

Expert advice

DIY DILEMMAS

If you have a tough DIY question that needs answering, House Doctor's Jake Robinson is the man

Jake's guide to... hanging an internal door

Follow these six important steps to get the job done:

- Measure the width at the top and bottom of the doorway, deducting 4mm to allow 2mm clearance on both sides. Transfer these measurements to the door. If the door is only slightly wider than the opening, measure from one edge and, using a tri-square, mark the cut line. If it's a good deal larger, mark the cut lines so an equal amount can be trimmed on both sides. When fitting panelled or framed doors, this ensures they look symmetrical.

- Use a vice to steady the door, packing the sides with cardboard to prevent damage. Trim to the marked lines using a sharp plane. Hold firmly on the surface, square it with the edge and run it along smoothly. You should position the saw to cut cleanly along the line.

- When trimming the top and bottom edge of a panelled door, start from the outer edges and work towards the centre. If you do it the other way round the ends of the vertical panels (or stiles) will split.

- Where more than 6mm needs to be trimmed from the door, use a saw to cut off the excess before planing it down to the trim line.

- Hold the door up to the opening and check it fits. If necessary, mark any trimming and plane as before. Use two small triangular wooden wedges to hold it off the floor at the right height.

- Place hinges 15cm from the top and 23cm from the bottom of the door and score around them with a Stanley knife. Use a hammer and chisel to cut out their depth. Place the hinges on the door, drill through the holes into the wood and screw flush. Wedge the door into place and apply the same method for the door frame.



JAKE ROBINSON

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO FIX OLD AND CREAKING STAIRS?

We have just moved into our house but our old stairs make a terrible creaking noise. One of the treads sinks a bit when we walk on it. There is a cupboard beneath but I can't see what is causing the problem.

Jenny Grove, London

Jake says Stairs are made up of treads and risers with strings holding them all together. Each tread has a wedge that secures it in place. What is probably happening is that some wedges have come loose or even fallen out. To fix the problem, cut some timber in the same shape and size as the existing wedges. Discard loose ones, apply PVA glue to the designated area and drive in the wedges with a hammer tight under the tread.

CAN I SAVE MY NEW FLOOR OR SHOULD I TAKE IT UP AGAIN?

I have recently laid a laminate floor in my daughter's room, but I've noticed that it has started to bow upwards. I don't know why this has happened but my neighbour thinks I have fitted the floor too tight. Is there any way of saving this floor or will I have to take it all up again?

Geoff Ridley, Sussex

Jake says This sort of thing only happens if you have fitted the floor without leaving a 10mm expansion gap. I suggest you remove all your skirting boards – use a Stanley knife to score



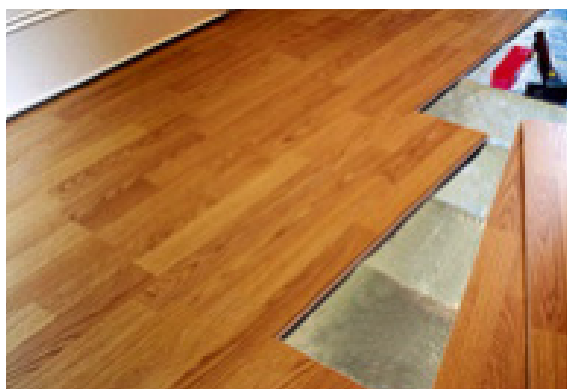
carefully between the top of the boards and the wall so it doesn't damage the paintwork when you take them off. Once you have removed all the boards, leave the floor to settle down flat. Then fit all your boards back on top of the floor. Remember to leave an expansion gap, no matter what floor you are fitting.

HOW CAN I RESTORE A LOVELY BARN DOOR IN MY COTTAGE?

I have a lovely old tongue and groove barn door in my cottage but the bottom of the flat frame is slowly starting to rot. Is there any way I can save it or should I start thinking about buying a new one?

Terry Rogers, Somerset

Jake says If the door is just starting to deteriorate, sand down the wood and apply some wood hardener to the affected area – you can buy this from DIY stores. Then pop into your local timber merchants and ask for a hardwood weather bar. Cut the bar to size, make three holes using a wood-bit drill to fit the screws, one in the centre and left and right holes of around 5cm. Apply some PVA glue to the back of the weather bar, making sure it's flush at the bottom and not catching on anything. Screw it onto the door, fill any holes, sand and paint.



PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY/LOUPEIMAGES

Send in your DIY queries to

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