

Must-haves for the toolbox

By Mike Dale
Copley News Service

Having the proper tools makes home improvement projects go smoother. Needed tools vary from task to task, but every handyman must have the "basics":

- A ladder.
- A putty knife.
- A circular saw for cutting across the grain of wood, a hacksaw for cutting metals and a keyhole saw to cut circular openings.
- An electric drill.
- A block plane. It's used to shave wood and is handy for trimming the edges of doors.
- A hammer, vice grip pliers, a ratchet wrench and a set of open ended wrenches.
- An assortment of screwdrivers, both hand and power driven mask.
- Many other tools can be purchased for certain jobs. Home repair manuals and your home improvement store may recommend buying specific tools for such projects. Heed their advice.

HOMEFACTS

Are home improvements worth the cost?

A recent survey of more than 400 real estate brokers revealed that many home owners can have difficulty in recovering the costs of some major home improvements when reselling their homes.

Improvement	Projected cost	2-year recoup rate
New garage	\$10,000	80%
Room addition	20,000	65%
New bath	10,000	60%
Remodel kitchen	20,000	50%
Fireplace	5,000	50%
Add deck or patio	5,000	50%

SOURCE: ERA Real Estate survey

Copley News Service/Ken Marshall

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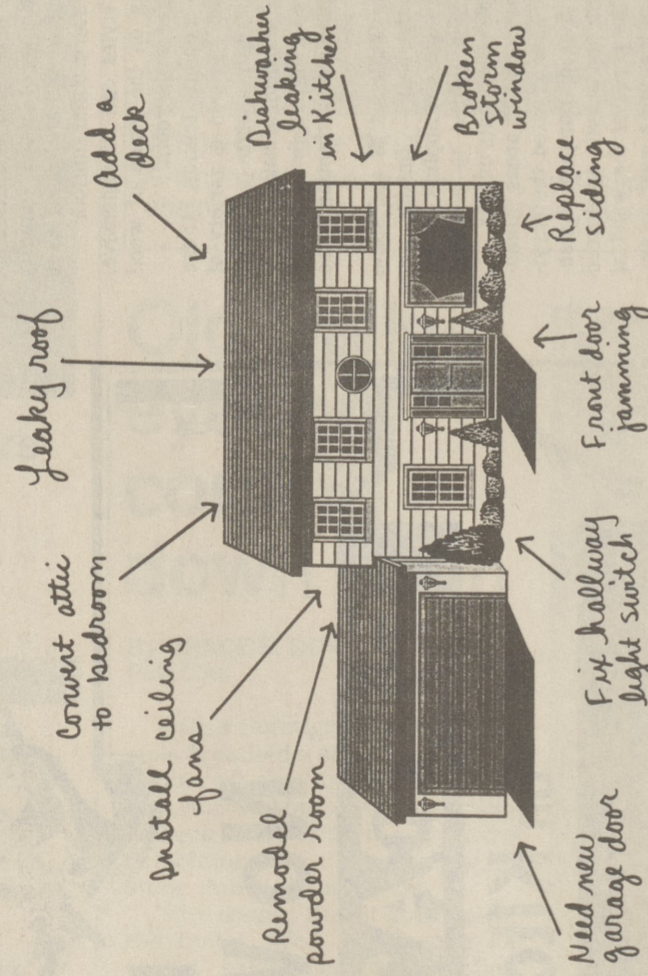
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offices. Simply hook up a fax machine, fire up the modem, download the disk drive and you're in business.

Indeed, corporations such as AT&T are helping employees move their offices to attics, basements or spare bedrooms.

Today you will find a range of furniture pieces designed for an array of home-office spaces. There are drop-leaf, wall-mounted desks that can be installed in a kitchen corner and can moonlight as minibars. There are also black laminate office systems that can be tucked into converted bedrooms. And lateral file cabinets come in a rainbow of colors.

Each technological breakthrough brings new challenges. Hiding the computer, other equipment and wiring has become a design challenge.

Many workstations offer molding, panels and frame doors that are spitting images of traditional furniture. In fact, even printer stands are being placed in hutches that have more nooks and crannies for envelopes and thumbtacks.

Don't forget about proper and stylish office lighting. With the advent of halogens, you will find a variety of lamps in architectural or sculptural forms that boast high-tech good looks.

KIDDIE KORNER

The relatively new baby boom has spurred a cottage industry in children's interior design. Couples are transforming spare bedrooms into nurseries. Preteens are enjoying the blush of yuppie accoutrements. And teeny-boppers are letting it all hang out.

The first lesson in remodeling for a baby is to finish construction well before the stork delivers your infant. The goal is making a room that, with periodic adjustments, can last until the teen years — a tricky proposition.

Think about adjustable shelving, modular storage, flexible closet space and good lighting. Kids love colors, too. Use paints generously and creatively.

Ideally, designing for children means designing with them, too. Their rooms should be a reflection of their tastes. Draw a rough layout with the help of your child. Encourage him to imagine where he will read, paint, draw, sleep or just daydream.

Good planning makes a good room. Painting or repapering, buying new bedclothes or throw rugs can be the easiest and least expensive way to make a room grow as a child moves from Barbie to Madonna.

Other money-savers include calling up Mom or Grandma to ask if she has any old fabric — bark-cloth curtains, chenille bedspreads or satin brocade.

Teens, of course, will insist on decorating their own rooms. Child psychologists say teen-agers view their bedrooms as a safe haven in which to rebel and have their own space. They say it's a healthy phenomenon, just as long as the teen understands who owns the home.

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