



JAKE ROBINSON'S

# DIY advice

Don't sit and despair about DIY dilemmas, ask Jake instead – with TV's *Big Strong Boys* and *House Doctor* under his belt, he's just the man for the job

## Jake's guide to...unblocking drains

For small blockages you can use caustic soda or purchase a specialist product such as Mr Muscle Sink & Plughole Unblocker. Its thick gel sinks through standing water straight to the blockage, effectively clearing it while killing germs and deodorising, leaving your pipes clean and fresh at the same time. If this option doesn't work, a sink, bath, or shower tray can be unblocked in a few other ways.

■ An ordinary plunger can be used to dislodge a blockage by placing it over the plughole and pushing up and down.

■ An easier way to unblock sinks is to use a power plunger. This is primed by pumping the handle before placing it over the plughole. By simply pressing

the trigger, all the compressed air is released, forcing the blockage down the pipe or breaking it into bits.

■ My personal favourite is the water injector. Put some water in the blocked basin and stand the pump in it. Pull up on the handle to fill it with water and place it over the plughole, then push down hard and pull up again. Repeat so the water is pushed and pulled at great force through the blockage, which should clear it if the blockage is within a couple of metres.

■ Another option is the corkscrew cable. The flexible wire is pushed into the pipe, wiggled about to break up the blockage and wound back in offering a simple and effective solution for clearing your drain.



Unblocking a drain is easier than you think

## Tip-top tools

Is there a way to clean up my rusty tools, or will I need to buy new ones? As you can tell it's been quite a while since I've done any DIY!

Steve James, Bolton

**Jake says:** I find the easiest way to clean rusty tools is with wire wool and WD-40 or kerosene, or penetrating oil. Spray the WD-40 onto the wire wool or dab it into the oil, rub until the rust disappears then clean off with a cloth. Wash the tools in warm soapy water and dry. This should solve your problem.



## Good-looking wood

We've recently inherited a wooden kitchen worktop in our new house, and I hear that they need to be treated. How do I keep it looking good?

Mrs L Shakeshaft, via email

**Jake says:** Hardwood worktops need to be oiled not varnished, which can cause chipping and can harbour germs. They must be thoroughly treated with at least three coats of protective wood oil to all sides and the underside before they're installed. You should also apply as many coats as possible to the end-grain of the worktops as this area will absorb the most moisture. An extra three or four coats should be applied around the sink cut-outs, tap holes and areas of heavy use. Apply the oil using a lint-free cloth rather than a brush, as this won't leave any particles on the wood. Always work the oil into the worktop the same way as the grain and try to apply it evenly. Leave each coat for 30-60 minutes to sink in. Wooden worktops need at least six coats, so it can be a bit of a job. If you want a really smooth surface go over the worktop with some fine sand paper (120-180 grit) or fine wire wool. If you spill water on the surface, wipe clean immediately as this could stain it.

## Pigeon street

I live in a tall block of flats and the local pigeons have taken to nesting on our roof. Is there anything we can do to deter them from using our balcony?

Jennifer Edwards, London

**Jake says:** You don't have to let pigeons be a pest. The industry standard method of protecting your property is to use Pigeonoff pigeon spikes ([www.pigeonoff.co.uk](http://www.pigeonoff.co.uk)), which keep them from perching without hurting them. They are recommended by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and cost around £5 for a one-metre length.



Cute, but a bit of a nuisance



**SEND IN YOUR DIY DILEMMAS TO:**

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