

Decorator's Notebook

On the Level: A Must-Have Tool For Decorating and Home Fix-Ups

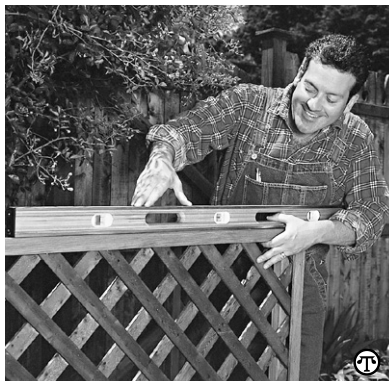
(NAPSA)—Homemakers everywhere know the satisfaction of a window treatment hung just right or a border that perfectly accents a room. However, it takes more than hammers, pliers and glue guns to complete a project properly—you need a way to keep your projects on the level as well.

Who hasn't been frustrated by a picture listing to left or right, or a knickknack shelf that's not quite straight? Well, there's an easy solution: the level.

Levels are one of the fastest-growing categories of tools for the dedicated fixer-upper. And today's models are so much lighter and easier to handle than ever before that no serious home decorator can afford to be without one.

Levels come in a variety of shapes, sizes and optional features. They all have a small glass vial containing a liquid that flows left or right, depending on the angle at which the tool is held. A bubble caused by air in the vial moves along with the liquid, letting users judge when the level is straight. When the bubble holds steady between the two markers on the face of the vial, your picture or knickknack shelf is straight.

Battery-powered laser levels, which project a light beam onto the wall to give you a rule-straight guide for hanging, are the hottest models in the category. They've dropped significantly in price since being first introduced in 2003 and have become very affordable. Like other types of levels, laser levels come in a range of sizes. One of the most portable and easiest to use is the Mayes brand laser level from Great Neck Saw Manufacturers, which comes with a tripod for simple tabletop setup.



Levels can be a valuable tool for home decorators.

A torpedo level is the most compact of the variations and usually includes three directional vials—vertical, horizontal and right angle—for multiple uses. Enhancing this portable tool's functionality, Great Neck has added a grooved magnetic edge that aligns the level with any pipe or other curved surface.

Another Great Neck innovation is the MarkSmart ruler model, featuring pin guides to mark the appropriate spot or spots for your nail or tack. Simply measure your hanging space, taking care that the bubble inside the vial holds steady between the black marks. Then slide the pin guides to the appropriate points and push. The pins will leave tiny marks on the wall surface and—*voilà!*—you're ready to nail your shelf, picture or border.

Mayes, MarkSmart and Great Neck Saw brand levels range in price from \$1.59 to \$69, and can be found at Tractor Supply, Menards, Distribution America and other fine retailers everywhere. For more information, log on to www.greatnecksaw.com.