



Handywoman's Home Repairs

by Gloria Rae

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Always make safety of all involved your first criteria.

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Introduction

Women and home repair can mix! In fact, if you take away the heavy or super-awkward movements, women can do a whole lot of fixing.

You can have fun and save money, too.

It feels good and powerful to be able to do things for yourself.

I started learning how to fix things at a very young age. It seemed that, if I ever wanted anything done when I wanted it done, I had to do it myself. You know how long you can wait, don't you?

Years ago, I was pregnant. My kitchen sink was broken and my husband kept saying he was going to fix it. So, I'd haul the dishes to the bathtub with a dishpan. My back ached as you well can imagine. It was awkward and it made me angry.

But, I had been raised that women were to listen to their husbands.

Times have changed and so have I. After several months and me (with a new born daughter and a three year old) doing dishes with the dishpan in the bathtub, my husband fixed the sink in fifteen minutes.

It took him fifteen minutes to fix a sink that I could not use for five months! I was livid.

And so, my journey began. I not only learned the skills that I needed, but I made a small business out of painting apartment buildings, created an income and became independent.

You can learn how to do repairs too.

Using Tools

How to use a Hammer:

It may seem silly to think you need to know how to use a hammer. But, it’s the standard ‘blunt instrument’ so let’s learn about hammers and using them safely.

Tips:

First and foremost, choose the right hammer for the job.

Grip the hammer firmly by its handle.

Keep your wrist straight and use your whole forearm to lift and drop the tool.

Let the hammer do most of the work, using its weight to drive the nail.

How to Hammer in a Nail:

Grasp the hammer with its claw facing upward. Don’t choke up on the handle.

Hold your wrist stiff.

Your arm should be raised at 90 degrees at the elbow.

Take a few practice swings.

Gently tap a nail into the wood at 90 degrees (perpendicular).

Raise the hammer as described above and strike it confidently.

Repeat the process, adding force and velocity with each swing, until the nail is completely driven into the wood.

How to remove a nail:

Using the edge of one claw of the hammer, pry the head of the nail from the wood until it can be slid into the claw slot.

Place a piece of thin wood, at least 3/4-inch-by-3/4-inch, beneath the head of the hammer for additional leverage.

Jerk the nail out.

Safety tips:

These tips will help you get the work done but, if the work requires a specialist, then get in touch with one. No matter how small or big the task is, safety is a key issue.

Important: Keep it away from children.

Always wear safety goggles to protect your eyes from flying particles and dust. Even bystanders should wear safety goggles.

Consider earplugs as well.

All hammer blows should be struck squarely with the striking face of the hammer flat on the surface which is being struck.

Avoid glancing blows as well as over-and under-strikes.

When striking another tool, always use a hammer with a striking face that has a diameter approximately 3/8" larger than the other tool.

Never use one hammer to strike another hammer or hatchet.

Never use a tool with a loose or damaged handle.

Discard any striking tool if it shows dents, cracks, chips or excessive wear.

Never re-grind, weld or re-heat a treated hammer.

Replace loose or cracked handles before using the tool again.

Do not use the hammer handle for striking, and never use the hammer as a pry bar. This may cause the handle to split, which could result in it cutting or pinching the user.

Do not strike a hard steel surface with a steel hammer. Small pieces of steel could fly off and they may injure someone.

TIP: To hold a nail before hammering, push the teeth of a comb around the nail and let the comb hold the nail in place, protecting your fingers from a mis-strike.

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How to Use a Staple Gun

Here are some key tips about loading your staple gun:

Load the appropriate staples/nails before plugging in the staple gun.

Plug the staple gun into the main supply.

Hold the staple gun firmly with the staple track at 90 degrees to the work piece.

The safety trigger release button will be depressed when the staple track is pressed towards the work.

The staple gun will not operate unless the safety trigger release button is fully depressed.

Squeeze the trigger to drive the staple/nail into the work.

On hard surfaces, press down on the top of the handle with your free hand to hold the staple gun against the work.

Each squeeze of the trigger will drive one staple/nail only.

Remove the staple gun from the work and disconnect from the main supply when the work is finished.

Safety Instructions:

Keep the work area clean

Do not expose power tools to rain.

Do not use power tools in damp or wet locations.

Guard against electric shock.

Keep the staple gun and all supplies away from children.

Do not let visitors or children touch the tool or the extension lead.

Do not force the tool.

Use the right tool.

Remember: Check for Damaged Parts

Always check the tool properly before using it. If any part is damaged, get it repaired or replaced by an authorized service center or follow the instructions in the user guide or manual.

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How to Use a Handsaw

Mark a line where you will be cutting.

Support both sides of the work on a bench or sawhorse.

Take time to get comfortable before you start sawing.

Make sure that the teeth of your saw are sharp.

Line up your wrist, elbow and shoulder with the saw blade.

Remember that you will lose about 1/8-inch of wood with the cut due to the width of the blade, so cut on the outside of the line.

Apply slight pressure on the push strokes and relax when you pull the saw.

Saw with a steady, easy rhythm.

Keep in mind that the more acute the degree, the faster and rougher the cut.

Hold the saw at:

- 90-degrees for a quick, raw cut
- 45 degrees for smooth cuts; and
- 15 to 20 degrees for very fine cuts.

Tips:

Wear gloves for comfort and protection.

Wear goggles and a dust mask.

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How to Use a Paint Spray Machine

1] Rent or buy an airless spray machine.

2] Protect areas near the area that you are painting.

3] Spraying puts a lot of fine paint droplets into the air, so cover everything in the area that you don’t want to get paint on.

4] Seal the area if you're working inside. Do not use the sprayer outside on a windy day.

5] Pour paint in a bucket through a strainer to ensure that there are no lumps or any bits of non-paint material.

6] Thin the paint (if required) as per the manufacturer's instructions.

7] Cover yourself well; wear long-sleeved shirts and gloves.

8] Start at a corner, work from the top down and keep your strokes steady and smooth. Remember that it is better to paint several light coats than one heavy one.

9] Do not to create "columns" of paint while spraying.

Tips:

There are basically three kinds of sprayers: airless, compressed air, and electric pump available in the market.

Get instructions specific to your machine from the dealer, as paint sprayers can be difficult to operate.

The nozzles of the sprayer are prone to clogging, so you have to know how clear them properly.

Make sure the equipment is clean.

If you are using latex paint, make sure your sprayer is compatible or you may ruin the appliance.

Safety Tips:

If you are painting in a room with appliances such as water heaters, air conditioners, or furnaces, turn them all off!

Don't hold the spray gun close to your body - it may harm you.

Never try to unclog a nozzle while it's running.

Wear a respirator/mask.

Make sure that children are not present in the room.

Wear goggles for eye protection.

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How to Use a Power Drill

The cord of the appliance should be long enough that you can use the machine far from the electrical outlet without any worries.

Always uncoil the electric cord of any appliance before starting to use it.

Always ensure that there is no chance that you can touch the cord with the appliance or tool.

Open the chuck of the drill with the help of the chuck key that comes with it. Do this by pushing the notched end of the key into a hole along the chuck and twisting it counter-clockwise.

Insert the drill bit into the chuck and tighten it with the chuck key, turning it clockwise this time. Be sure it fits securely.

Plug the drill in to the electric socket.

Press the trigger to make sure everything is fine and in good condition, before you make contact with the work.

Start the work at a slow pace and steadily increase the pressure.

Maintain the pressure on the drill and the trigger until the hole is completed.

As soon you finish the work, stop drilling.

Depending on the type of work, you can use different attachments such as a disk sander, a buffer pad, a hole saw, a bit extender etc., to make the job easier.

Key Tips:

If you want to drill a hole of a certain depth, mark the measurement on the drill with a piece of colored electrical tape.

Use cutting oil while drilling metals.

Safety tips:

Wear safety goggles

Tie your hair if it’s long

Fold up and secure loose sleeves

Keep all tools away from children

Wear gloves.

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How to Use a Caulking Gun

Clean the area to be caulked; remove dirt, loose paint and old caulk.

Make sure the area is dry before you begin.

Load a tube of caulk into a caulking gun and make sure it's well sealed at both ends.

Use a utility knife to cut the tip of the spout. Cut off as little as possible, taking into consideration the size of the 'bead' of caulk you need.

If the caulk comes in a cardboard tube, look for a second seal at the base of the spout. Insert a nail or an awl through the spout to puncture the seal.

Remember that plastic tubes don't usually have a second, inner seal.

Hold the gun at a slight angle. If you're filling a crack, insert the spout if you can - otherwise, run it at the surface.

Pull away from the bead slightly as you squeeze out the caulk, rather than push into it - that can be very messy.

Use the right amount of caulk for the job.

Use your finger to gently press the caulk into corners or cracks.

Use a damp towel or rag to clean off most of the excess caulk, and then use a dry one to clean off the rest.

Tips:

Different types of caulk (silicone, acrylic and latex) are available. Silicone caulk is the long-lasting one, but it does not take paint well.

Wear gloves if required.

Keep some water handy to wash off.

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How to Safely Use a Ladder

First and foremost, fully open the stepladder and lock the braces.

If you use a regular ladder, then make sure it's not broken.

Keep the feet of the ladder, particularly of an extension ladder, on dry and even surfaces.

Never use an aluminum ladder near live electrical sources.

Climb only as high as the ladder is designed for. Never climb past the point where your hips are level with the top of the ladder.

Hold on to the sides of the ladder as you climb. Store tools in back pockets or a tool belt.

Never allow more than one person on a ladder at the same time.

Don't let anyone stand below the ladder.

Read all warnings and cautions from the manufacturer of the ladder. Instructions can be found on yellow or orange safety labels on the side of the ladder.

Important:

Store your ladder where it is not exposed to moisture or extreme heat.

Safety Tips

Wear gloves

Keep it away from children

Make sure that the ladder is not broken

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How to Use a Wrench

Always use good quality tools and inspect them for defects before using them.

Replace worn or defective tools.

Maintain your tools. Make sure that the teeth of a pipe wrench are clean and sharp. Worn or greasy jaws are more likely to slip.

Check the pipe or fitting. Is it clean and oil-free? Slippage can cause you serious injury.

Always keep your wrist straight when using a wrench.

Be sure that the opening of the wrench is in full contact with the bolt or nut before you apply pressure.

Pull, don't push, and use a slow, steady motion.

Don't stick a piece of pipe on the end of the wrench to improve leverage. It is not safe

Important Tips:

Keep your tools away from extreme heat, which can expand the metal and cause dangerous structural problems.

Protect yourself from losing your balance if the wrench slips or a bolt breaks. Stand on a solid surface with both feet planted firmly on the floor and don't lean in to the work.

Never use a wrench on moving machinery.

Keep it away from children

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