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# 7 Do-It-Yourself Home Improvement Projects That Could Save You Money

If you always hire professionals for your home improvement projects, here are a few you may want to try yourself.

By [Geoff Williams](#) | ✓ Edited by [Dawn Bradbury](#)

✓ Reviewed by [Liisa Rajala](#) | July 29, 2024

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A garden can make your home looks nicer, and maybe you save a little money with the vegetables you raise and eat.

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It's easy to see why you might be thinking about [DIY projects](#) instead of hiring a professional. In the best of circumstances, maintaining a house means there's often some big expense or repair around the corner. Maybe you're saving up to [replace your roof](#). Maybe before that you plan to have [your home's exterior painted](#). Perhaps soon you'll have to replace your heating and air conditioning system, your aging and crooked mailbox or your decaying backyard patio or deck.

The joys of homeownership aside, living in a condo or a house can mean having a never-ending list of home improvement chores and continually hiring a small army of [contractors](#) to keep your place running.

And thus the appeal of DIY projects. Instead of paying somebody to do the hard work of fixing up your home, you can do it yourself – at least in theory. Home projects that are a snap for some might completely break another person's spirit and will to live.

Here are seven ideas – from pretty easy to not so easy – a reasonably confident DIY-er may want to attempt.

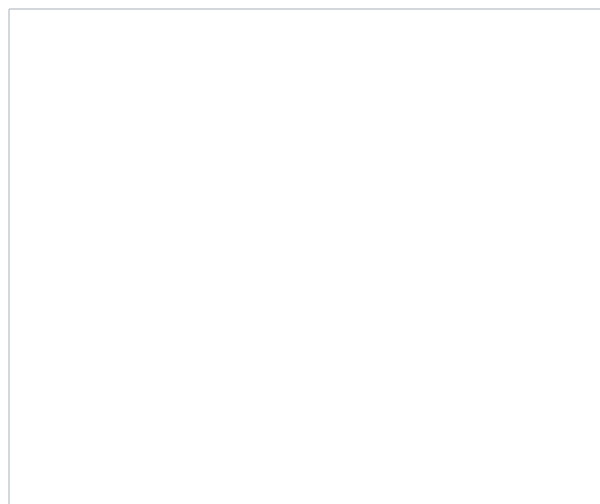
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## 1. Replace a Showerhead

**Difficulty level:** Easy

**What you might save:** The home improvement website HomeGuide.com suggests that you'll spend \$45 to \$150 an hour for a plumber. This is a project a plumber should be able to do in minutes. However, plumbers may add a minimum service time of one or two hours to account for travel time and other factors.

**How to do it:** You'll probably need a wrench or pliers to unscrew the nut on the old showerhead, says S.A. "Sam" Jernigan, a Grass Valley, California, entrepreneur who owns interior design firm Renaissance Design Consultations. Make sure there isn't anything grimy on the pipe before you put the [new showerhead](#) on, and "then just screw on your new showerhead and tighten by hand. No need to be too aggressive," Jernigan says.



**What could go wrong:** Not much. If you end up unscrewing the old showerhead and can't get the new one back on, a family member or neighbor could probably do it for you.

▶▶ **Related:** [How to Filter Shower Water in Your Apartment](#)

## 2. Set Up a Garden Bed

**Difficulty level:** Easy

**What you might save:** On average, a gardener costs \$75 an hour, according to home improvement website

TheSpruce.com.

**How to do it:** “Making a garden bed is a great way to add value to your home without breaking the bank or your back,” says Al Ruggie, marketing director at ASAP Restoration LLC, a home contracting company in Tempe, Arizona. “Many planter boxes and garden beds come in kits that can be assembled in the morning so that you’re planting veggies and herbs by the afternoon.”

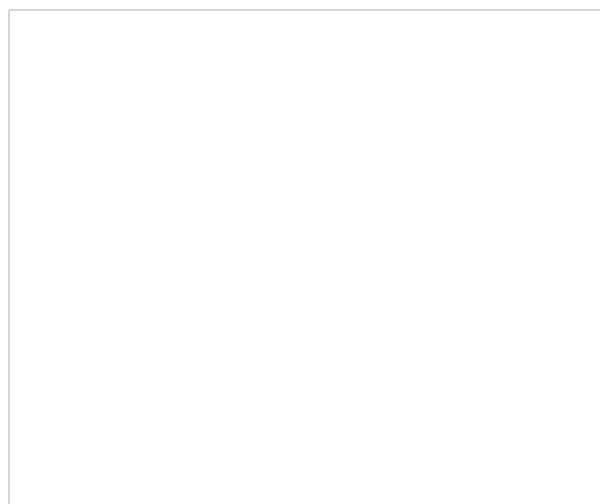
**What could go wrong:** Very little. At worst, you have an eyesore somewhere in your yard. At best, your yard and the outside of your home looks nicer, and maybe you save a little money with the vegetables you raise and eat.

### 3. Paint an Accent Wall or Architectural Feature

**Difficulty level:** Medium

**What you might save:** \$210. HomeGuide.com suggests hiring a painter could cost as much as \$70 an hour. It'll probably take a professional painter, at most, three hours to paint your wall. It might take you about the same length of time. For the cost of around a gallon of paint, an accent wall is a quick way to give a room a fresh look in a weekend.

**How to do it:** The key here is that this is one wall or one little part of your home that you’re painting. Obviously the more you paint, the more difficult a painting project becomes. Before choosing an accent or feature wall, decide where you want to draw your attention. Good focal points include fireplaces, living room gallery walls and the wall behind your headboard in the bedroom.



Preparation is particularly important. For instance, you'll want to buy high quality painter's tape. "No bargain brands, they don't do the job," Jernigan says. "Spackle and latex primer are optional, if you have any surface blemishes that need to be repaired, including nail holes."

Jernigan also advises: "Apply the tape carefully when masking off edges, around trim and moldings, and then run your finger firmly along the entire surface to ensure a good seal."

Professionals use the 60-30-10 wall color rule to maintain the space's color balance: 60% of your room will have the dominant color, 30% should primarily be the secondary color and 10% the accent color. For rooms with darker color walls, consider going lighter for an accent wall, according to advice from Benjamin Moore. If the walls are light and airy, consider a deeper, bolder color.

**What could go wrong:** You might do an excellent job but realize you picked an unappealing color, or chose the wrong wall to paint, so think it over carefully before you start painting, Jernigan warns. You could wind up doing a lousy job and need to hire a contractor or a friend or family member to repaint what you did. But, again, this is one wall. You won't destroy your home with one badly painted wall.

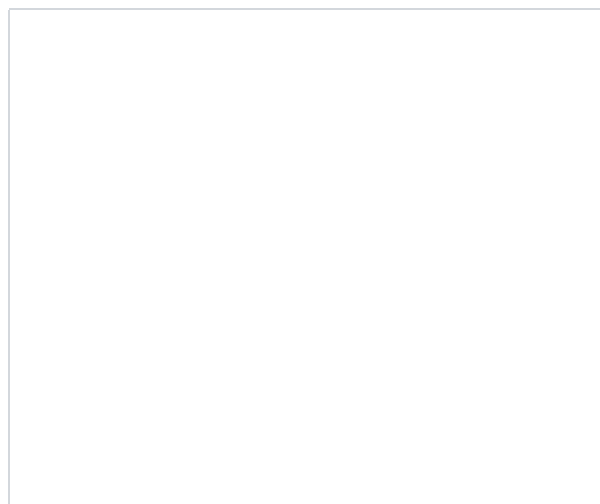
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## 4. Install Floating Shelves

**Difficulty level:** Easy to medium, depending on your point of view and skill level

**What you might save:** \$70. The service website Thumbtack pegs the cost of hiring a professional handyman at \$60 to \$70 an hour.

**How to do it:** [Paige Warrington](#), a Youngstown, Arizona-based project manager with ASAP Restoration, is a fan of floating shelves. "Floating shelves are a great way to accent a wall without going all out on a paint project or nailing shiplap up all day," she says. "Not only do floating shelves look really cool and stylish, but they are also functional and useful too." She says most floating shelves come in easily installed DIY-able kits that take most of the work out of the process.



**What could go wrong:** If you mismeasure or misjudge the space, you could leave nail holes in the wall that will need

repair. If you're not a meticulous DIYer, you could end up with some scratches on the wall. Still, even if the floating shelf idea flops, it's a pretty low-risk project.

## 5. Replace a Faucet

**Difficulty level:** Easy to medium

**What you might save:** \$45 to \$150 an hour, per HomeGuide's plumbing estimates. You could wrap up this project within an hour or two.

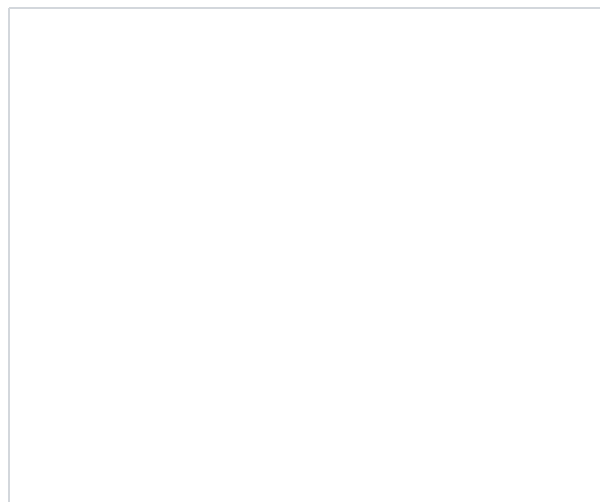
**How to do it:** "Before [replacing a faucet](#), turn off the water supply to prevent leaks," says Craig Young, who knows his way around a wrench and hammer since he works on a lot of projects that are most definitely not do-it-yourself jobs. Young is the vice president of Roof Doctors, which services Northern California and is headquartered in Sacramento.

Young suggests that you have a bucket and towels to catch water that spills. He says the manufacturer's instructions for the faucet will tell you how to install it, but it's generally not a difficult project. You can tackle the project with a basin wrench and a few other tools. There are specialized faucet tools that may make replacing a bathroom sink or tub faucet easier.

"Make sure all parts are included before you start, and use plumber's tape on connections to prevent leaks," Young advises, cautioning that you don't want to overtighten anything when you connect the faucet to the pipe, which can cause damage.

**What could go wrong:** Maybe you won't be able to do it and you'll have to call in a plumber, but this shouldn't be a case where you flood your home.





## 6. Caulk windows, doors, walls or bathtubs

**Difficulty level:** Easy to medium

**What you might save:** \$70 an hour, going with Thumbtack's professional handyman rates.

**How to do it:** What is caulking? It's using rubbery-type material on cracks and gaps in your house; you're sealing leaks and making your home more insulated when you caulk.

If you're going to caulk your windows and doors, you'll want to remove any old caulk first, Young says. "Use a caulk gun to apply a smooth layer of new caulk," he says, adding that it's important to choose the right type of caulk. Silicone is typical for bathrooms, according to Young, and latex for general use.

"Clean the surface thoroughly before applying the caulk and smooth it out with a wet finger or a caulking tool. Avoid applying too much caulk at once and ensure that the caulk is allowed to cure fully before painting over it," Young says.

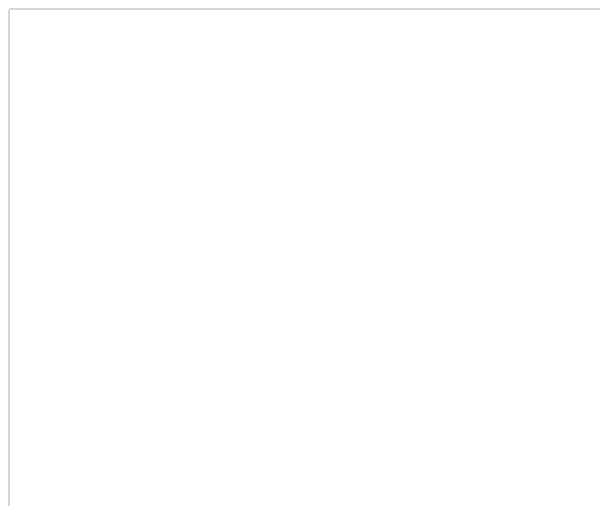
**What could go wrong:** You could have a slight eyesore if you caulk incorrectly or not neatly. In a worst-case scenario, if you caulk badly and gaps remain, moisture may collect in the gaps that are still there, which can allow mold growth. You can fix a bad caulk job easily, however, by using a solvent to soften the caulk. Scrape it away before giving caulking another try or hiring a professional.

## 7. Install a Ceiling Fan

**Difficulty level:** Medium to hard

**What you might save:** Maybe \$140 or more, assuming you're using a \$70-an-hour professional, and assuming he or she would have it done within about two hours.

**How to do it:** “To install a ceiling fan, ensure that the power is turned off at the circuit breaker before beginning the installation,” Young says. “Use a fan brace or mounting bracket to securely attach the fan. Carefully follow the manufacturer’s wiring instructions.”



Some people just see the part where Young mentions “wiring” and think “no thanks”. And that could be exactly the right attitude, according to Young, who says, “If you’re not comfortable with electrical work, it’s best to seek professional assistance.”

But for those who are comfortable with wiring and DIY projects in general, a ceiling fan can be a nice add-on to a home, especially in the summer.

**What could go wrong:** Ceiling fans can be heavy, so there's a risk of drops or falls, and you'll need the strength to lift and place it. You also need to be sure the ceiling can take the weight. You could install it at the wrong height. Improper wiring is a safety hazard. You need to take care with blade balance and placement or you could end up with noisy or wobbly fan blades.

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