

Expert advice

# DIY DILEMMAS

Big Strong Boys' Jake Robinson gives some eco-friendly home improvement tips and explains how to apply paint like a pro



**JAKE  
ROBINSON**

### WHAT CAN WE DO TO REDUCE OUR HEATING BILLS?

**We have single-glazed windows and doors throughout our home and our heating bills are going through the roof! What can we do?**

Annabel Richards, Hampshire

**Jake says** It's not just heating bills that are a problem—all that energy consumed in vain is not doing the environment any good. Single-glazed windows alone are responsible for up to a quarter of the heat loss, especially sash windows. Double-glazing can halve this loss—and doing so with low-emissive glass can halve it again! You can install double-glazed panels in existing sash or casement windows. It can be costly initially, but cost-effective in the long run. However, if double-glazing isn't an option, use draught excluders around the bottom of doors and invest in curtains made from thick materials such as velvets to stop draughts and heat loss.

### IS IT WORTH INVESTING IN LOFT INSULATION?

**How should I go about insulating my loft and what are the benefits?**

Marie Harris, Edinburgh

**Jake says** Lofts do benefit from being properly insulated, but you can also gain a lot by ensuring walls, windows, doors, water pipes, hot-water tanks and floors have insulating materials added to them. Did you know that if British homes were insulated to Danish standards, carbon dioxide emissions could be reduced by over half a million tonnes a year? So not only will you be saving money, you'll be helping the environment, too. Lagging a hot-water tank with a thick jacket can reduce heat loss by three-quarters, covering the initial outlay in just weeks. For your loft insulation, think about using an eco-friendly product, such as 12003 Loft Insulation by Natural Collection. This is made from 100% recycled newspapers and provides high performance insulation.

### HELP ME BUILD A MORE ECO-FRIENDLY BATHROOM

**We are about to replace our bathroom and want to opt for a more environmentally sound one—what shall we look for?**

Denise Miller, Cumbria

**Jake says** Why not think about having just a shower installed, instead of a bath? You can still create a luxurious suite and there are a whole host of eco showers available which cut the amount of water used. It's also well worth opting for a low-flush toilet—these have a choice of two flushes, long or short, and this greatly reduces the amount of water used. Alternatively, install a regular toilet but place a brick in the cistern to limit the amount of water used for each flush.



## Send in your DIY queries to

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## Jake's guide to... painting a room

Painting is one of the simplest home improvement tasks. Follow this easy guide to ensure you get a professional finish.

### YOU WILL NEED

Paint brushes (measuring 1in for tight spots, 2in for painting trim and 4in for larger areas), roller, white spirit, paint tray, extension pole, ladder, dust mask, putty knife, dustsheets, paint edger, brush comb, painter's shield, blue painter's masking tape (such as 3M Scotch Blue).

### STEP ONE PREPARING THE AREA

Make sure the room you're painting is properly ventilated. Remove all ceiling fixtures, curtains, nails, pictures and shelves from the walls. If you are removing any light switches, make sure the fuses are switched off first.

Remove as much furniture as possible. Any furniture that has to be left in the room should be covered with dustsheets and moved in to the centre of the room. Cover all floors and surfaces in dustsheets

or newspaper to catch spills.

Repair any holes in the walls and make sure they are clean, with no loose or flaking paint. Use a lightweight spackling compound and a putty knife to fill small holes or cracks. Wash the walls using sugar soap, which removes grease (available in all DIY stores), then rinse with clean water and leave to dry.

Protect any mouldings and windowsills using blue painter's tape, which can be applied up to a week ahead and won't leave marks when you remove it. Make sure the line of the tape is flush with the moulding.

### STEP TWO PAINTING CEILINGS AND WALLS

To paint the ceiling, put your roller on an extension pole. Dip the roller into a roller pan filled halfway with paint, running it over the pan's shallow end until it is lightly and evenly coated with paint.

Start in one corner and roll the paint

**Above** You don't have to shell out for a decorator to achieve this elegant paint scheme. Try The Little Greene Paint Company for similar period shades

on in smooth parallel actions (**fig. 1**). If you work in 3 x 3ft sections, you will find it easier to keep the wet edges fresh. Coat the entire ceiling and then allow the paint to dry thoroughly. Once dry, apply the second coat in the same way.

To paint the walls, cover the roller with paint as described above. Start in the corner of a wall and roll the paint on in a 3 x 3ft W shape, then fill it in without lifting the roller. Continue in sections until you're finished. Mentally section the wall off in squares roughly 3-4ft wide, and work from the top down (**fig. 2**). Remember to paint one wall at a time. Carefully cut in at the junction of the ceiling with a 4in brush to get a clean line.

Once the first coat of paint is dry, remove any nubs by scraping the wall with a putty knife. For glossier sheens, sand lightly with 150-grit paper, then wipe away dust with a tack cloth. Brush on the final coat and remove any masking tape as soon as you have finished painting; pull it slowly to avoid tearing.

### HINTS AND TIPS

- Invest in good-quality brushes—cheaper brushes tend to shed their bristles. Get one with fairly soft bristles that will flow over the surface better and is easier to manoeuvre.
- Always stir paint before using it—emulsion in particular separates over time. Pour old paint through a pair of tights or a paint sieve into a bucket to get rid of any lumps.
- Use a radiator roller to get behind radiators rather than going through the hassle of taking them off the wall.
- Use water-based paint wherever possible to make cleaning up easier. Satinwood or eggshell is a good substitute for gloss on woodwork.
- To store brushes while you take a break, wrap them in clingfilm; when you're finished, clean them thoroughly with white spirit.



### STEP THREE PAINTING THE WOODWORK

When the walls are completely dry, use blue painter's tape to mask off where the trim meets the wall (if you're worried the tape might pull off the paint, test a small area first).

For larger surfaces, use a 4in brush. Start with a layer of primer or undercoat. To avoid visible brush marks, start by painting at right angles to the grain, then brush out along the grain to even the finish. When the paint is completely dry, sand it lightly and wipe away any dust with a cloth. Next, apply the top coat of eggshell or satinwood in the same way.

For narrow surfaces such as door or windowframes, do as above but use a 2in angled brush and paint in the direction of the grain only (**fig. 3**). If you get paint on glass, wait for it to dry and then remove it with a window scraper. To avoid scratching the glass, wet the surface first with window cleaner. Use white spirit to clean up spills.



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