

Overcome DIY Drama With Ease

(NAPSA)—With more homeowners cutting back and tackling home improvement projects themselves, it is common for unexpected DIY drama to ensue. Whether it is drilling a hole in the wrong spot or getting a shovel stuck in hardened concrete, DIYers across the country are encountering similar problems and coming up with their own solutions.

This fall, True Value is asking Americans to share their home improvement mishaps and how they were able to turn them around with the True Value “DIY Drama” contest. Whether it’s a project that turned out nothing like you planned or one you never quite finished—submit your own home improvement blunder at www.StartRightStartHere.com for a chance to win \$5,000 at a local True Value store and an in-person consultation with a knowledgeable employee or “Master of All Things Hardwarian.”

With proper preparation and real-world tips from experts, many projects can be done without hiring expensive contractors and with minimal headaches along the way. Here are some common home improvement projects and simple tips to ensure your DIY doesn’t go awry.

Breathe Easy

Project Idea: Making simple changes to improve the energy efficiency of your home—like cleaning or replacing air filters once a month—can save money and is friendly to the environment.

Tips: Dirty furnace and air conditioner filters hamper airflow—which ends up costing you money. Vacuum and wash the filters with soap and water, but make sure they’re completely dry before you replace them. Before you begin work, make sure the area surrounding your furnace and air ducts is free of flammable materials.

Show Your Stripes

Project Idea: A fresh coat of paint does wonders for any space—but make a statement by painting stripes. This unexpected twist adds visual interest and is surprisingly versatile.

Tips: Start your pattern in an inconspicuous place, such as behind a door, to make sure any first-time mistakes are hidden. To keep your stripes straight, mark the top and the bottom of the wall and attach a string to both marks with a pushpin to determine if the line is straight before you paint.

Year-Round Curb Appeal

Project Idea: Maintaining the health and look of your lawn is a year-round process. What you do in the fall and winter months to clean up and maintain your yard contributes to lush springtime growth.

Tips: Autumn is the perfect time to get rid of weeds and clean up your yard before the first major frost. In the winter, reuse the boughs from a cut holiday tree to protect plants from the cold weather. Not only is it a natural covering, but the evergreen

boughs can be shredded in the spring for mulch or turned into compost.

For more project ideas and advice, visit www.StartRightStartHere.com and receive step-by-step instructions for any level, no matter if you’re a beginner or advanced do-it-yourselfer.

Real DIY Advice To Keep In Your Toolbox

Eliminate home improvement drama before it begins with these simple steps:

- **Prep Before Paint**—It may sound simple, but cleaning, patching and priming the walls before you paint will create an even and professional feel.
- **Measure Twice and Cut Once**—When cutting materials, it is best to cut too long rather than too short. You can always fix it by making it shorter, but you can never make it longer.
- **Be Realistic**—When budgeting for a project, pad the final cost by 20 percent for any unexpected expenses/materials. Make a list before you go to the hardware store and consult an experienced store employee to determine how much material you’ll need.
- **S.O.S.**—Don’t be afraid to reach out to a handy friend, family member or home improvement expert before a mishap gets out of hand. You can also visit www.StartRightStartHere.com for step-by-step project instructions, shopping lists, project tips, helpful advice and to enter the “DIY Drama” contest this fall. 