



THE FILL

Cleaning Up Homes & Communities One Dumpster at a Time



DIY Mistakes: When NOT to Do It Yourself

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When it comes to DIY home improvement, it can feel like there's no limit to what you can do. A few YouTube videos here, a cursory glance at a blog post there, and suddenly you're hanging drywall and installing a new sink all by yourself. But even though you may be a quick study, there is an upper ceiling on what the average homeowner can do themselves.

DIY mistakes are quite common when it comes to certain projects, especially when they involve fixing or modifying a home's electrical or plumbing systems, or making some very delicate alterations to your home's decor. In order to save your household from some big DIY mishaps, we've put together a quick list of projects you should definitely consider hiring out to a professional.

DIY Mistake #1:

Rewiring Your Home

While minor electrical work, such as replacing a ceiling lamp or swapping out a light switch, can be done by carefully following directions (and remembering to switch off the electricity), anything that requires modifying the actual circuitry of your home should be done by an electrician. This includes rewiring a room, let alone your entire home.

Why? Because upgrading or replacing your home's wiring is a monumental task, requiring not only professional knowledge and skill, but working around obstacles and removing drywall to get access to the internal structures of your home. DIY electrical mistakes are a huge hazard and can easily happen while running new wire or modifying an existing circuit, resulting in injury or even starting a fire, especially when working with high-voltage circuits.



Replacing old knob-and-tube wiring is a common reason for rewiring a home, but it's far from a DIY job.

As Nathanael Toms, owner of [Mr. Electric of Southwest Missouri](#), explains, "a 220 volt circuit has so much potential to be dangerous if done incorrectly. There is so much heat that would come from a short circuit if the wires crossed, that it could start a house fire or melt the skin off the individual close to the arc flash."

...and that's why you should always call an electrician before you break out the Romex.

DIY Mistake #2:

Repairing Leaks in Your Ceiling or Wall

When a leak appears in your wall or ceiling, your first instinct may be to grab a roll of duct tape and start making holes in your drywall. But the kind of leaks that spring up within walls and ceilings are usually best left to a professional to deal with. A plumber will be able to identify and access the source of the leak quickly. Plus, they will have the tools handy to permanently repair the section of leaky pipe, rather than resorting to a temporary fix, such as a clamp or epoxy.



Pipes behind walls or ceilings need a professional touch to ensure they are repaired correctly and permanently.

DIY Mistake #3:

Messing With Your Plumbing

While installing a new toilet or replacing a faucet isn't too difficult, anything that involves modifying the existing pipes in your home, such as adding a new bathroom or relocating an existing fixture, should be done by a plumber. This includes moving vent pipes or running new connections to the main stack, that long 4-inch diameter pipe in your home that carries wastewater down to the sewer.

Any kind of extensive plumbing work runs the risk of damaging your home, especially if a new plumbing connection isn't properly installed (hopefully it's not connected to a toilet). Plus, removing or adding new plumbing connections requires working inside the walls and floors of your home, a serious amount of work for the average DIY enthusiast. So avoid a potentially big DIY plumbing mistake and call a professional for the big plumbing work.



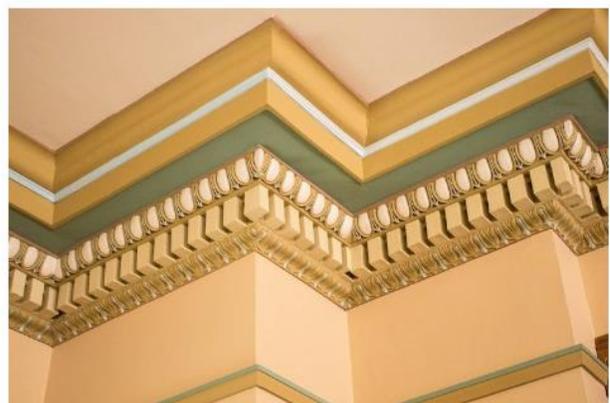
Anything beyond replacing a faucet or unclogging a drain should be handled by a plumber.

DIY Mistake #4:

Installing Crown Molding

Crown molding is like the frosting on the edge of a cake. When done precisely it looks delectable, but if just one line is out of place it ruins the look of the entire confection. The same aesthetic principle applies to crown molding. Creating the perfect mold requires complex cuts and calculations, as well as a steady hand on the saw.

And the work gets more complicated when you're dealing with walls that don't meet at 90 degree angles. "The measurements must be accurate, the cuts have to line up seamlessly and our professional technicians have been called out to repair a job gone wrong many times," says J.B. Sassano, president of [Mr. Handyman](#). Even if you are handy with a saw, the best results will almost always come from a professional carpenter.



Don't be obtuse. Crown molding is one job you don't want to cut corners with.

DIY Mistake #5:

A Seriously Clogged Drain

If you ever come across a clogged drain, be it a sink or toilet, there are many tried and true DIY methods to unclog it. But every once and a while, you may come across a clog that simply won't submit to your chemical and mechanical remedies. That's when you need to call in a plumber.

A major clog in a single drain line may be the result of a foreign object blocking the flow, in which case a plumber is necessary to snake the drain and remove whatever object is lodged down there. If more than one sink or toilet in your home is clogged, then the problem may lie even deeper, near the main sewer line or septic tank, in which case you may need to excavate your yard and repair the pipe – definitely not something you want to do yourself.



A drain that refuses to unclog is a guaranteed call to a local plumber.

DIY Mistake #6:

Removing a Popcorn Ceiling

Yes, that ugly spray-on cottage cheese texture adorning your bedroom ceiling has to go, but don't be too quick to start scraping. Popcorn ceilings installed between 1950 and 1980 may contain asbestos, which is the last thing you want to be kicking up in the air. You can test your ceiling to see if it contains asbestos by taking a small sample and sending it to a testing laboratory. If the results are positive, you'll want to contact a [specialist](#) to remove the popcorn texture for you.

Apart from the potential hazards, this project also requires a little finesse to avoid making a mess: "popcorn texture removal can be extremely messy, and if ceilings are being re-textured, it takes a lot of skill and equipment, such as a compressor, to do the job right," says Dan Schaeffer of [Five Star Painting](#).

Whether it's messing with the internals of your home, or removing potentially hazardous materials from your ceiling, any project that can cause significant damage to your home, or health, is always worth a second thought. For more tips to avoid potential home improvement mistakes, check out our exceedingly comprehensive guide to [DIY home improvement](#).

