



Home Tips®



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Q & A

Doors Won't Stay Open?

We have two doors in our house that will not stay open. They slowly close and we have to prop them open. Is there anything we can do to solve this problem?

It is aggravating to have to prop your doors open. This is a common problem, however, in both new and older homes. There are two main reasons for this problem. Either the doors were not hung plumb to begin with or the house has settled causing the doors to be out of plumb.

The first solution is quick and easy. Remove each hinge pin, one at a time, and whack it with a hammer on a concrete floor. You want the pin to be bent slightly, so that the hinges are stiff enough to prevent the door from swinging by itself. If you bend the pins too much, they will not go back into the hinge. This seems to work well on lighter doors.

The second solution is much more involved. You will need to rehang the door so it is plumb. The first step is to take the door off its hinges. Then use a level to see which direction the door frame is crooked: parallel with the wall, perpendicular to it, or both. Use a six foot level if you can get a hold of one, or a shorter level held securely against a very straight board. Place your level against the barrels (the round part) of the hinges for checking perpendicular to the wall, and against the leaves (the flat part) of the hinges to check parallel to the wall.

If the hinges are out of plumb parallel to the wall, slip a shim under the hinge that needs it. You can use pieces of cardboard, metal flashing or a thin strip of wood.

If the hinges are out of plumb perpendicular to the wall, one of them will have to be moved sideways. You may have to chisel out the hinge recess to enlarge it and you may also need to remove the door stop (the piece of wood the door hits when it is closed) and relocate it. If you're moving the hinge only a small amount, the screws may insist on going back into the same old holes. In this case fill the old holes with wood shims or wooden matches. Then predrill the new holes before attaching the hinges. You may end up readjusting the strike plate on the other jamb if the door will not latch.

Is Roofing Felt Needed?

We are planning to replace our roof shingles and will be removing the old shingles. When we asked the roofer what weight of felt he used, he said that he did not use felt. Is felt required and what purpose does it serve?

Roofing felt performs several functions. First, it provides a quick cover to protect the roof deck (plywood) and interior of the house from the elements while the roof is being installed. It provides added protection if the wind rips a shingle off and it also provides protection from wind-driven rain or backed-up ice, which can get under the shingles and damage the roof deck. So insist that the roofer use roofing felt.

Insulating A Garage?

We are converting our garage into a family room and would like to use 6" of insulation on the walls. However, the studs are only 2x4s. What is an easy way to add the 2" we need to the studs?

You could nail 2x2s to the face of your existing studs and plates, then fill the cavities with 6" thick batts of insulation. However, there's a better way.

Use R-13 high-density fiberglass batts between your existing 2x4s, then follow them with a layer of 1" rigid foam insulated sheathing rated at R-5 or more. This will give you the same R-value as the 6" batt insulation. The foam should be glued with construction adhesive. When it comes time to install the drywall, you will need to use 2 1/2" drywall screws to go through the foam and into the studs. The cost of these two methods is about the same, but the layer of rigid foam insulation prevents heat from being lost through the studs, which accounts for 10% to 12% of your wall, and which are much less effective insulators than fiberglass.

Venting A Dryer?

We are planning to relocate our washer and dryer to the upstairs. Is it okay to run a vinyl dryer duct through the attic?

Vinyl ducts longer than 20 feet can accumulate enough lint to become a fire hazard according to the 1987 Consumer Product Safety Commission Report. The report also stated that 13,900 such fires were identified in 1987.

It would be better to install a 4" galvanized rigid metal duct in the wall, since you will not be able to inspect the duct for tears or holes after the wall is finished, and then install flexible aluminum ducts in the attic to the roof or soffit vent.

