

# 33

# HANDY HOME FIXES

EASY TIPS & TRICKS TO MAINTAIN YOUR HOME

FROM [PRETTYHANDYGIRL.COM](http://PRETTYHANDYGIRL.COM)



by  
*Brittany Bailey*

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you for downloading this eBook. I've always been in love with houses. For me a house is more than just walls and a roof. It's a place to make memories and protect us from the elements (and occasionally life.) But, a house can offer more than those things. It can be a good investment. Maintaining your home is the best way to protect that investment. When you get ready to sell your house, you will get top dollar when buyers see that everything has been cared for and well maintained. Potential buyers want to purchase a home that was loved and cared for.

If you don't maintain your home, it can be overwhelming trying to fix everything at once. Or worse, discovering big problems that cropped up because of neglecting basic maintenance.

Beyond better resale value, you can save yourself money by following some of these tips to save energy, too.

Finally some of these tips can be considered basic life hacks that are here to make your life easier.

I hope you find these 33 EASY TIPS & TRICKS TO MAINTAIN YOUR HOME super beneficial!

- Brittany Bailey, [PrettyHandyGirl.com](http://PrettyHandyGirl.com)



*Where applicable I have included affiliate links to the products and tools I use. I earn a small amount of money from any purchase made directly from these links. Affiliate links do not cost you any money.*

# PREVENT WATER LEAKS

Catch and stop small leaks before they become big ones!

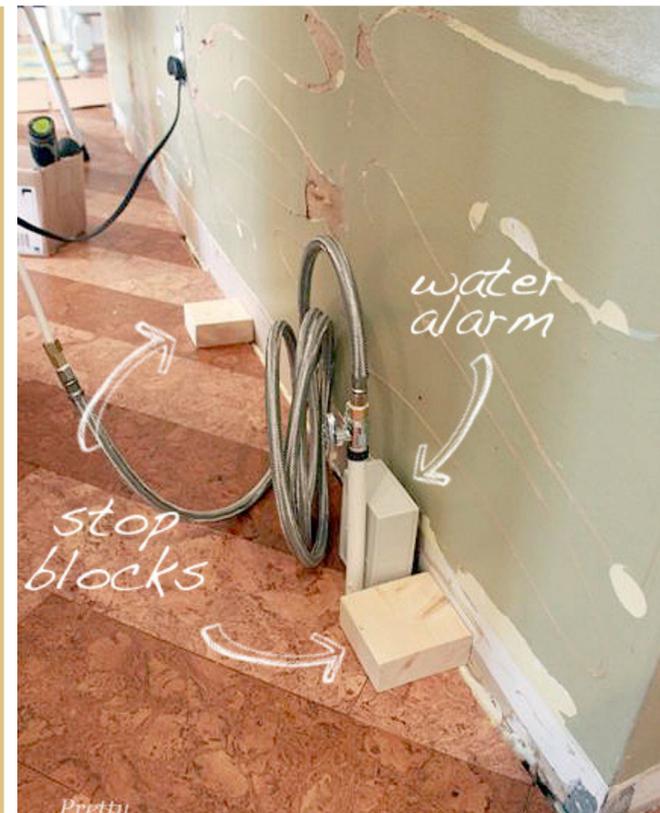


This simple device can protect your home from costly leaks! A water sensor alarm costs approximately \$10, but can save you thousands of dollars! Add batteries and put one underneath every sink. Be sure to replace the batteries twice a year (when you are changing your smoke detector batteries). Don't forget to put one behind the clothes washer and your fridge too! Speaking of your fridge, you'll want to read the next tip.

[Click Here to order Water Sensor Alarms](#) for your home!

Two main causes of leaks in a kitchen are a dishwasher or ice maker water line leak. They can start as slow drips that accumulate over time and leave costly damage from rot or hazardous mold spores. Take precautions to prevent water leaks by insisting that your plumber (or builder) install a stronger rigid PVC water line instead of the flexible plastic tubing behind your refrigerator.

Then protect the water line by cutting a small scrap of wood and use it as a stop block to prevent your refrigerator from being pushed too far back against the line.



Do you know where your water shut off is? If not ask someone to help you find it. Many times the shut off valve may be under your house. If that's the case, you would be wise to have a plumber install a shut off inside a closet in your house. When you have a water leak, seconds can mean the difference between an easy clean up or a major insurance claim.

Educate yourself by [reading how to shut off your water from the water meter](#) as an alternative shut off.



# QUICK PROBLEM SOLVERS

These happen to everyone, but now you'll know how to fix them!



Do you have a door that sticks? Take a look at the door and determine where it is rubbing. The simplest fix is to figure out which way the door needs to move to break contact. Then loosen or tightening the door hinge screws. If that doesn't fix it, remove the hinges completely and try placing a piece of thin cardboard behind the hinge, then drive the screws back in.

95% of the time **the above two tips** will resolve your issues. If your door is still sticking, you may have to take **more drastic measures** like routing out more material from the door frame with a Dremel or using a power planer to trim down your door.

Have you ever tightened a screw 1,485 times before finally admitting that the hole is stripped? Procrastinate fixing that stripped hole no longer!

Remove the screw. Squeeze some wood glue into the hole, add a little more on the end of a toothpick and shove as many toothpicks as you can into the stripped hole. After the wood glue has dried, snap or cut the toothpicks off with a hand saw. Now you can drive your screw into the newly fixed hole!



Two quick tips for **fixing a stripped screw**:

Tip 1 - If the screw is painted over, place the screwdriver into the screw head and use a hammer to hit it one solid time, this will likely crack the paint or set the screwdriver in enough to get a good grip.

Tip 2 - Slip a thick rubberband over the end of the screwdriver, insert it into the screwhead and turn to remove the screw. If these don't work, you'll need **Tip 3 using a Dremel to get it out!**



# LAUNDRY ROOM TIPS

Keep your laundry room clean and safe!



If you don't take good care of your high-efficiency washer, you'll end up with a stinky, funky mess. Funky music is good; a funky washer is very, very bad!

These machines are air tight and prone to mold. After each load, grab a dry cloth and wipe off the door. Then wipe out the gasket, top to bottom. Open the detergent dispenser drawer and wipe out any moisture. Finally, leave the detergent drawer and the washer door open to air out. If your machine is already funky, [follow these tips for cleaning it out!](#)

Cleaning out your dryer vent is an extremely important home maintenance task. The good news is you can clean dryer vents yourself! Cleaning them twice a year is recommended.

Pull your dryer away from the wall and disconnect the duct tube from the dryer and the wall. Use a shop vac to clean out as far as possible from both ends. Vacuum the back of the dryer, washer, and the wall too! A clean laundry room is less prone to fires. Go ahead and clean out the exterior vent and make sure it closes when not in use so the critters can't crawl in!



Do you know what type of dryer duct you have? If not, run and check before reading further. If your dryer duct is semi-rigid or solid metal then go ahead and skip to the next tip. If it's the shiny, flexible foil type, keep reading!

Flexible duct work collects a lot more lint over time than the semi-rigid ductwork. The flexible material is also flammable, which makes it less safe. Buy semi-rigid ductwork at your local home improvement store or on Amazon and be sure to pick up adjustable elbows and hose clamps that you might need. Remove the old and add the new! [More detail in this tutorial for installing semi-rigid dryer hose.](#)

# TIPS FOR WALLS

Clean 'em, paint 'em and hang your stuff on 'em!



Scuffs magically appear on walls at my house, so I know we must have a ghost. The great news is that I don't mind one bit because I know a few easy tricks for removing them. The Mr. Clean Magic Eraser is my number one tool for removing marks on almost anything! But, they are expensive, so I always cut one sponge in fourths so I don't waste a huge piece.

Rinse it under water, ring out as much water as you can, then gently rub it on wall marks until they disappear. Be careful not to rub too hard or you'll remove the paint. If that happens, (or if the magic eraser just doesn't get it all) do some [touch-up painting](#) and you're good to go.

I love to paint rooms! It's a meditative task that leaves me with instant gratification when I'm done. But, I don't like cleanup. Several years ago I came up with this cheap and [easy clean up paint tray liner](#).

All you need are two plastic grocery bags and two strips of painter's tape. Make sure the bags are clean and have no holes. Turn them inside out, slip the first bag on from the top of the tray and tape it at the bottom. Slip the second bag over the bottom and tape the opening across the entire tray width.

Now you're ready to paint! When you're done carefully toss the bags and you're ready for your next paint job.



Wall  
Anchors

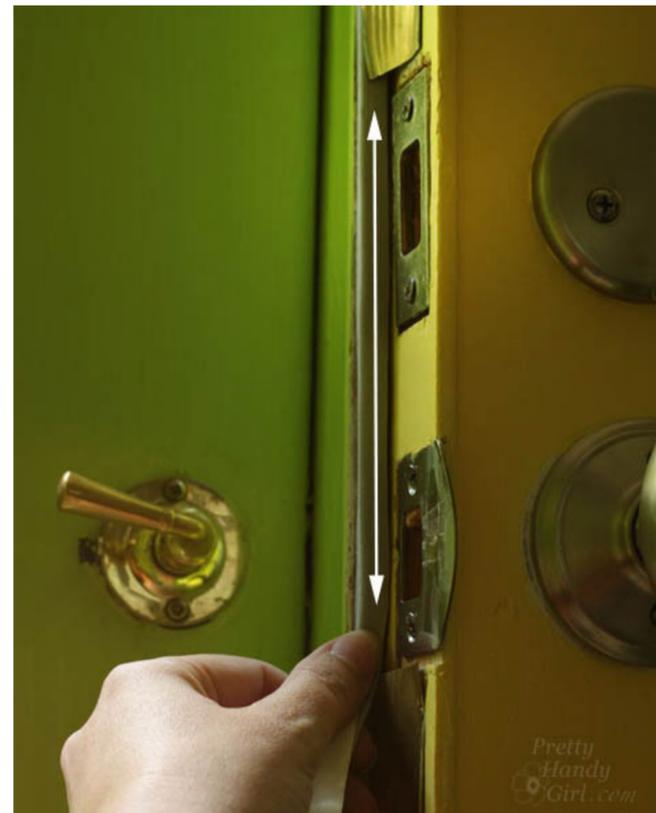
Pitch

Use  
These!

How often have you found that you don't have a stud where you want something mounted on the wall? Probably 98% of the time, right? That's where it's important to use good wall anchors. Many products come with wall anchors, but **DO NOT USE** the El Cheapo wall anchors that get mangled and won't hold up. Instead, use [self-drilling wall anchors](#). They are easy to drill into drywall, easily removable, and have options for weight limit and wall type.

# WEATHERIZE YOUR HOME

Seal up doors, windows and cracks.

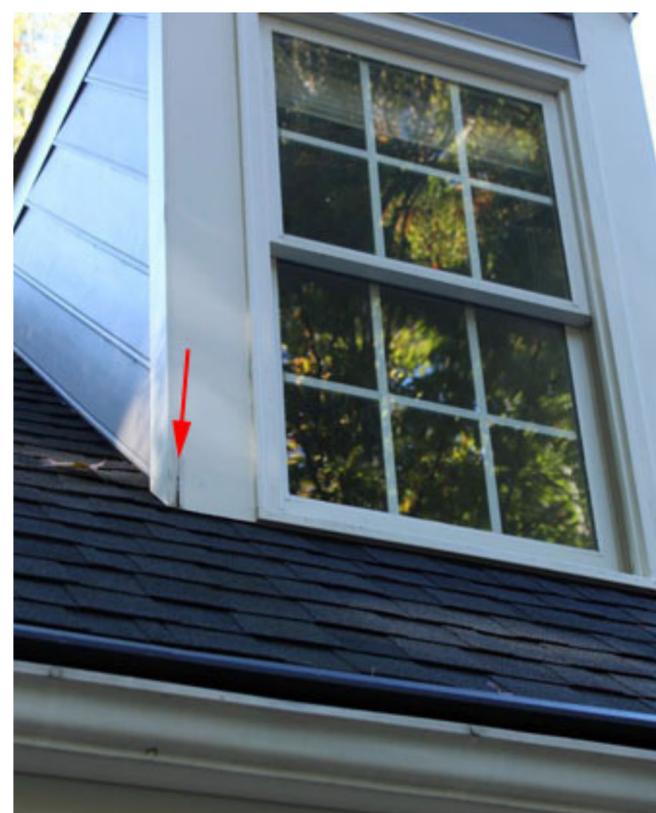


Winter is fast approaching and now is a good time to assess your doors and windows. Do you feel a draft by your window when the wind kicks up outside? Can you see daylight seeping through your door? If you answered yes to either of those questions, you are throwing away money on heating and cooling your home. The solution is as simple as buying a roll of **foam weatherstripping**.

Peel off a section of weatherstripping. Press it onto the door jamb. Peel off the protective paper. Test your door by closing it and look again for light. You can also use the same weatherstripping on the bottom of your old windows.

In just an hour you can **seal up the gaps around your garage door** and make a huge difference in the temperature of your garage and possibly the adjacent rooms as well.

A Garage Door Side and Top Weather-Strip Kit costs less than \$20. Be sure to measure the sides and top of your garage doors and order enough to cover it. Use the nails included in the kit to secure the seal against your doors. For a time saving tip and more detailed directions you can **follow my full tutorial for installing garage door weatherstripping**.



One of the best things you can do to save time and money is to prevent water from getting through your home's exterior. Before winter is a great time to walk around your house and look for gaps or cracks in the siding, trim, and around doors and windows.

Use caulk to seal those cracks. Clean off the crack. If you're caulking upside down or the tube slips out of the gun, slip a rubber band around the tube and gun to hold it in place. Caulk along the crack, running your finger along behind the nozzle, filling in the crack. **It's this easy!**

# HANDY TOOL HACKS

When you don't have the perfect tool,



Occasionally you need to drill a hole to a specific depth. Or you want to drill a hole into but not completely through your wood. **This simple trick** helps you do just that! Mark the depth of the hole you want to drill with painter's tape. Drill into the wood and stop as soon as the painter's tape hits the top of the wood. You can also use the tape to countersink holes. Drill with the smaller bit first, then center the larger bit and drill just deep enough to bury the screw head.

## Two Flashlight Hacks:

Before you prepare to paint a room, double check the wall for any imperfections. Turn on a flashlight and shine it parallel to the wall to highlight any imperfections that need spackle or sanding.

Next time you drop something tiny on the floor (like a pill or earring backing) shine a flashlight at the floor level and it will illuminate any tiny objects. Beware, you might find some dog hairs that need vacuuming too.



Using a stud finder is the quickest way to find a stud, but if you don't have one you can use **one of these ways to find a stud**.

1. Remove an outlet cover and inspect the outsides of the box. One side will usually be nailed to a stud. To locate additional studs, measure out to the left or right at 16" intervals. In locations near doors/windows studs may be located less than a 16 inches apart.

2. Look for nail pops where the drywall was nailed to a stud. In newer construction this is less likely to happen because screws are used.

3. Inspect your crown or baseboard moulding for nails that might indicate where it was attached to a stud.

# HANDY HOME HACKS

These tips will save you money!



If you've ever looked at the cost of laundry detergent, you may have choked at the price. I have a wonderful recipe for DIY Liquid Laundry Detergent that will cost you 20¢ for 75 loads! You read that right, not 20¢ per load, but per 75 loads!!! And the detergent is low suds and low residue which will keep your washer and clothes cleaner. The ingredients are simple and can be purchased at your grocery store. Just look on the high or low shelves in the laundry detergent aisle. Find the recipe here - [DIY Laundry Detergent](#)

Don't you hate when the trash bag gets stuck in the trash can? No worries, I have an easy fix that will make taking out the trash a much easier chore. To prevent the suction created by a full trash bag, simply [drill three or four holes into the sides of the trash can](#) (locate the holes a few inches up from the bottom in case the bag leaks). You can now easily remove a full garbage bag, saving you time and energy. Or even better, making it easier for your kids to take out the trash!



It's no picnic when you realize your home has been invaded by sugar ants. Instead of spraying your kitchen (or wherever you find them) try this [Two Ingredient Ant Killer](#).

Mix equal parts sugar and Borax into a small disposable lid. Set it out near the area of largest ant concentration or near the location they are entering your home. Caution: DO NOT put this mixture where children or pets can get to it. Leave the mixture out for 24 – 48 hours or until you have no more ants. The ants will take the sugar and Borax back to the nest where the colony will have a feast and consequently die after intestinal distress.

# CLEANING TIPS

Handy tips to help with your daily cleaning tasks.



A clogged tub or sink is an inevitable situation for any homeowner. Before you reach for the toxic drain cleaner, try this easy and inexpensive **Non-Toxic Drain Opener**. All you need is a box of baking soda and cheap white vinegar. Remove the drain pop up and pour baking soda into the drain until you see it near the drain opening. Pour about 1 cup of white vinegar into the drain until it causes a bubbling reaction. For more concentrated "plunging", stuff a rag over the drain. Continue until the baking soda fails to bubble up. Turn on the hot water full blast. Let it run for at least a minute. Repeat if necessary.

Do you have hard water? It is definitely hard to remove from sink edges! I have a trick to scrub away that stubborn hard water stain in no time! Grab some vinegar, baking soda, and a good scrub sponge. Pour some baking soda and a tiny bit of vinegar (to create a paste) on the hard water stain. Let it sit for at least 15 minutes. If you have a Dremel Multi-Max, cut some of the sponge to fit the sanding head and use that to scrub. If you don't have the Dremel tool, then you can scrub by hand. It may take a little longer to remove the crusty stain. Scrub away and get rid of those hard water stains!



Never throw away your old toothbrushes again! These worn out dental tools make fabulous scrub brushes for cleaning. First, mark the old brush with a permanent marker so no one will use it in their mouth again. Then use this mini scrub brush on hard to reach spots like between the faucet handles, behind the faucet, around toilet hinges, around stove knobs and other hard to reach spots. You can even use an old toothbrush dipped in baking soda and water to clean dirt out of the grooves in your wedding rings. (Although, I might use one brush for jewelry and a second one for toilets. Just sayin'.)

# OUTDOOR FIXES

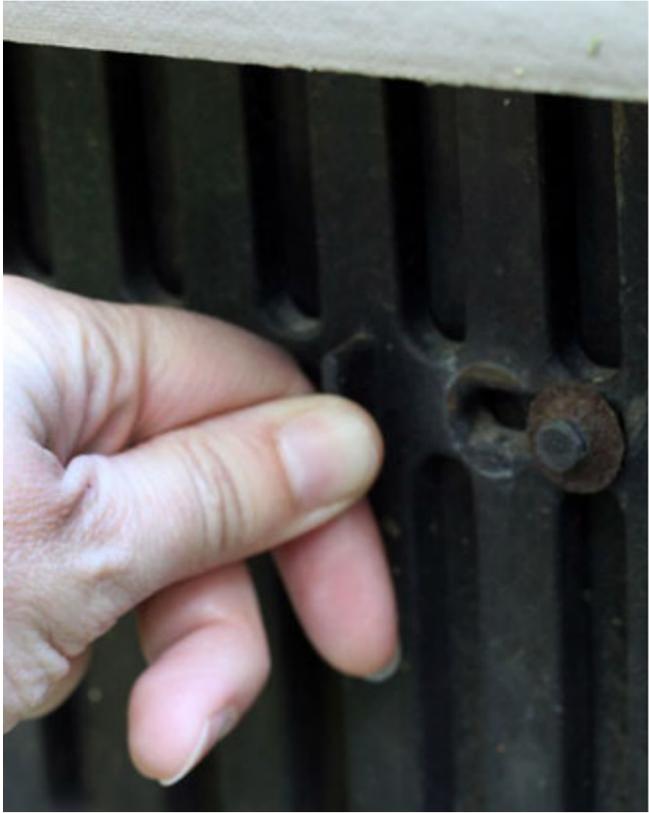
The exterior of your home needs upkeep too.

A Goodman HVAC condenser unit is shown outdoors, mounted on a concrete pad. The unit is dark grey with a red Goodman logo. It is surrounded by some mulch and a brick wall in the background.

When was the last time you looked at your HVAC unit? Specifically the condenser which is the big box usually located outside the house. If at first glance it doesn't look too bad, be sure to peek around the back, you may find a stray vine trying to make its way inside. Get rid of it! For your HVAC system to work efficiently and live longer, it's important to keep vegetation and leaves away from the condenser. Never plant bushes or shrubs too close to the unit. To discourage weeds and plants from growing back lay down some mulch, rocks or other weed resistant materials.

A brick fireplace is shown with a fire burning in the hearth. The mantel is decorated with autumn-themed items, including framed pictures of trees and candles. A white garland is draped across the mantel.

When winter is approaching you want to seal up all drafty areas. One big offender is a chimney. An easy solution is to cut a piece of rigid foam insulation to fit into the opening of your fireplace. If you want more attractive ideas, you could wrap the insulation with fabric. Or use construction adhesive to attach thin plywood and wood slices to the fireplace insert. Another option would be to cover the insulation with black craft paper and draw a chalkboard scene on it. Finally, if you want an attractive reclaimed wood fireplace draft stopper, you can [build your own following my tutorial here](#). Just remember to remove it before you light a fire. Stay cozy and warm this winter.

A close-up shot shows a hand adjusting a metal vent cover on a crawl space. The vent is dark and has a circular opening. The hand is using a small tool to adjust the cover.

Crawlspace vents should be opened in the spring and closed in the fall. Once spring arrives, open your crawl space vents to allow better air flow in the crawlspace and to eliminate moisture build up. Adjusting the vents should take you 5-10 minutes total. If they are stuck, you may need to use a pair of pliers and a hammer to nudge them open. The only time you shouldn't close your vents is if you have high radon; an appliance that can build up fumes; or excessive water and moisture problems. If you have these issues, you have bigger problems than worrying about your vents being opened or closed. Consult with an expert to remedy those situations immediately.

# SEMI-ANNUAL TASKS

Remember these important maintenance tasks twice a year!



I don't have to tell you how dangerous not having a working smoke detector can be. We hear tragic stories of homes burning down, especially this time of year. It is imperative to **maintain your smoke detectors** twice a year when you change your clocks.

Put on your hearing protection. Begin by removing your smoke detector. Don't forget to check your hard-wired smoke detector, it might also use a back up battery. Open the battery compartment and remove the old battery. Put a new battery into the smoke detector (pay attention to where the + and - terminals go.)

Changing your air filters is important. It helps improve air quality, reduce allergens, improve air flow, lessens stress on your heating and cooling system and captures airborne microscopic particles that can carry bacteria and viruses. Regular maintenance and filter changes can help maintain your system.

Check the size you need from your old filter and replace it at least once a season or more often if you have pets or allergy sufferers in your home.



✓ **Yes, please send a reminder to change my filter.**

20x25x1

10/10/2014

✓ **Frequency**

Monthly

Every 2 Months

Every 3 Months

Every 6 Months

Yearly

Two tips to help you remember to **change your air filters regularly**:

1. Write the date you changed the filter on the new filter. That way you can peek at the filter to see if you need to change them soon.

2. Sign up for a reminder email. You can sign up for the Filtrete Clean Advantage Club reminder emails or set up a recurring reminder in your online calendar.

Now sit back and don't worry about remembering to change your air filters ever again.

# PROTECT YOUR PIPES

A burst pipe is no joke.



Are the water pipes under your house insulated? If not, it's important to **protect your water pipes** with foam insulation to prevent them from freezing. If you are venturing into the crawlspace, protect your knees and maybe throw on a hat to protect your hair.

Locate any unprotected water pipes (look for copper, white, red, blue or gray pipes about 3/4 – 1 inch in diameter). Measure the length of the exposed pipe. Cut the foam sleeve to length. Open the insulation sleeve at the seam and wrap it around the water pipe. Continue until all your pipes are completely covered. Now your pipes are ready for winter!

Winter is coming and this year I want to help you protect your home from a burst pipe caused by freezing. Much like your water pipes, it's important to protect your spigot on the outside of your house from freezing. Luckily, you can buy this handy dandy **Insulated Outdoor Faucet Cover**. To install the insulated cover, simply slip the interior cord loop over the spigot handle. Cinch the cord lock tight onto the styrofoam cover. And your spigot is protected from freezing. The nice thing about these covers is they can be installed and removed in seconds. If you need to use your spigot, it's simple to remove and then replace the cover.



Have you looked under your sinks around the water pipes? If you have gaps around the pipes, you have a welcome sign for cold air and bugs. Take a few minutes to **seal around pipes** with GREAT STUFF and you'll stop them from entering your home. Simply shake the can for 30 seconds. Add the spray nozzle. Spray it into the gaps around your pipes. Don't overfill because the foam expands as it cures. Keep a wet wipe or paper towel nearby to wipe up any drips. Once the foam has cured, trim off any excess with a serrated blade.

# INDEX

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  - Fixing a Sticking Door
  - Fixing Stripped Hole in Wood
- Removing Stripped or Painted Screw
  - Keep your Washer Funk-Free
  - Clean Your Dryer Vent Duct
  - Replace your Dryer Vent Duct
- Replace Washer Hoses with Braided Steel
  - Easy Tricks to Remove Wall Scuffs
  - Easy Cleanup Paint Tray Liner
- Protecting Spigots from Frozen Burst Pipes
  - Non-toxic Drain Opener
  - Good Wall Anchors
  - Trash Can Hack - Use Holes
  - Two Ingredient Ant Killer
- Find a Stud Without a Stud Finder
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  - Caulking Cracks In Siding and Trim
  - Seal Gaps Around Pipes
- Smoke Detector Maintenance Tips
  - Protect Pipes From Freezing
- Weatherstripping Doors & Windows
- Protect Your Home From Water Leaks

## 5 BONUS Clickable Links to More Tips from Pretty Handy Girl!

[How to Get Your Car Ready for Winter](#)

[The Best Glues for Every Fix](#)

[How to Fix Small Areas of Wood Rot](#)

[How to Patch Holes in Drywall](#)

[Tips for Improving Indoor Air Quality](#)

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