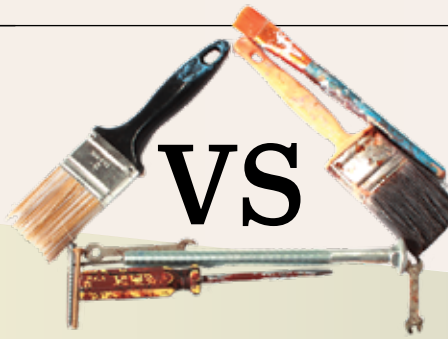


When should you roll up your sleeves and tackle a home improvement project yourself, and when should you leave it to the pros? Do-it-Yourself projects can be a creative and rewarding way to save money while personalizing your space. However, if you are short on skills for certain tasks such as electrical, mechanical, or plumbing work, you could end up electrocuting yourself, causing a fire, or flooding your home – all less-than-ideal outcomes for a weekend project. That's where another home improvement solution comes in – DIFM.

DIY

DO-IT-YOURSELF



DIFM

DO-IT-FOR-ME

When to Grab Your Tools or When to Call the Pros



DIY OR DIFM?

The DIY movement in America took off in the post-war era, quickly becoming a widespread hobby as well as a thriving industry. In the years following World War II, the skills learned by millions of Americans during their service – repairing radios, engines, or machinery – laid the foundation for this national phenomenon. According to a *Time* article in 1954, "The once-essential handyman who could fix a chair, hang a door, or patch a concrete walk has been replaced by millions of amateur hobbyists who do all his work in their spare time and find it wonderful fun. In the process they have turned do-it-yourself into the biggest of all U.S. hobbies and a booming \$6 billion-a-year business."

In the 2000s, the Internet revamped the DIY trend by providing easy access to online tutorials for everything from upcycling old furniture to creating mosaic garden pathways and pipe clothing racks. However, while DIY projects are often cost-effective, the hassle of doing it yourself can outweigh the savings, not to mention the risk of it turning into the next DIY disaster story. Going the DIFM route and hiring a professional might be the better choice for those who value convenience or, perhaps, lack the time or inclination to take on tasks themselves.

Fearless DIYer or DIFM enthusiast? Knowing how to evaluate your skills, time, and resources may help you decide the best approach for your next project.

- ★ **ASSESS YOUR SKILLS:** Take an honest look at your abilities and past experience. Small projects like painting or assembling furniture are great for beginners, but more complex tasks might be beyond your expertise.
- ★ **CONSIDER SAFETY RISKS:** Safety is critical when deciding between DIY and hiring a pro. Tasks involving electrical wiring, plumbing, or heavy lifting can result in damage or serious injury if done incorrectly.
- ★ **EVALUATE YOUR RESOURCES:** Consider whether you have the tools, materials, and time necessary to complete the job. Some projects require specialty equipment or significant time commitments that might be impractical for DIY.
- ★ **FACTOR IN COSTS:** DIY can be cheaper, but mistakes can quickly drive up costs. Calculate expenses for materials and tools, and weigh them against a professional's fee.



"CALL THE MAN!"

Fans of Andy Griffith will know that recognizing when to call in the pros can save you time, money, and headaches. "If it involves electrical, plumbing, HVAC, anything structural, you should definitely turn to a pro," T.A. Todd Construction owner Tim Todd says. "If you want to change your light fixture or ceiling fan, that's fine, but if you have to change out wall switches or plugs, you're better off using a pro."

Roofing, siding, and window replacements also require expertise for efficiency and quality. "Even installing cabinets or countertops like granite or laminate is better handled by professionals. Cabinet installation is an art, and solid surfaces demand precision tools."

DIY INSPIRATION

- ★ **CUSTOM ACCENT WALL:** Transform a plain wall into a focal point by adding wood paneling, shiplap, or geometric patterns with molding. For a budget-friendly option, try painting a bold pattern or using peel-and-stick wallpaper.
- ★ **LIGHTING:** Brighten your home by installing string lights, custom pendant fixtures, or under-cabinet LED strips. Outside, solar-powered path lights or hanging lanterns can create a welcoming atmosphere.
- ★ **PAINTING:** Freshen up your space by painting your front door in a bold hue or updating hardware like doorknobs with metallic spray paint. Use primer for better coverage and durability, and always choose weather-resistant paint for outdoor projects.¹
- ★ **COFFEE STATION:** Create a charming coffee station by re-purposing an unused alcove, kitchen counter, or old dresser. Use floating shelves to maximize storage in a small nook, or refresh a bar cart for a budget-friendly option. Add personality with decorative elements like hanging mugs and other coffee and tea accoutrements.
- ★ **OUTDOOR FIRE PIT:** Build a simple fire pit using pavers, bricks, or a pre-made kit. Choose a safe, flat location away from flammable materials, and add a gravel base for stability. Surround the pit with comfortable seating for a cozy gathering spot.
- ★ **INDOOR GARDEN:** Enhance your indoor space with a vertical garden using wall-mounted planters or a DIY ladder-style frame. Choose low-maintenance plants like pothos, succulents, or herbs.
- ★ **MAILBOX MAKEOVER:** Update your mailbox by lining the interior with fun, vibrant contact paper, as well as adding personality with spray paint, vinyl numbers, or monogram decals. To revive the look of a plain mailbox, consider installing a new mailbox post or enhancing the area around your mailbox with flowers or other plants.

¹ If you own your home and are part of an HOA, be sure to check neighborhood guidelines before changing exterior colors.

