

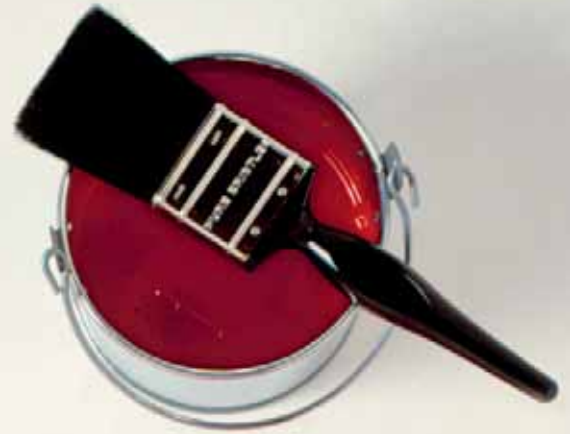
Save money on home repairs

IN BRIEF

In this report we help you to:

- pinpoint the household jobs that you can do yourself
- compare the cost of doing it yourself against professional prices.

Whether you're in your dream home or sitting tight until the market improves, there are some jobs you shouldn't neglect. Find out how much you'd save by doing them yourself



If you're concerned about getting a professional in to carry out maintenance work on your home, don't worry – doing it yourself may be easier than you think, and the money you'll save can make it worthwhile.

We've asked DIY expert Tommy Walsh for his advice on home maintenance, and he has selected eight jobs that will keep your home in good shape, not to mention more secure and energy efficient. We've calculated that you would save more than £1,500 if you did them yourself (see 'Our research', right). For

example, it costs around £60 to paint a room, but getting a professional in could cost more than 10 times as much.

Of course, if you do the job yourself rather than hiring a professional, the quality of materials and the workmanship may not be the same.

However, when we surveyed Which? members about DIY jobs they'd carried out in the past two years, the majority said that they'd found them easy: jobs such as insulating pipes and bleeding radiators were considered easiest, while clearing drains and fitting extra locks were a little harder.

OUR RESEARCH

We surveyed 2,829 Which? online panel members between 8 and 15 January 2009 to find out which DIY jobs they have tried and how difficult they found them.

DIY costs are based on buying the materials from B&Q, the DIY shop that Which? members visit most often – half visit regularly. B&Q doesn't stock shed felt or hinge locks so these prices were sourced from Wickes. We selected own-brand products where available, but you may be able to get the materials more cheaply by shopping around.

The professional costs are an average and come from Building Cost Information Service data for the last quarter of 2008 (www.bcis.co.uk). The costs will differ depending on where you live.

Note that the DIY and professional costs aren't directly comparable as the quality of materials and quality of the job may differ.

KEY

Ease of DIY is rated on a scale of one to three, with one being the easiest. Ratings are based on Which? member experiences. Our DIY costs cover all the materials you'd need for each job. For a full breakdown, and general advice on DIY safety, see www.which.co.uk/homemaintenance. Tommy Walsh (right) has given his top tips for each job.



PAINTING

EASE OF DIY: 2



WHEN: Minimum of every five years, but it's best to do it every two.

WHY: It's not essential, but will keep your house looking good.

TIPS:

- 1) Many people don't prepare before decorating, and this can cause problems; use dust sheets and make sure you have enough paint, particularly if it's a specially mixed colour.
- 2) Always start with the ceiling and use a minimum of two coats all over.
- 3) If you need to cover stains, don't just use emulsion; use a stain block or oil-based paint to cover them first.

Cost of painting a 4 metre x 4 metre room, including skirting and door

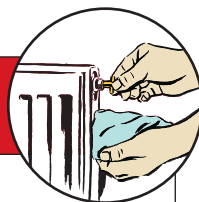
DIY: £61 and you'll need a stepladder

PRO: £760



BLEEDING RADIATORS

EASE OF DIY: 1



WHEN: Once a year or whenever your radiators feel hot at the bottom but cold at the top.

WHY: If you don't, your radiators won't heat up properly and you'll waste energy and money.

TIPS:

- 1) Have some rags handy to catch the water so you don't end up with a mess or damage the surrounding area.
- 2) Use a bleed key (also known as a vent key) to open the valve. You'll hear air hissing as it escapes. Keep the valve open until a little water runs out and the air has stopped completely.

Cost of bleeding a radiator

DIY: £1.50

PRO: You don't need one



CLEARING DRAINS/TOILETS

EASE OF DIY: 3



WHEN: Check drains once a year to see if they need clearing. Clear other drains as needed.

WHY: Your property will suffer water damage if your drains overflow. Also, if you don't deal with simple blockages immediately you may have to get a professional in, which can be pricey.

TIPS:

- 1) Clear drain blockages with drain rods. Lift up your manhole cover and use the plunger rod to clear the blockage, adding rods as you need them; this will depend on how far down the pipe the blockage is.
- 2) Make sure you go with the flow of the drain, and once the blockage is cleared use a hose to flush it through.

Cost of clearing blocked drains

DIY: £32

PRO: £130



INSULATING PIPES & TANKS

EASE OF DIY: 2



WHEN: One-off.

WHY: Pipes that aren't insulated can freeze and burst, causing thousands of pounds worth of damage. **Insulating your hot-water tank and pipes can save £50 a year on your heating bill and means you'll emit around 260kg less carbon dioxide.**

TIPS:

- 1) Buy pre-slit foam insulation, slip it around the pipe and seal the joint with gaffer tape. Be careful with hot pipes.
- 2) You can buy purpose-made insulation jackets for your cold water tank in the roof space and to wrap around the hot-water tank.

Cost of insulating 10 metres of pipe and a hot-water tank

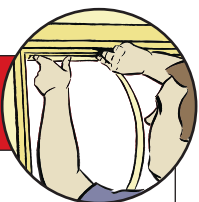
DIY: £24

PRO: £335



EXCLUDING DRAUGHTS

EASE OF DIY: 2



WHEN: One-off.

WHY: You'll save money on energy bills.

TIPS:

- 1) Clean surfaces thoroughly before you apply self-adhesive draught excluders.
- 2) Stick the draught excluder to the edge of the open window so it's tight against the frame when you shut it. Apply it to the door frame rather than the door itself.

Cost of fitting rubber draught excluders

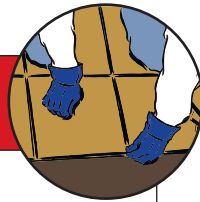
(The professional cost is based on aluminium and rubber draught excluders, which aren't self-adhesive; costs are therefore not comparable.)

DIY: £10.50

PRO: Single door £155; sash window (0.9 metre x 1.2 metre) £260

REPOINTING A PATIO

EASE OF DIY: 3



WHEN: When the joints appear cracked and broken.

WHY: Slabs can become loose. Weeds will grow rapidly through the joints.

TIPS:

- 1) Rake out the old joints first. Use dry, soft sand and cement mixed to a ratio of three parts sand to one part cement and sweep it into the joints with a soft brush, forcing into joints with your hands – you must wear rubber gloves for this job.
- 2) Rub hose or copper pipe over the new joints to give them a professional finish.
- 3) Make sure you do this on a dry day.

Cost of raking out and repointing a 12 square metre patio

DIY: £27

PRO: £260





EASY DOES IT

Emma Louise Jones

34, London

Emma reckons that she's saved thousands of pounds by doing home repairs and improvements herself. She's tiled the bathroom and kitchen, built shelves, replaced skirting boards and decorated.

Emma found the painting easiest and most satisfying, and laying slate tiles in the kitchen hardest. She says that by starting small and finding simple solutions she's been able to develop her skills.

She advises: 'Find a really good local DIY shop where they can give you advice, and don't be afraid to ask.'

However, Emma does say she wishes she'd been more safety aware at times: 'I screwed into a water-pipe and flooded our downstairs neighbour's ceiling – amazingly, we are still friends, but it wasn't the best thing I've done!'

CARING FOR A SHED/FENCES



EASE OF DIY: 2

WHEN: Paint the shed or fence with preserver every two years. Replace the shed roof felt when it starts to leak.

WHY: The wood will rot otherwise.

TIPS:

- 1) Before you attach new felt to a shed roof, apply a coat of wood preserver.
- 2) Leave 15cm (6 inches) of spare felt around the roof so you don't end up with too little; nail the felt on and then cut the excess off with a craft knife.
- 3) You'll need a stepladder and a friend to help you.

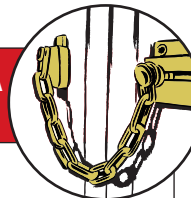
Cost of painting a 2.4 metre x 1.2 metre (8ft x 4ft) shed with wood preserver and recovering the roof

DIY: £27 (roof); £37 (wood preserver)

PRO: Not available from BCIS



FITTING EXTRA SECURITY



EASE OF DIY: 3

WHEN: One-off.

WHY: To make sure your house is secure.

TIPS:

- 1) You can fit door guards and hinge bolts yourself. A hinge bolt goes on the same side of the door as the hinges so it's protected all round. A door guard limits how far the door opens, giving you extra security.
- 2) Make sure the door frame is well fixed and strong; this is often overlooked when fixing new locks.

Cost of adding two hinge bolts to a door

DIY: £6.50 (Two hinge bolts. You'll also need an electric drill. See www.which.co.uk/advice/choosing-a-drill for advice on the different types of drill.)

PRO: £130



MEMBER BENEFIT

Develop your property

To order a copy of *Develop Your Property*, the definitive guide to home improvements, for £9.99 including free p&p, call 01903 828557 and quote DYW0409 and ISBN 978 1 84490 038 1. Offer closes 30 April 2009.



WHICH? LOCAL

If you're looking for a builder, plumber or electrician then visit the new and improved Which? Local site at www.which-local.co.uk. Which? Local lets you search for traders in your area that have been recommended by Which? members. You'll also find more information about the cost of getting home-improvement jobs done professionally.

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