

QUICK FIX!

Moving into your first home and tackling DIY may seem a little daunting, but it's much easier than you may think.

Sylvia Marshall has a great deal of DIY and building knowledge. Her website is named after her Yorkshire terrier, **Bubby**, and it provides insider tips and practical advice about both large- and small-scale projects.



Difficulty rating 1/5

HOW TO... DRAUGHT PROOF YOUR HOME

What you need: weatherstrip, decorators caulk

- 1** You can buy weatherstrips (draft blocking strips) for your door and outward-opening window frames. These are simple foam or rubber strips that glue on to the frame to provide a tighter seal.
- 2** For the bottom of doors, you can buy a permanent draft excluder strip – usually a brush that screws on to the bottom of the door.
- 3** Decorators caulk can be used to seal any gaps in window surrounds and skirting boards. These sometimes form as your house expands and contracts. For larger gaps, use an expanding foam.
- 4** Replace any attic hatches with insulated ones – your roof space is often deliberately drafty, but this doesn't need to cause problems in your home.
- 5** Check your home for large gaps in wall or roof spaces, specifically round your plumbing – sometimes there is an overly large hole behind toilets or at the back of cupboards that can benefit from being sealed up or insulated.

HOW TO... INSULATE A LOFT

What you need: eye protection, respirator, loft insulation

- 1** Insulating your loft is relatively easy and, for a fairly small price, can save you money on your heating bills and reduce your home's carbon output.
- 2** Choose what insulation to use. There are two that are convenient for DIY purposes: **mineral wool** – sold in rolls and the most used insulation in the UK. **natural wool** – environmentally-friendly and a natural version of mineral wool.
- 3** Before you start, make sure you have the correct safety gear, especially if using mineral wool, which can irritate the skin and eyes. Use goggles, a mask and cover up as much skin as possible. If working at height and in a cramped space, make sure you have a buddy to steady ladders or help if you get stuck! Be careful not to step between joists as your foot could go through the ceiling. Taking a platform up with you can make installation easier.



TOP TIP

Make sure you don't over-seal your house. A little bit of air movement will actually help stop damp and condensation forming. If a room is prone to damp, such as a bathroom, consider fitting a one-way extractor fan to allow damp air to be removed but stop drafts from getting in.

- 4** Unroll your insulation between the joists to a depth of 270mm. It may take two layers to reach this depth, but this will give you maximum insulation. To ensure the insulation works efficiently, avoid pressing down on it. Use heavy-duty scissors to cut the strips to size and to fit smaller spaces.
- 5** If you want to use this space for storage, fill insulation up to the top of the joists and then install boards over the top. Be aware that you probably won't have enough space to get the insulation to the recommended depth of 270mm.



Difficulty rating 3/5

HOW TO... FIX A DRIPPING TAP

What you need: screwdriver, spanner, rubber washer

- 1 If you have a dripping tap, the washer inside the tap may need to be replaced.
- 2 Turn off the water supply. Remove the tap covering to expose the headgear nut. If it is a conventional tap, unscrew the bell-shaped head using a spanner padded with a rag. If the tap has a shrouded head, prise off the top plate and unscrew the retaining screw below. Loosen the head to reveal the headgear nut.
- 3 Undo the headgear nut with a spanner. Do not force the nut if it is hard to turn. Use a

penetrating oil to try to lubricate the nut. Leave to soak for about 10 minutes and try again. You may wish to hold the tap steady with a padded spanner to prevent the tap from turning.

- 4 With the tap top removed, you now have to remove and replace the washer. You may need to remove a nut holding the washer in place or prise the washer loose from the tap assembly. Replace the washer and reassemble the tap.

TOP TIP

These days you can also save time and money by buying a tap reviver kit, which saves fiddling with washers. We have used Screwfix ones – not only are they great, but readers can get them at a discount when you log on to bubsydogdiy.com/trade_secrets.php



Difficulty rating 3/5



For more hints and tips, go to bubsydogdiy.com/trade_secrets.php

If you can't find what you're looking for, just ask Bubsy!



Difficulty rating 3/5

HOW TO... TILE

What you need: tiling kit, grout, spirit level, plumb line, undercoat paint/primer, adhesive trowel, tile adhesive

- 1 Make sure the surface to be tiled is clean, dry and flat. If it is porous, you will have to use a primer before tiling.
- 2 Nail a timber batten to the wall you wish to tile – leave the nails protruding slightly for easy removal later. Position it one tile height from the floor or skirting board. Using a spirit level, check it is level. Use a plumb line to measure the vertical from the batten and secure another batten in this position to give the vertical line for your tiles. Make sure the battens are straight and at right angles to each other before beginning.
- 3 Measure how many tiles and spacers it will take to cover one line on the wall (including spacers). Reposition the tiles to avoid leaving small slivers of tile at the end of a row.
- 4 Apply the adhesive out from the corner formed by the battens. Use a notched spreader to evenly apply the adhesive over about three square feet, no more than 2mm deep.
- 5 Attach the tiles by gently moving them into place over the adhesive. Place spacers between the tiles for even spacing. Make sure the tiles are level throughout using a spirit level. Wipe away any excess adhesive with a sponge.
- 6 Continue tiling small areas over the wall to prevent the adhesive drying out.
- 7 It may be necessary to cut tiles to fit. Use a tile cutter, or for bigger jobs hire an electric tile cutter if required.
- 8 Once the wall is completed leave for 24 hours to allow the adhesive to dry.
- 9 Grout the joins using either a sponge or professional squeegee. Make sure the grout is pushed firmly into the spaces. To finish, run a blunt piece of wood, such as the end of a pencil or piece of doweling, down the grouted lines.
- 10 Wipe away any excess grout with a damp sponge, and buff the tiles with a soft cloth.

QUICK TIP OF THE DAY

Metal cooking utensils or pans can leave a grey scratch if you accidentally scrape a tile. Calling in a tiler to replace a single tile can be costly, and you may not feel brave enough (yet!) to remove it yourself. Don't worry, a quick trade tip is to wet the reverse of another tile of the same kind and rub this on the tile surface – like an eraser – and, hey presto, your tile is like new, and it hasn't cost a penny!