
- Try both hot and cold taps. If only hot is weak, the geyser or its inlet valve might be restricted.

Inspect the stopcock and isolation valves

- Sometimes, partially closed valves near the main supply reduce flow. Ensure they're fully open.

Examine water softeners or filters

- If you have a water treatment system, a clogged filter can reduce pressure drastically.

B. Step-by-step for boosting low pressure

Clean tap aerators

1. **Unscrew the aerator:** Use a soft cloth to protect its finish and a pair of pliers if it's stuck.
2. **Remove debris:** You might see small bits of mineral scale. Scrub gently with an old toothbrush.
3. **Soak in vinegar:** If there's heavy scale, leave the aerator in a bowl of white vinegar for an hour or two.
4. **Rinse and reinstall:** Check if flow improves.

Flush the geyser

- Over time, sediment collects at the bottom of the cylinder, slowing water flow.
- Turn off power or gas, connect a hose to the drain valve, and run it into a safe drainage area.
- Open the valve and let the water (and sediment) drain until it runs clear.
- Refill and power on the heater, then test for improved pressure.

Consider a pressure booster pump

- If your local mains supply is simply low, installing a booster pump might be the best long-term fix.
- This is more advanced; consult a professional if you're unsure.

C. Addressing high pressure

Signs of high pressure

- Banging or rattling pipes ("water hammer").
- Frequent leaks or dripping taps.
- Appliances like washing machines wearing out quickly.

Step-by-step installation of a pressure-reducing valve (PRV)

1. **Locate the main water line:** Typically near the stopcock.
2. **Shut off water:** Turn off at the mains and open a tap to relieve pressure.
3. **Cut the pipe:** Measure and mark where you'll install the PRV, then cut carefully with a pipe cutter.
4. **Fit the valve:** Position the valve with the arrow pointing in the direction of water flow.
5. **Use PTFE tape:** Wrap threads if needed for a tight seal.
6. **Secure the valve:** Tighten compression fittings or solder connections, depending on your pipe type.
7. **Turn water on:** Adjust the PRV using its screw or knob until you reach the desired pressure level.

Extra maintenance tips and preventative measures

Regular inspections

- **Visual checks:** Walk around your home periodically, looking at exposed pipes in cupboards, basements, or lofts. Catching early signs of corrosion or damp patches can prevent severe damage.
- **Listen for unusual sounds:** Gurgling drains or banging pipes can signal impending issues.

Seasonal precautions

- **In colder climates:** Insulate pipes prone to freezing. A frozen pipe can burst, leading to significant flooding.
- **In warm weather:** Check outdoor taps and irrigation systems for leaks, as dryness can cause soil movement around pipes.

Drain care

- **Avoid pouring grease:** Cooking fat solidifies in pipes, a major cause of clogs. Let grease cool, then discard it in a bin.
- **Use strainers:** Place strainers or mesh covers over drains to catch food scraps and hair, especially in kitchen sinks and showers.

Water softeners and filters

- **Descaling:** Hard water leads to mineral build-up that can clog valves and fixtures. If your area has very hard water, consider a water softener or regularly descale appliances.
- **Filter changes:** If you install an under-sink filter or a whole-house filtration unit, replace or clean the cartridge as recommended.

Appliance upkeep

- **Washing machine hoses:** These hoses can wear out and burst. Inspect them yearly and replace if signs of bulging or cracking appear.
- **Dishwasher connections:** A small drip at the dishwasher inlet can remain unnoticed until significant damage has occurred. Check for moisture under kitchen cabinets.

NEWS

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Local design stars shine in Manchester

Pieces by top South African designers, part of the Nando's Hot Young Designer (HYD) programme, were recently showcased in Manchester, UK, at the Nando's UK Indaba – a knowledge-sharing event for the group. Curated by Tracy Lynch of Clout/SA, the display featured work by HYD alumni including Thabisa Mjo, Kalki Design Studio, and Khosi Letaba in collaboration with Wiid Design.

"Our designers' patterns are now featured globally, and they earn licence fees every time a design is used – creating long-term income," said Lynch. A new fabric collection based on these patterns is also launching for use in restaurants worldwide.

Lynch visited various Nando's UK restaurants and offices during her trip, many of which feature South African pieces discovered through the HYD programme. Over the years, HYD has helped launch many creative careers, and Clout/SA continues to grow a global platform for local design.

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



Saint-Gobain Africa's new vision for growth



Saint-Gobain Africa has reaffirmed its commitment to the continent with its new Make it in Africa to Build Africa (MABA) initiative. The programme promotes local production, sustainable practices, and skills development to empower communities and meet Africa's construction needs.

Key pillars include sustainability – with the launch of the FutuRE range of environmentally-friendly building products – and local production, such as the new fibre cement plant opening in South Africa later this year, which will create over 60 permanent jobs.

MABA also supports talent through training programmes and collaborations with local partners. "It's about building Africa with African hands," said CEO Othman Benjelloun-Touimi. The initiative aims to unite stakeholders and set new standards for responsible growth across the continent.

For more information, visit www.saint-gobain-africa.com

Southern Africa's top timber trade expo set for June

Southern Africa's leading timber trade exhibition, WoodEX for Africa, returns to the Gallagher Convention Centre from 18-20 June 2025 with an even bigger offering for the wood and woodworking machinery industry.

Building on the success of the 2024 sold-out event, WoodEX continues to be a vital business platform where local and international professionals come together to explore new products, connect with suppliers, and close deals. Visitors can expect cutting-edge CNC machines, power tools, timber boards, sawmilling tech, coatings, and a wide range of fittings, finishes, and materials.

Stephan Jooste, Founder and Show Director, says: "WoodEX for Africa has grown into a key driver of industry collaboration. We're proud to welcome back loyal exhibitors and continue building a strong future for the timber sector."

The event once again partners with Big 5 Construct South Africa, offering even more networking and business opportunities across related industries. With attendees from



over 30 countries, WoodEX remains the premier platform to access Southern African markets.

Register now for free entry and secure your spot from 18-20 June 2025 at Gallagher Convention Centre, Johannesburg.

For more information, visit www.woodexforafrica.com

Tradition meets innovation in SA furniture success

RA Woodcraft, a member of the South African Furniture Initiative (SAFI), is making waves with high-quality joinery and furniture that blend traditional skills with modern techniques. Founded by joinery expert Rudolf Zuidema, the business is gaining international attention, recently shipping samples to Australia.

"We're about more than furniture – we're about passing on skills and building a legacy," says Rudolf. Together with co-director Jana Zuidema, the team supports artisan development through programmes like Sihlalo, which empowers women in woodworking by offering hands-on training.

Sustainability is key to their mission, using eco-friendly materials and donating sawdust for mushroom farming. With support from SAFI, RA Woodcraft is proving that local craftsmanship can compete on the global stage.

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



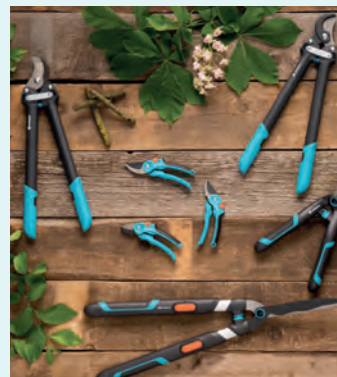
The right tools for strong plant growth

As the gardening season ends, it's the perfect time to prune hedges, trees, and shrubs to boost growth and flowering. But clean cuts are essential to prevent rot and disease – and that's where high-quality tools come in.

Gardena secateurs feature precision-ground blades, adjustable grips, and wrist-protecting buffers, with cut sizes ranging from 18-24mm. For thicker branches and overgrowth, Gardena loppers and hedge clippers offer extra reach, with models suited for green or dead wood. Their SlimCut Pruning Lopper even adapts gear ratios to suit branch thickness.

Pruned branches can be repurposed to help wildlife or improve compost. With a 25-year warranty, Gardena tools offer reliability and performance season after season.

For more information, visit www.gardena.com/za



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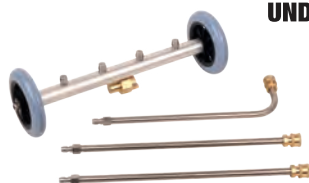


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DIY mistakes that made us laugh (and learn)

When it comes to DIY, mistakes can be as inevitable as bent nails. Yet, it's these little blunders that teach us some of our most valuable lessons. Here's a light-hearted look at five memorable mishaps that might make you chuckle – along with tips to ensure your own projects stay (mostly) on track.

The measuring meltdown

Perhaps you've heard the golden rule: measure twice, cut once. Well, it's a lesson someone learned the hard way when they built custom shelves that were too wide to fit through the doorway. After hours of careful assembly and sanding, the finished shelves ended up wedged at an awkward angle, forcing a dismantle-and-reassemble job in the passage.

Lesson learned: Always double-check every measurement – and consider the space you'll be manoeuvring through. It might be tempting to save time by cutting first, but a moment's patience can spare you plenty of headaches (and accidental doorframe damage).

The paint-fumes fiasco

A reader once shared how they painted their garage interior on a damp, muggy day. Convinced that fresh air would rush in naturally, they left only one window partially open. The resulting paint fumes were almost unbearable. To make matters worse, they neglected to test the colour on the wall first. The shade looked great on the tin, but, when fully dried, it cast a dull, greenish tint over everything.

Lesson learned: Always ensure proper ventilation, especially if the weather won't allow doors or windows to be fully open. Better still, wait for a clear day to paint, and test a small patch first to confirm the shade is what you expect.

The inscrutable instructions

Ever tried assembling flat-pack furniture without carefully reading the instructions? One enthusiastic DIY'er thought they could rely on sheer intuition. Midway through, they realised certain pieces were backwards and holes didn't line up. The final product wobbled like a three-legged table on uneven ground.

Lesson learned: Spare yourself frustration by reading the guidelines closely. Even if the instructions appear simplistic, they might save you from extra drilling, unhelpful guesswork, and a near-impossible puzzle halfway through the job.

The over-confident colour coordination

In a burst of creativity, a DIY decorator decided to paint each wall in their living room a different bright colour, thinking it would look "exciting". The result was more eye-watering than eye-catching, clashing so badly that even the cat seemed confused. Friends were polite but couldn't help giggling at the kaleidoscope effect.

Lesson learned: Be bold with your style, but always test your palette. Try small swatches side by side before committing. Colours can intensify when put together, so visualising them in the actual space is a must. If you love bright hues, consider choosing one wall as a statement, or incorporate those tones with accessories and accents instead.

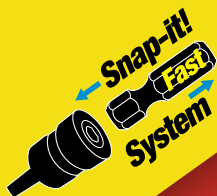
DIY can be full of surprises, and not all of them go as planned. Laughing off the odd slip-up keeps us going, and, most importantly, reminds us to approach each new project with a sense of adventure. May these tales help you steer clear of similar pitfalls – and give you confidence that even the most spectacular mishaps can turn into valuable lessons. After all, who said learning shouldn't be fun?

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