

Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

Replacing Cabinet Hardware

Are you looking to change up the look and feel of your kitchen without doing a total redesign? Replacing the hardware on your kitchen cabinets is a fast, easy and cost-efficient way to give the room a facelift. You'll only need a few tools: wood putty, a putty knife, a screwdriver, a drill—and a little patience.

While you're shopping for new cabinet hardware, keep in mind what's practical for your home and lifestyle. If you have young children, you'll probably want to avoid handles with sharp edges. You may think the fruit shaped knobs are cute, but do they actually fit with the overall aesthetic of your kitchen? A more simple, metallic handle or knob will look good in anyone's kitchen and will compliment nearly every paint color.



1 To install your new cabinet hardware, you will first need wood putty to fill in the old screw holes. Purchase three shades of wood putty, one that matches the lightest grain, one that matches the darkest grain and one that's in between. Let a bit of the mixture of these three colors dry some before you use it, just to make sure the color you achieve is one that you think matches well. Put the wood putty in the screw hole and use a putty knife to pack it in and scrape it flat.

2 Next, using a hardware installation kit and pencil, mark the holes that will correspond with your new cabinet handles. Choose a drill bit that matches the inner diameter of the handle's screws and carefully drill into the holes that you've marked off. Apply even pressure to the drill and be sure that you keep a steady hand.

3 Finally, install your new cabinet hardware into the predrilled holes. Secure the new handles with a handheld screwdriver.

Weatherstripping For Doors and Windows

During cold weather months, it's most important for you to make sure that the warm air inside is not being compromised by the frigid temperatures outdoors. Weatherstripping your doors and windows can help you retain the warm air inside, which can help lower your annual heating bill. There are four different kinds of weatherstripping that you can choose from.



Felt This is the most affordable weather stripping option, but the least durable. A synthetic blend of fabric or wool is installed around a door or window sash.

Door sweeps Door sweeps can be installed quickly along the bottom interior side of a door. These are made of aluminum, stainless steel or plastic frame that's fitted with a strip of sponge, felt bristles, vinyl or plastic to fill the space between the door and threshold. This is the most durable weather stripping option, as you can leave door sweeps on all year long.

V-Strip (Tension shield) These are typically made of aluminum, stainless steel or vinyl, and are placed along the top or sides of doors. To install a V-strip, cut the strip to the desired length, then peel and stick it down or use finishing nails.

Foam tape Foam tape can be used along door frames, on the top and bottom of window seams and on nonopening windows. This is an affordable option that's easy to install, as you simply place the tape along the area you want sealed.



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Replacing Your Water Heater



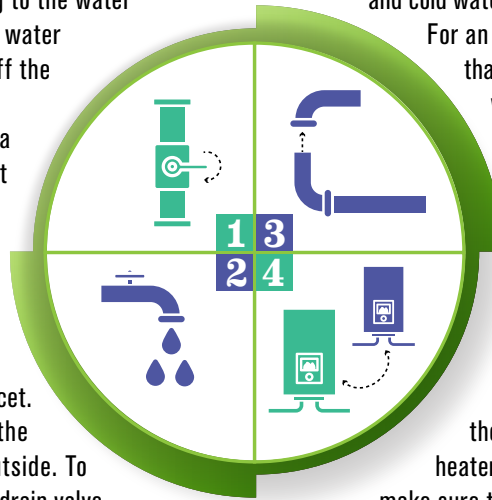
Most manufacturers suggest that homeowners replace their water heaters every 8-10 years. Since replacing a water heater is an advanced project, it's best to pay a professional in many cases. However, if you're an experienced DIY-er who's confident in their home improvement skills, this project will be much more suited for you to take on. Consider these steps as you work to replace your water heater.

1 Shut off the water supply and fuel source – Use your home's main water shutoff valve to turn off the water flowing to the water tank. If you have an electric water heater, you'll want to turn off the circuit breaker on the water heater's circuit. If you have a gas water heater, you'll want to turn off the shutoff valve on the gas pipe leading to the water heater.

2 Drain the water heater tank – Turn on the nearest hot water faucet. Use a garden hose to drain the tank into a floor drain or outside. To avoid sediment clogging the drain valve, you'll need to open it slowly. Let it drain completely before you turn off the valve and remove the hose.

3 Disconnect the water lines, then disconnect the power source – Next, disconnect the hot and cold water lines from the old water heater. For an electric water heater, double check that the circuit is off and unscrew the wires and circuits. For a gas water heater, double check that the gas line has been shut off before you disconnect the gas line from the gas valve. Then, disconnect the water heater vent.

4 Make the swap – You are now ready to install your brand-new water heater. Clean the floor where the previous water heater was, put the new one in place and make sure that it is level. You may need use brackets or straps to secure the new water heater if your area is subject to earthquakes.



Remember to use proper safety precautions before installing a new water heater. If you're uncomfortable performing any of the above tasks, contact a professional for assistance.

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