

YOUR HOME

TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

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Costly Renovations

Contrary to popular belief, not all home renovations will pay off when you sell. You might think an updated kitchen or a new deck is a sure bet, but a recent study by *Remodeling* magazine found that some renovations may hurt you when it comes time to sell your home.

- **The Addition.** A poorly executed addition can wreak havoc on your home's value. A family room or office may work wonders for your family's space, but it can look awkward from the outside. Consider your home's exterior and avoid poorly designed exteriors.
- **Trendy Finishes.** Avoid any style that could make your home seem dated. Keeping up on decorating style can seem daunting, but start small by flipping through decorating and renovation magazines. Some trends that may be on their way out? Stainless Steel appliances and polished hardware.
- **The Swimming Pool.** This is the only renovation on this list that is regional. In warmer climates, adding a pool can increase home value by 11 percent on average. In cooler climates, however, it can turn away potential buyers concerned about upkeep or safety problems for pets and small children.
- **The Jacuzzi.** This renovation is considered a luxury, and not a particularly practical one. Consider installing an oversized shower instead.

Tools to Get You Started

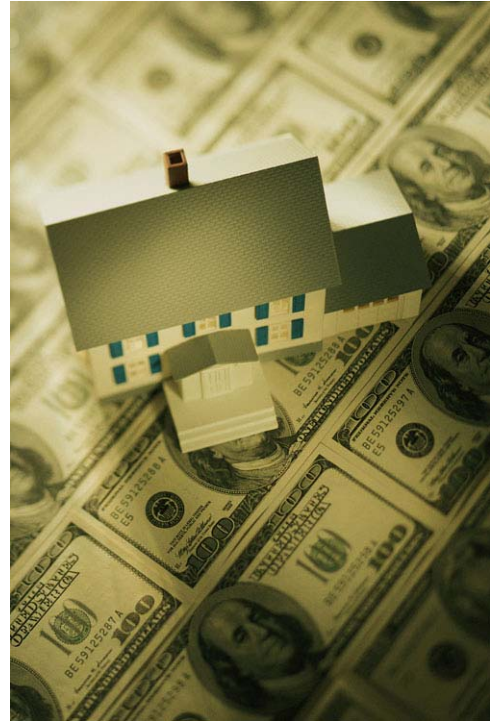
Whether you're a renter or homeowner, a basic set of tools is an absolute necessity. Even if you are not terribly handy around the house, hanging pictures, tightening fixtures and dozens of other household chores require some standard hardware. If you keep these items around, you'll save yourself needless trips to the hardware store.

The first step to stress-free home repair is knowing where all your tools are, so invest in a good toolbox. If you plan on expanding your collection in the future, think ahead and buy a large one.

To fill it, most experts agree on the best selection of tools to make up your starter kit. A 12- to 16-ounce claw hammer is essential for many projects. Don't forget an assortment of nails and screws, which you can buy in prepackaged kits. You will need two screwdrivers, a Philips-head and a standard screwdriver. Don't try to pinch pennies here — cheap screwdrivers break easily.

You should also consider purchasing at least two different types of pliers. The most versatile are needle-nose pliers, but also consider purchasing heavily-grooved pliers, for removing nails, and wire-cutters. Vise-grip pliers are a key tool when you need a slip-free hold.

Round out your collection with a tape measure and box cutter or utility knife. With these items in tow, you'll be ready to give Bob Vila a run for his money — or at least hang that framed family photo that's been sitting in the closet.





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Jump the Home-Decorating Hurdle

Starting a home decorating project can seem daunting, and it's easy to feel buried under all the paint samples, fabric swatches and accent pillows. However, by following a few simple guidelines when starting out, your project might seem a little more manageable and fun.

The first and most important step is to create a plan. "Survey your resources," says David Remignanti, lead design consultant for *Furniture.com*. "Look at your current furnishings, your work schedule and your budget. Then make a list of needs, wants and things you'd love down the road." By designing your game plan first, the rest of the project will be much easier.

Any project can seem overwhelming when you try to do it all at once. Thankfully, home decorating looks best when it's completed piece by piece. "Interesting interiors are created in layers, over time," says Remignanti. "Don't try to get it all at once."

Building confidence in your interior decorating abilities can be difficult, especially for a novice. Remignanti advises amateur decorators to clip photos of rooms from home decorating magazines and to learn from one of the many design shows on television. "Start small, build your confidence and learn from mistakes," says Remignanti. "The best designers did the same."



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.

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