



Home Tips®



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Q & A

Should Stucco Be Sealed?

Our house has a stucco finish on the exterior. During rainstorms the stucco absorbs water like a sponge. Should we seal it?

Do not worry about your stucco. The moisture it absorbs will just evaporate without damaging your house. Sealing the stucco will keep it from "breathing" and is likely to seal moisture into the stucco. That's not very good.

Sealing will also make it harder to renew the stucco finish. A stucco finish generally will last 20 to 30 years, after which a thin "dash" coat of new stucco can be applied to renew it. But if you've put a sealer on, it will have to be sandblasted.

The real problem for most people is moisture getting behind the stucco at cracks, especially around windows and doors. This can lead to rotting wood. Seal up cracks with a silicone caulk.

Acrylic Bathtub Repair?

Our acrylic bathtub has a crack about 2 inches long in the bottom. Can the tub be repaired, or do we have to replace it?

Sure, you can repair your tub yourself, but with dark-colored tubs, a pro will be able to do a better job.

The first step is to check your warranty - the crack may be covered. If it is, doing the repair yourself may void the warranty. If it is not under warranty, buy a repair kit, either from the manufacturer, from a repair company (look in the yellow pages under "Bathtubs & Sinks - Repairing & Refinishing") or from Surface Specialists Inc., Dept. TFH, 2362 175th Lane N.W., Andover, MN 55304; (612) 753-2807. The repair kit will cost around \$25.00.

To make the repair, here is the basic procedure (your kit will have full instructions): Rout out the crack with a Dremel Moto-Tool or similar tool until it is approximately 1/8 inch wide and deep enough so it goes into the fiberglass backing of the tub by 1/32 inch. Mix the filler compound with the supplied pigments so that it matches the color of your tub, and then pack it into the crack. Once it has set, sand with progressively finer sandpaper, going up to 600 grit. Apply a coat of automotive wax, then buff.

Don't expect to have a repair that is completely unnoticeable, especially if you have a dark-colored tub. If you are not comfortable with the "Ten Foot Rule" ("If you can't see it from ten feet away, it's okay"), hire a professional. The cost of a professional repair will be from \$50.00 to \$150.00, and even it will be noticeable if you look closely.

Squeaky Floors?

Our carpeted floor squeaks when we walk on it. Can it be corrected from underneath, where the joists are exposed in the basement? We have 1x8 tongue and grooved subflooring and under the carpet is oak flooring.

Squeaking is produced by wood rubbing on wood or nails rubbing on wood. For many people it's as irritating as fingernails on a blackboard.

The three most common causes are: (1) loose or twisted floor joist, (2) a loose subfloor, and (3) a hardwood floor pulling away from the subfloor. You are lucky that your floor joist are exposed in the basement. It should be easy to repair your squeaks without pulling up carpeting.

First, watch your floors from the basement as someone upstairs walks on them. Does the subfloor move or do the joist twist slightly? If not, chances are good that your hardwood flooring has come loose from the subfloor. The best way to fix this problem is to drill pilot holes through the subfloor in the location of the squeak and use 1 inch or 1 1/4 inch screws to pull the floor tight to the subfloor.

If you see the subfloor moving as someone walks, then it is not making firm contact with the joist or a twisted joist is giving a little under the weight. If you see a twisted joist make sure the wooden or metal diagonal bridging between the joist is tight. If extra support is needed, put in solid bridging.

If there are places where the subfloor is not touching the joist, drive wooden shims with a little glue on them between the top of the joist and under the subfloor. If this is occurring over several feet of the joist, place a 2x4 along the side of the joist, prop it tightly against the subfloor using a wedge from the basement floor, then nail or screw the 2x4 to the joist. Be gentle when you use either of these techniques, because they can pop your floor up in other places if you apply too much pressure. The goal is to make tight contact, not to push up the floor.

Another cure is to spray WD-40 lubricant on the area between the joist and subfloor. It is a quick and easy fix, though it is not a permanent one. On hardwood floors I have also had good results with talcum powder. Dust the powder over the floor and sweep into the cracks.

