

# Homestead Notes

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## Simple Household Repairs a Woman Can Do

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Feature Writer

How many times have you asked your husband to do some simple household repair, only to be told it must wait until he finds the time? Wouldn't it be a lot easier on you - and your marriage - to learn to do some of those jobs yourself?

You may think you're not "mechanically inclined" enough to take on the challenge, but if you do a little studying and put to use all your common sense, most home repairs can easily be done by women. And they can be done in half the time it might take to persuade the man of the house to do it.

If you're going to become really handy around the house, one of the first things you'd better do is to begin collecting items for your own tool box. You can use anything - a cigar box, a shoe box or an old coffee can, but it's imperative that you have one place where you can keep all the equipment you'll be using together.

A tool box will make the little jobs easier because you won't have to hunt for that screwdriver or oil can, and it will make your husband a lot happier if you don't have to "borrow" his tools, especially if you're a little slow in returning them to his workbench. By the same token, you must be firm about a "hands off" policy on your very own tools, or quickly they will disappear at the hands of husband or children, and you'll be back to searching for the hammer when you need it.

You will want to assemble your tools over a period of time, because if you are purchasing them they can add up to a lot of money. Consider asking for a hammer for your birthday! Some tools are more vital than others, but these are some of the things you'll want to get as a start towards independence: flashlight, hammer, pliers, screw driver, plastic tape, adjustable wrench, oil can, scissors, pencil and pad, box of assorted nails, tacks and brads, an awl or ice pick, and razor blade in a holder. Things like wire clippers, knife sharpeners, hand drills and the like can be added with time. Your husband may even let you borrow his as you need them.

Now there are lots of simple repairs that you can do around your home, and there are many places to turn for advice on how to proceed. The library has books on home repair, some written especially for women. Your county Penn State Extension office has some ideas, your paint and hardware store can supply information, and you may even be lucky enough to find a school district which offers an adult education course in the subject. The Lebanon County Extension office offered a home repair course last year in cooperation with instructors from the vo-tech school, and 60 women showed up eager to learn.

Some jobs you can begin with are repairing faulty plugs, fixing that leaky faucet, replacing tiles in the bathrooms, doing caulking in the bathroom or kitchen, hanging pictures properly, and repairing switches. Painting, wallpapering, building shelves and installing the air conditioner can come later.

In this article, we'll attempt to get you started with your first repair - replacing a worn cord or plug. The tools you will need include a screwdriver, a knife and a new plug.



A toolbox of your own is a must for the woman who is serious about doing home repairs. It keeps all your tools together and handy so you don't waste valuable time searching for them.

A basic caution: Be sure the cord is disconnected from the outlet before beginning. Also, take note of exactly how the plug is put together. First you must loosen the screws inside the plug so that you can pull the cord and plug apart.

Pull the cord through the new plug hole and cut off any frayed or worn parts of the cord before proceeding.

Now remove about two and one-half inches of the outer covering of the cord, using a sharp knife and separate the two wires. If it is an ordinary lamp cord, you'll just need to separate the two wires about two and one-half inches. From each end of the two wires, remove three-quarter inch of the insulation to expose the fine copper wires. Be careful not to cut any of the small wires because it will lower its capacity to carry electricity. Twist each bundle of copper wires together, for easier working.

Now you need to tie an Underwriter's knot in the insulated cord to make it withstand strain when it is pulled from the outlet.

Please refer to the pictures as you read the explanation, because it becomes clearer when you see the result. Hold the cord at the V in the left hand, with the divided conductors up. Make a loop with the right hand wire by bringing the end in front of the wire, and hold it in place with the thumb.

Bring the left hand wire down and over the right-hand end, taking it back of the wire and through the loop made by the right-hand wire. Pull it through the loop from back to front. Now pull on both ends to make the knot tight.

Pull the cord down tightly into the recess between the prongs of plug.

The next step is to run each insulated bundle of copper wires around the prong of the plug to relieve strain on the cord when the plug is pulled out, and to complete your job. The insulated part should reach to the screw leaving the fine copper wires free to twist around the screw.

Now give the copper wires an additional twist to the right, and wind once completely around the screw clockwise, making sure they are all caught firmly under the screw head as you tighten it. You wind the wires clockwise because that's the way the screw works, and it makes them work together. Tuck all ends under with the point of your pen knife or your screw driver.

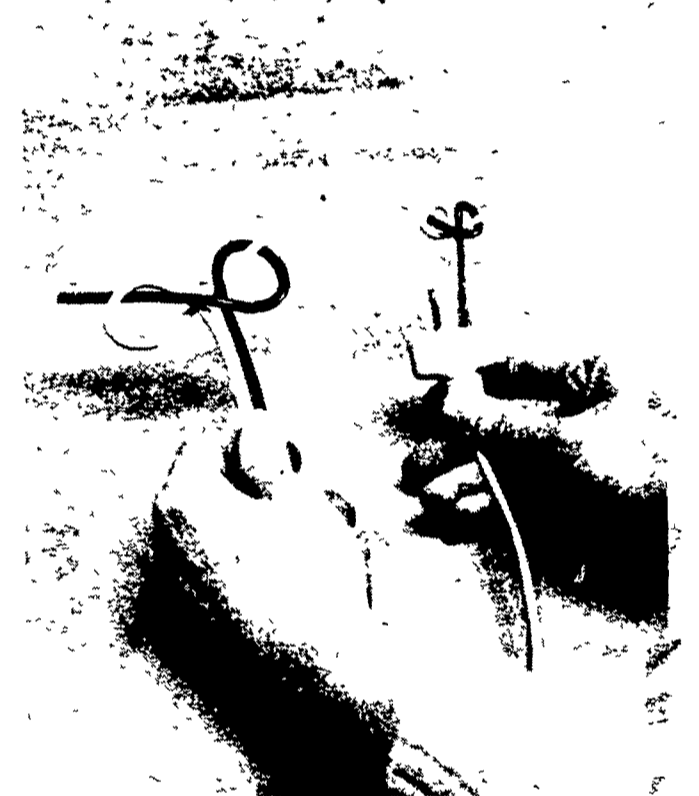
Tighten the screws, repeat with the second wire and you're ready to replace the insulating plate on the plug and test your new plug.

Now that you've actually completed your first task, you can avoid having to replace the cord and plug again soon by making sure that you and other members of your household aren't cord jerkers - remembering to unplug cords by pulling the plug, not just the cord.

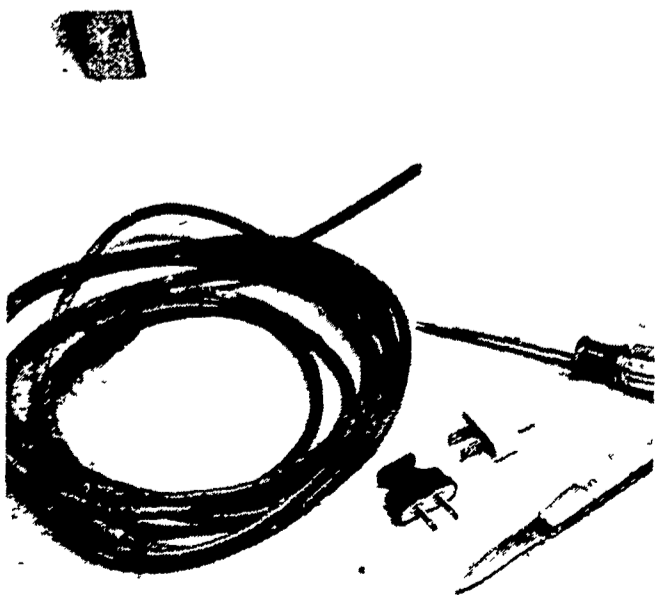
As you undertake small jobs and successfully complete them, you'll gain the courage to move on to bigger and more challenging tasks.

I'm not recommending that you take up this new "hobby" because it's fun, but it will help you get those annoying little repairs done more quickly and you're bound to feel a sense of satisfaction in a job completed. And, who-knows, if you're liberated enough to take over some of his work, maybe the man of the house will find some time to help you with your work.

Happy repairs!



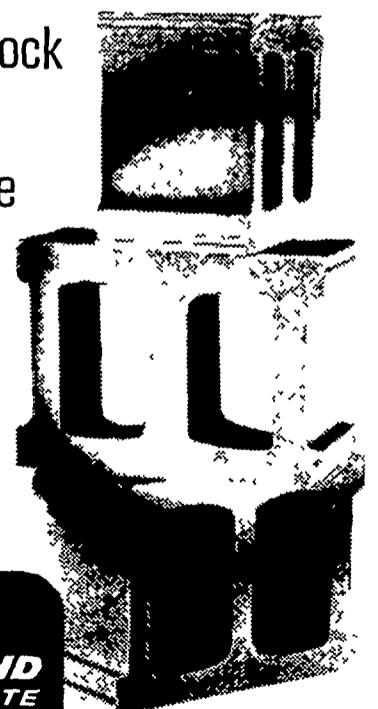
To demonstrate the Underwriter's knot, we show two examples, using contrasting colors of cord. On the left is a large knot made with heavy cord, and on the right is a plug and cord of lamp size.



Some materials you'll need before embarking on your plug repair job - cord, screwdriver, knife and plugs.

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