

2025 Fall Home Improvement



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Fall Home Improvement

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GET READY FOR A Furnace Checkup

Turning on the heat may be the furthest thing from homeowners' minds come the end of summer or early fall. After all, there are plenty more days of comfortable temperatures to expect over the weeks to come. However, failing to inspect a furnace prior to when it is needed could lay a foundation for cold evenings.

Many HVAC experts recommend that homeowners get their furnaces tuned up before the first cold spell arrives. When the heat is needed for the first time, it will be guaranteed to work if it's been examined and any underlying issues have been addressed.

HVAC technicians are busy at the start of summer and winter. If a furnace is not working correctly, it could take some time before a professional can make a service call. Having the furnace and related equipment checked prior to when it's time to turn on the furnace means homeowners will not be left in the lurch or potentially spending premium prices for repairs.

It is important to get a furnace checkup for a variety of reasons. Doing so can make



the HVAC system run more efficiently, which could result in savings over the winter. Regular maintenance also can help the furnace last longer, delaying the need for a costly replacement. No one wants the furnace to break down in the middle of a frigid night. Annual checkups can help reduce the risk of that happening. In addition, many furnace manufacturers offer

warranties on their systems that require annual maintenance from a professional. Failure to have the system inspected could void the warranty.

Even if homeowners are floating in the pool and cranking up the air conditioning, they should give consideration to having their furnaces inspected and serviced soon to prepare for the colder months ahead.



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HOW TO SPOT A *Mold Infestation* IN YOUR HOME

Homeowners know the work related to their homes is never done. Tasks ranging from routine maintenance to minor tweaks to large projects are part of homeownership.

Some of the work related to a home focuses on functionality, while other tasks might be all about aesthetic appeal. Potential health concerns related to a home also merit homeowners' attention. Mold is one such issue. Though it's impossible to pinpoint how much mold poses a health problem to a home's inhabitants, it's fair to suggest homeowners feel that no mold is ideal. According to the New York State Department of Health, exposure to indoor mold can cause nasal and sinus congestion; eye irritation marked by itchy, red and watery eyes; wheezing and difficulty breathing; cough and other types of throat irritation; skin irritation, including rash; and headache.

The potentially harmful consequences of a mold infestation inside a home underscore how important it can be for homeowners to learn to identify when they have a mold issue at home.

- Learn what mold looks like. Mold patches increase in size the longer an infestation goes unchecked, so it might be easier to stop an issue after it's been around awhile. The NYSDOH notes that mold typically appears as fuzzy patches that may be discolored or even slimy.

- Recognize that mold also can be malodorous. Mold produces a distinct musty smell that is often the first symptom people recognize when they have an infestation at home. If a musty smell is present in a room, try to follow it to its source. That may involve some trial and error, as mold can grow behind and even underneath surfaces, including carpets, wallpaper and cabinets. Mold also can grow behind walls, a situation that may necessitate working with a remediation professional.

- Know where to look. Though mold can grow anywhere in a home, certain areas in a home are more vulnerable to an infestation than others. Rooms affected by moisture are susceptible to mold growth. In bathrooms, mold may grow around sinks, shower stalls and curtains, and tiles. In kitchens, mold can grow on tiles and even on the seal around a refrigerator door. Mold also can grow on and around window air conditioner units.



The NYSDOH notes that certain people may be more vulnerable to mold-related health problems than others. Such individuals include people with existing respiratory conditions and those with compromised immune systems. Homeowners can prioritize safeguarding their homes from mold infestations and, when necessary, work with remediation professionals to eliminate existing issues and reduce infestation risks going forward.

Protecting a home against a mold infestation is a simple yet important task homeowners can look to in an effort to keep their homes safe and healthy.



COOKING UP A Kitchen Remodel

A successful kitchen renovation project requires careful planning and a detailed vision of what the space will look like upon completion. Whether a homeowner is thinking about giving the kitchen a major overhaul or just a minor refresh, bringing that vision to life doesn't happen overnight. There is a process that must go into a kitchen renovation.

Embarking on a kitchen remodel can be an exciting venture and homeowners may be eager to dive right in, but familiarizing oneself with what to expect prior to the start can help property owners navigate the process more smoothly.

- Inspiration and design: The first phase involves dreaming up kitchen plans and making practical decisions regarding

efficiency and functionality. Considerable time may be spent working with a designer and architect, which will involve choosing materials and a color scheme.

- Creating a budget: According to Angi, the average kitchen remodel costs \$26,934, but price ultimately varies depending on the scope of the work. Costs may be less or more depending on the size of the kitchen and the materials chosen.

- Demolition: Before a homeowner can have a new kitchen, the old one must be removed. The real physical transformation begins with the demolition, which tends to be quick but messy. It is essential to set up an alternative "mini kitchen" elsewhere, or expect to be dining out throughout the remodel. The demo process may reveal any issues that will need to be remedied before the real work can begin, such as structural damage, leaks, mold, or other hiccups.

- Contractor work begins: It can take one to three weeks for contractors to install plumbing, mechanical components, electrical wiring, ductwork, and more, followed by structural needs and drywall, according to sink and faucet manufacturer Blanco. Flooring and cabinets will follow, and can take another week or more. Fabricating custom countertops is a lengthy process and can represent the bulk of a kitchen renovation timeline. Expect a few weeks for countertops to be measured, made and then installed.

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SIGNS IT MIGHT BE TIME FOR A Room Addition PROJECT



No one enjoys being in cramped quarters. Whether a person battles a legitimate case of claustrophobia when confined in tight spaces or simply prefers a place to stretch out, there's no denying the appeal of a little extra room. That's particularly so at home, where cramped spaces can make it hard to unwind.

When homeowners feel their walls are closing in on them, many choose to build space via a room addition. Room addition projects are extensive and expensive undertakings, with the home renovation experts at Angi estimating the average add-on costs \$48,000. But Angi estimates such projects can cost as much as \$72,600, or even more depending on the size of the space and the features chosen.

The financial commitment when adding a room is significant, but homeowners and residents also will need to prepare for a potentially lengthy disruption to their daily routines. Various online resources, including Angi, suggest room addition projects typically take around three to four months. With so much at stake, homeowners who think they might benefit from a room addition can look for various signs to help them determine if such a project is right for them.

- Increasingly cluttered spaces: Cramped quarters without much space for people are perhaps the most notable sign that residents can benefit from some additional space in a home. Cluttered spaces suggest homeowners may have run out of room for their stuff, and a custom addition can provide that extra room while contributing to a more calming ambiance in common spaces that may no longer be overwhelmed by papers, toys and other items that can quickly take over a home that lacks space.

- Lifestyle hurdles: Millions of homeowners like to entertain friends and family, and that's more manageable for some than it is for others. If interior or exterior spaces do not accommodate hosting, a room addition that expands an existing kitchen or living room might be the ideal renovation project.

- Functionally challenged: A home that no longer has enough space to meet your needs is another sign a room addition might be in order. This very issue emerged for millions of professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic and has remained a challenge ever since. Indeed, an increase in

days spent working remotely has left many homeowners grateful to work from home but desirous of a designated remote work space. A room addition to accommodate a home office can be just what remote workers need to restore fully functional status to their homes.

- Cost: While the sticker price of a home addition may (or may not) raise an eyebrow, the project is almost certain to prove more cost-effective than moving. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the average sale price of a home in the United States reached \$503,800 in January 2025. While that marked a roughly \$16,000 decrease from a year earlier, it's still a high figure that many homeowners aren't willing to pay. A cost comparison detailing the price to move versus the price to build an addition may indicate that the latter option is a homeowner's best bet.

A room addition could be the perfect renovation project for homeowners who need more space but still prefer to stay put.

REMODEL

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• Appliances and finishing touches: Appliances will be delivered and hooked up at the tail end of the renovation. Finally, the backsplash, fixtures and lighting are put into place. The last leg of the remodel will include painting, trim work and installation of hardware on cabinets and drawers.

Once all the work is done, it is essential for homeowners to make sure everything is to their liking. According to HGTV and Kitchy Crouse of CK Interior Design, a regular kitchen renovation can take anywhere from six to 12 weeks. With so much time devoted to the space, homeowners should ensure it lives up to their expectations.

As the renovation begins, homeowners should remember that unexpected issues can arise, including delays due to material availability or unforeseen challenges. Maintaining an open communication with the contractor, asking questions and remaining flexible helps. Although a kitchen remodel is initially disruptive, it is an investment that ultimately enhances a home's value.



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DID YOU KNOW?

66%

would prefer to buy a home with one home office space



Professionals might be returning to work in offices after years of pandemic-related remote work, but that doesn't mean home buyers aren't still prioritizing home office space when shopping for a new place to call their own. According to a recent survey of home buyers conducted by the National Association of Home Builders, 66 percent would prefer to buy a home with exactly one home office space and 13 percent want at least two offices. Just one in five buyers indicated they do not want any home office space. The majority of buyers who want home office space prefer a medium-sized space, which the NAHB defined as between 100 and 150 square feet. Just 22 percent of buyers prefer a home office space larger than 150 square feet, while only 19 percent want a small space (less than 100 square feet). The NAHB survey indicates the enduring popularity of home office spaces, recognition of which can be particularly useful for current homeowners preparing to put their homes on the market as well as those looking to add office space.

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WHAT TO EXPECT OF A *Room Addition* PROJECT

There are many reasons homeowners consider adding a room to their current homes. Some outgrow an existing space, while others take up new hobbies or have different needs that were not apparent when purchasing the home. Indeed, a room addition can remedy a host of issues affecting a home.

Those considering adding a room may wonder what is involved in this type of project. According to The Spruce, no home improvement project is more complicated or expensive than building an addition. The National Association of Realtors says building an addition can cost between \$90,000 and \$270,000, depending on the size and intended purpose of the room. An addition structurally changes a home, which requires the work of professionals whether homeowners plan to build upwards or outwards.

With so much to ponder when considering a home addition, here's a look at what homeowners can expect of the process.

- **Design and planning:** Homeowners must determine the purpose behind the addition and how it will integrate with the existing home. A bedroom design likely will be different from a garage addition or family game room.

- **Hire an engineer and contractor:** An addition changes the footprint of a home. Homeowners will require professional contractors and structural engineers/architects to properly design the addition and ensure that it will not compromise the existing structure. Detailed architectural plans will be drawn up considering the layout, size and integration with the existing structure. The home may require a new property survey as well.

- **Comply with building codes:** The project will have to meet with local zoning

regulations, building codes and homeowners association rules.

- **Timing involved:** Adding a room is a major overhaul of a space. It may require months of a home being in upheaval. If the renovations are particularly extensive, homeowners may need to temporarily move out of the space. Electrical, plumbing and HVAC must be considered, and drywall and finishing the interior are some of the last steps to make the room habitable.

- **Demolition:** Adding a room may involve taking down walls or modifying existing spaces, necessitating hiring a dumpster to remove debris. This is an added consideration and expense.

Putting an addition on a home is a complex process that will take time and money. Such a project requires careful planning and consultation with an array of experts.

WHY IT PAYS TO Create A Mudroom IN A HOME

Considerations for room additions or space modifications generally involve rooms that will add value or function to a home. Mudrooms certainly fit that description, as they can add aesthetic appeal in more ways than one.

As the name implies, mudrooms are entire rooms or areas near entryways of homes where muddy shoes and other items can be stored. By having a set space for messy shoes and coats, homeowners do not need to worry about dirt and other debris being tracked throughout the home. Mudrooms also can provide a welcoming space for guests.

Homeowners who have adequate space to add an entirely new room may have no difficulty putting in a mudroom. A mudroom addition is a job best left to a professional. Ideally, this new mudroom can be adjacent to an entry by the garage, or a side or back door. The footprint of the mudroom needn't be too large, either. All it requires is a small amount of space to place a bench, coat hooks and shoe

storage.

According to This Old House, homeowners also can convert a porch, create a mudroom by expanding into an adjacent room or closet, or even repurpose space in an attached garage. U.S. News and World Report indicates that a well planned and executed mudroom has the potential to increase a home's value. Depending on the scope of the work, the average cost of a mudroom project ranges from \$2,500 for a simple porch conversion to \$30,000 when a new foundation is needed and the build-out is extensive.

Budget-conscious homeowners can create a mudroom in an existing foyer or another entryway. Adequate storage is essential

See **MUDROOM** | page 11



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WHAT TO EXPECT OF In-Law Suites

The modern real estate market has led millions of aspiring home buyers to reconsider their approach to buying a home. Low inventory has led to high home prices. When paired with mortgage interest rates that have remained north of 6 percent for years, the high sticker price of homes has made many buyers wonder if homeownership is simply beyond their means.

It's impossible to know if or when home prices will come down, but some buyers have chosen to seek homes that can accommodate multiple generations. According to the Pew Research Center, the share of multigenerational homes rose from 7 percent in 1971 to 18 percent in 2021. A multitude of factors have contributed to that increase, and housing affordability is one such variable. In 2024, researchers studying multigenerational households at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania noted that housing affordability declined considerably in recent years but also had been on the decline for decades. As homes become less affordable, the number of multigenerational households tends to increase, and that's something modern buyers can keep in mind as they look for a home.

In-law suites that accommodate



multigenerational households can provide a pathway to homeownership for buyers who otherwise may be priced out of the market. Buyers considering homes with an in-law suite or those who want to add one to their existing homes can familiarize themselves with these convenient and potentially cost-saving features.

• **Note the significance of a separate entrance.** Whether you're looking for a home with an in-law suite or hoping to add one on to your existing home, a separate entrance for suite residents can allow them to come and go as they please. That sense of independence is significant. In addition, a separate entrance can make a home seem less like a multigenerational residence, which at times can feel crowded, and more like a single-generation home. That can

afford all residents a little more peace and quiet in a typical day.

• **Expect an increase in taxes if you're adding on.** As with any addition to a home, adding an in-law suite to an existing home is likely to result in an increase in homeowners' property taxes. The amount of that increase is contingent upon variables unique to each residence, like location and the size of the addition. When shopping for homes with existing in-law suites, buyers can request existing tax information so they are not surprised by the number like they might be if they add on to an existing home. Despite that, it might still be in prospective buyers' best interest to add on to an existing property and pay the additional taxes than it would to buy a new home.

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MUDROOM

from page 9

for any mudroom, and should include coat racks, hooks, a bench to facilitate removing shoes safely, shoe storage, and additional considerations, like shopping bag storage or umbrella holders. Creating a door from the outside into an existing laundry room can enable homeowners to use the space as both a mudroom and laundry area with minimal

changes necessary.

There are some extra considerations for mudrooms that homeowners should think about. The flooring, walls and furniture/storage used in the mudroom should be durable and easily cleaned. As wet and dirty shoes and clothing will be in the space, it's essential to make clean-up a breeze. Look for nonslip flooring so entering the mudroom safely is not an issue. Although a mudroom is a utilitarian space,

creature comforts can be added to integrate the space with the rest of the home. Cover a storage bench with indoor-outdoor fabric that coordinates to the colors used in a home. Add some decorative drawer pulls and cabinet hardware to elevate the space. Washable throw rugs also can add some design appeal to the room.

Mudrooms can be useful spaces that add function and value to homes.

IN-LAW SUITES

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- **Try to include features residents have come to expect when living independently.**

An in-law suite should include its own private bathroom, a washroom for a washer and dryer

and a kitchen or kitchenette. If everyone in a multigenerational household is forced to use the same bathrooms, washers and dryers, and kitchens, then the home might begin to feel cramped rather quickly.

- **Try to secure off-street parking.** Though it might not affect the ambiance within the in-law suite itself, an off-street parking spot is a

convenience residents will appreciate. Such a space will allow residents to come and go as they please and save them the headache of moving their vehicles for snow plows and street cleaners.

In-law suites could be an in-demand feature as more homeowners and aspiring buyers seek to reduce housing costs by embracing multigenerational living arrangements.

In-law suites that accommodate multigenerational households can provide a pathway to homeownership for buyers who otherwise may be priced out of the market.



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TIPS TO MAXIMIZE Closet Space

Who couldn't use a little more closet space at home? As individuals accumulate more belongings, they need places to store all of these items. While modern homes may be built with extra storage in mind, older homes often place a premium on closet space. Homes built earlier than the 1980s may have small closets in bedrooms and only one or two additional closets around the home for linens and other items.

The most obvious solution to a lack of closet space is to build more closets. But too

often home floor plans cannot accommodate new closets. Therefore, homeowners may have to get creative to maximize their space.

Sort and discard

Individuals can take some time to empty closets and assess what is in them. Sometimes more space can come from simply thinning out belongings that are no longer used. Take off the plastic coverings on dry cleaning and discard bulky shoe boxes.

Invest in thinner hangers

Clothes hangers come in all types, but the thinnest and most durable ones tend to be the no-slip velvet variety. Such hangers keep garments from slipping off and feature an ultra-thin design, says Real Simple magazine.

Use storage containers

Grouping items together and condensing them can free up space. Tuck belts, handbags and other items into storage bins that can be labeled and stacked. Loose items can look more cluttered and even take up more space when spread out.

Pair shelves with rods

For those with enough space, hanging a few shelves in unused areas in the closet can provide more storage space. If there is sufficient space above the rod, install a shelf and place seldom-used items up high.

Get a closet system

A customized closet system will certainly provide the best chances to maximize closet space. These companies will measure the closet and assess the contents to draw up a design that will give homeowners what they need. Closet systems also can adjust and grow with lifestyle changes.

Choose other storage solutions

In addition to closets, people can identify other spaces to store items. This can include bins under beds, storage benches or ottomans, the back sides of doors, or in furniture with built-in drawers. Individuals also can purchase free-standing closets or armoires that can fill in when rooms do not have enough closet space or no closet at all.

Maximizing closet space comes down to some creativity, de-cluttering and utilizing additional furniture to meet needs.



REMEDIES FOR Creaky Floors

Hardwood floors are coveted features in many homes. The National Wood Flooring Association says wood floors are the most environmentally friendly flooring options available. In the United States, the hardwood forests that provide flooring products are growing twice as fast as they are being harvested. Furthermore, wood floors can last for many generations and require fewer raw materials to produce than other flooring options. That means less waste may end up in landfills.

Hardwood floors can endure for decades in a home, but over time those same floors may need some tender loving care to keep them looking good and working as they should. Squeaky floors are a common nuisance that homeowners may experience.

Squeaking is often caused by movement and friction between floorboards. Treating the problem involves identifying the underlying issue.

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TIPS FOR WINTERIZING Exterior Living Areas

When the summer entertaining season draws to a close, homeowners need to ensure their outdoor living areas can handle weather that's right around the corner. Although outdoor furniture and other items tend to be durable, the impact snow, wind and ice can have on them may lead to damage over time. That is why many homeowners take steps to winterize their outdoor spaces and protect their belongings. Here's a look at how to prepare for the winter to come.

- **Furniture:** Cover or store furniture to

protect it from the elements. Covering it with weather-proof covers can be adequate if storing items indoors is not possible.

- **Deep clean:** Items that will be covered or stored should be thoroughly cleaned prior to being removed from spaces for the season. Lingering dirt and moisture can cause damage.

- **Insulate and drain:** Don't risk damage to pipes, which can freeze and crack in the cold. Shut off the water supply to exterior faucets and drain water lines to prevent pipes from freezing and bursting. Use foam

pipe insulation to prevent freezing and cover any exposed pipes.

- **Apply mulch:** After cleaning up garden debris, think about applying mulch to garden beds and cover tender plants to protect them from the weather.

- **Check gutters:** Be sure that gutters and downspouts are clear of leaves and any additional debris. If gutters and downspouts are not cleaned, ice dams may form on the roof and cause water damage.

- **Inspect and repair:** Inspect walkways

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FLOORS

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Loose hardware

Squeaky floors may be due to the loosening of the hardware holding the floor in place, says The Home Depot. When nails or screws no longer are secured tightly, the boards can rub together. The noise heard is the sound produced by rubbing. Tightening or replacing the hardware can help reduce the squeaking.

Counter-snap kit method

This Old House says this kit method is a great way to fix squeaks without damaging the floor. Once the source of the squeak is

located, drill a 3/32-inch pilot hole through the hardwood flooring. Then insert a screw through the kit's depth-control fixture and into the pilot hole, and drive it until it automatically snaps off below the wood surface. Follow this up by filling the hole with wood putty that matches the floor color. Once the putty is dry, lightly sand the area to blend.

Use a shim or shims

Sometimes the floor may squeak because of a gap between the joists and the subfloor. Filling the gap with a small piece of wood called a shim can help alleviate the gap or gaps.

Drive up screws

If a squeak is just in one spot, The Home

Depot says that you may be able to drive short screws from below into the subfloor.

Small gaps

For small gaps between boards, sprinkle talcum powder or powdered graphite between squeaky boards to reduce friction. Wood filler applied with a putty knife also may work. For larger gaps, use a liquid filler designed for wood floors.

Homeowners also can visit their local home improvement center for other hardware solutions designed for underfloor repairs to remedy squeaks. Many work from underneath the floor and involve mounting plates or brackets to sure up the floor.

Squeaky floors can be problematic, but noises can be banished with some repair work.

EXTERIOR

from page 14

and driveways for any damage and make repairs now so water will not seep in and cause further issues with freeze-thaw cycles. Consider applying a sealant to protect surfaces from snow and ice.

• **Pools and spas:** It's essential to follow the industry or manufacturer recommendations for closing down swimming pools and spas for the season. While covers may not be

essential in all climates, covering can help prevent leaves and other debris from getting in the water. Water should be expelled from pipes and tubing to prevent freezing and bursting. If space allows, consider moving the pool pump indoors to prolong its longevity. Turn off the electricity to the outlet where the filter is plugged in.

There may be additional, region-specific steps to winterize a property, but these pointers are a good starting point to protect outdoor spaces.



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