

Expert advice

# DIY DILEMMAS

Caught in a DIY trap or simply want some good advice? Jake Robinson is on hand to help



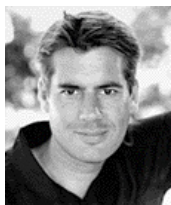
## Jake's guide to... creating a built-in wardrobe

■ **Design the wardrobe interior according to your needs and then plan the framework. Make sure there are no cables or pipes where you intend to fix the tracks and don't build close to a radiator as the heat will damage the woodwork.**

■ Check the area with a spirit level. If your walls are uneven, pack out the timbers to ensure the doors hang properly. Create a framework using 2x2in or 2x1in timbers. The wardrobe must be at least 60cm deep to allow for clothes hangers. Clad the frame with 18mm MDF or veneered plywood.

■ **Build a base plinth 10-12cm from the floor (or match the height of your skirting), then create a top shelf to determine the height of the hanging rail (around 170-180cm from the base is ideal).**

■ Cut the doors to size, leaving 3mm between them so they don't catch. Attach three Blum hinges 5mm in from the edge of each door (use four if over 180cm high) and screw into place.



**JAKE ROBINSON**

### WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO FIX A BROKEN FLOOR TILE?

**I dropped a ceramic dish on my kitchen floor and broke one of the tiles. Is this something I can fix myself and have you got any handy tips?**

Shelley Mitchell, Cardiff

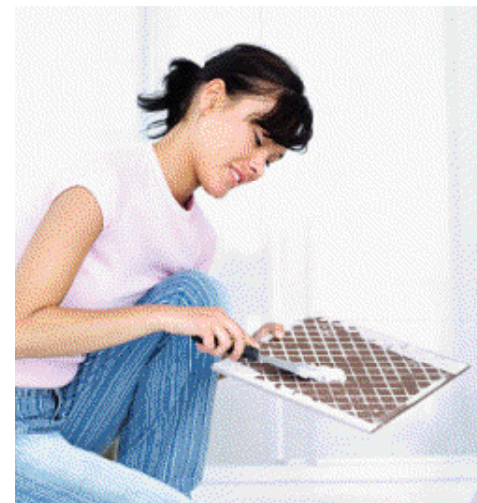
**Jake says** This is really easy to do yourself. First, remove the grouting from around the broken tile using a grout rake. Next, put on some safety goggles and drill a hole in the centre of the tile, then chisel at an angle until the tile cracks. Take out the broken pieces and remove all of the old adhesive left on the floor – if this proves difficult you may need to heat a knife to help melt it. Apply adhesive to the back of the new tile and insert it into the gap on the floor, making sure it sits flush with the surrounding tiles. Mix your grout and work well into the gaps with a sponge, making sure you wipe the surface clean before it hardens.

### HOW CAN I RECTIFY MY PAINTING MISTAKE?

**I recently painted my walls but didn't tape off the dark wood trim around the windows and doors, so it now has yellow paint all over it. What is the best way to remove the paint without damaging the wood finish?**

Jeremy Dobson, Newcastle

**Jake says** If the wood trim around your doors and windows has an oil-based finish, a water-based dried-paint remover will suffice to remove the wall paint. If the stain on the trim is water-based, however, this may affect it, so it's best to try a small test area first. For a more aggressive remover, denatured alcohol will work on the paint without affecting the oil-based trim. If it still won't come off or if these methods affect the stained trim, then a full stripping or painting (over the stain) is in order.



### CAN I GET RID OF THE CRACKS IN MY WOODEN FLOORING?

**Our newly installed red oak hardwood floor started showing cracks after we turned on the heating. The installer came back and sealed them, buffed the floor and applied an extra layer of finish, but after only a week the cracks are appearing again. How should we address this problem?**

Ricky Smith, Derby

**Jake says** Manufacturers always advise storing new timber in situ for a period of time before installing it to make sure it acclimatises to the ambient temperature and humidity. This is because changes in the environment will make the wood shrink or expand quite a bit and this is when cracks can occur. A professional fitter will know this, so if it wasn't done, you need to speak to your installer. Unfortunately, there isn't really a cure once the cracks have appeared, other than to have a good look for any sources of moisture or damp and, once fixed, sand, fill and reseal the timber floor surface if necessary. You should also check out some less obvious causes for the cracks, such as hot air blowing or warm pipes under the floorboards. Also try using a humidifier. If the cracks are large, you can cut off larger parts of the same wood and fill the holes.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY IMAGES, JUPITER IMAGES, REDCOVER.COM

Send in your DIY queries to

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