

It's a woman's world: be your own handy gal

Women don't need a handyman to fix those common household problems. All they need is confidence.

Some Do-It-Herself Tips

Local experts offer tips on how to fix the most common household problems that can save you time and money.

TOILET TROUBLE

It only has three moveable parts so if none of these work, you probably need a new toilet.

Flapper valve – Located at the bottom of the tank above the bowl and holds the water in the toilet. A chain is attached to it.

Common problem: Causes toilet to keep running. May be the result of old age.

Fix-it solution: Shut water off and flush the toilet. This should empty the tank. Unhook the flapper and bring it to the hardware or home store to match it. Re-hook in tank and turn the water back on. Use as normally.

Cost: \$3

Flush arm – Silver or white handle used for flushing.

Common problem: Older flush arms are made of brass and corrode when in contact with steel. Also, arm may bend so toilet doesn't flush.

Fix-it solution: Loosen nut on inside of tank behind flush arm. Loosen to right because left-hand thread. Disconnect chain from flapper valve and remove arm. Bring to home or hardware store and buy replacement. Reattach by reconnecting to chain and tightening the nut back on.

Cost: \$3 (arm)

Fill valve – Fills up the toilet with water after you flush.

Common problem: Won't shut off and cause of hissing sound from toilet.

Fix-it solution: Oftentimes, debris gets stuck under the valve. Bending the arm attached to the valve will often readjust place where the float sits in the tank water. If that doesn't work you need to repair the whole thing. To repair, shut off water valve from pipes leading to toilet. Flush the toilet

to get the water out. Have a bucket of water handy. Hold the fill valve up and unscrew the nut under the tank to remove the fill valve. Buy replacement and insert where old one used to be.

Cost: \$7-\$13

LEAKY FAUCETS

Figure out the make and model.

Turn off hot and cold water from under the sink. Pliers may be needed to close valves.

Use Philips head screwdriver to unscrew handles. Pull out stems and bring to the hardware/home store to buy replacements.

Reverse steps to replace stems. The hot and cold water stems are the same. Best to replace both so they wear out together.

PAINTING PERFECTION

Using a primer will help the paint better adhere to the walls. It also seals dark paint if changing to a lighter color; two coats will only be needed.

Use painter's tape along edges to protect molding and floor.

GENERAL TIPS

If it has batteries, replace it once a year.

Turn valves on water pipes once a year to keep them loose and working.

Replace filters on air conditioning or heating at least once a year, but more often if you have pets, as animal hair (and dust) can clog the unit and result in serious repairs.

—Compiled by Patricia Bertuccio
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COURTESY PHOTO

Gail Zolotas, of Zolotas Kitchen and Bath in Ipswich, is a handy female plumber.

Toolbox essentials

- Small level
- Tape measure
- Adjustable wrenches (8- and 12-inch)
- Pliers
- Channel lock or gas pliers
- Small handsaw
- Screw drivers (large and small Philips and straight heads)
- 10- or 20-ounce hammer
- Electric circuit tester (if doing work on switches, lighting, etc.)

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