



Tom Feiza, "Mr. Fix-It," Inc.

HOME TIPS

Tom Feiza's Tips for Operating Your Home

JUST FIX IT – The Absolute Best Repair Products

Prefer your home repairs on the easy side? So do I! Here is my latest information on new and better products that solve our common fix-it problems. These problem solvers can tackle the nagging flaws you thought you had to live with, like ceiling cracks and bathroom mildew. Let's take a peek at my favorites.

—Tom Feiza, Mr. Fix-It

The Mr. Fix-It Secret Window Washing Formula

This is the best home brew for washing windows. Put it in a spray bottle and use it like a commercial window cleaner. It also makes a great spot-cleaner for many surfaces.

- 1/2 cup sudsy ammonia
- 1 pint 70% isopropyl alcohol
- 1 teaspoon dishwashing detergent
- water
- food coloring

Mix the first three ingredients. Add water to make one gallon. Add a few drops of food coloring. Store the mixture in a container marked DANGEROUS CHEMICAL.

GREAT PAINTING PRODUCTS

Where can you find these products? Visit a paint store that professional painting contractors use. A store like that always offers the best products and great advice.

Bin from Zinsser Co.

Bin is a primer/sealer and stain killer that solves many painting problems. It will cover water stains, crayon marks, knots, and marker stains. It sticks to glossy surfaces and provides an excellent base for latex paint, preventing stain bleeding. It can even seal in smoke and pet stain smells. Since it is a white, pigmented shellac, it dries within 45 minutes and has little odor.

Perma-White Mold & Mildew-Proof Interior Paint from Zinsser Co.

Perma-White solves the problem of mildew and peeling in bathrooms and damp areas. This one is a real winner. I have used it in several areas with great success. It works in bathrooms and even on basement walls—wherever there are damp conditions and a potential for mildew.

Before using, you must kill the mildew. Then apply two coats of Perma-White. It is self-priming and cleans up with soap and water. It is guaranteed to be mildew-resistant. White semi-gloss is the standard formula, but it can be tinted.

Painter Quality Masking Tape – 3M, Trimaco Industries

Don't use cheap masking tape for your next paint project. Cheap tape either fails to stick or won't come off afterward, and the paint still bleeds behind the tape. Use a "professional painter" masking tape designed with a special adhesive that sticks when you want it to yet can be released after painting. Long Mask and BluEdge products can be left in direct sunlight for up to seven days and still can be removed without worry about the tape welding to the surface.

When using masking tape, rub a fingernail or a knife next to the edge to seal it and prevent the paint from bleeding underneath. Also, before applying the tape, clean the surface to be protected.

Easy Mask Painting Tape from Trimaco Industries

Easy Mask is my favorite masking product. This smooth, flat paper comes in different widths with an effective adhesive on one edge. It leaves a sharp paint edge, and paint will not seep through. The tape is easy to remove and does not leave a sticky residue. One inexpensive roll will mask several rooms.

Lightweight spackling compound from UGL or Red Devil

Toss the old vinyl spackling compounds that sag, run, shrink and crack. Try the new generation of lightweight spackling compounds. They dry very quickly without shrinking. You can fill those holes just once and paint within minutes. By the way, do you know where spackling compound comes from? Just ask Tom.

Krack-Kote from TK Waterproof Coatings

Krack-Kote is a wall and ceiling crack repair material that remains pliable and permanent for interior plaster and dry-wall crack repair. The product is packaged in a kit with an applicator and a mesh tape for wider cracks. Krack-Kote has been the choice of professional painters for many years. Because the product remains flexible, it moves as wall or ceiling cracks open and close, thus preventing new cracking.

DRYLOK Masonry Waterproofer from UGL

The ultimate concrete and concrete block sealer/waterproofer. Homeowners have relied on DRYLOK for their basement walls for years. When applied to a clean masonry surface, it seals the pores and stops water from moving through the surface. Use on interior or exterior masonry walls, concrete block, stucco, brick, retaining walls, basements and more.

DRYLOK Etch from UGL (liquid or powder)

Before concrete is painted, the surface must always be etched to a "sandpaper" texture so paint and sealers will adhere properly. DRYLOK Etch is perfect for etching concrete and galvanized surfaces prior to painting. Easier and safer to use than muriatic acid, it removes efflorescence (salt-like deposits) and roughens the surface.

DRYLOK Concrete Protector from UGL

This clear masonry sealer safeguards concrete, brick, pavers, driveways, walks, slate, and terrazzo surfaces. It prevents excessive dusting on garage and basement floors, and it provides protection from acids, road salt, household cleaners, and weathering. It also serves as a primer/sealer under latex, alkyd, or polyurethane concrete floor paints or carpeting and helps prevent staining on porous surfaces such as fireplace brick and stone hearths. (Tip: seal around the fireplace before soot stains appear!)

Rust Reformer from Rust-Oleum

Rust-Oleum has produced metal coatings and paint products for many years. This unique product can be applied to rusty surfaces to chemically convert the rust to a protected, paintable surface. Ideal for thin metal-roof flashings and valleys, for example—where the metal is too thin to sand. This milky product turns rust into an inert, flat black finish.

Sheetrock Brand Wall and Ceiling Texture Paint from USG

Yes! You can match that fine sand texture on drywall. You just need a little practice. This is a premixed sand-textured paint. I like to thin it with water and apply it with a standard roller. With a little practice, you can obtain an excellent sand-textured finish.

Wood Finish Stain Marker from Minwax

What a great idea: oil-based wood stain in a marker. Just rub the correct color stain marker over scratches or other damage, and the finish will look like new. Use these to touch up scratches and dings.

Color Putty from Color Putty Company

Forget applying a wood filler and then staining the filler—the color and texture never match the natural wood grain and color. For a perfect match, stain the wood and apply a clear finish. Fill the nail holes with a colored filler that matches the stain and grain color, and then apply your final clear finish coat. You can even combine several colors for a perfect match.

Arm-R-Seal from General Finishes

My favorite clear finish. Just wipe it on with a rag. It is just as durable as a varnish and is low-odor and easy to use. It comes in satin, semi-gloss and gloss. A great repair product because it will stick to almost any finish. Made in Wisconsin!

Synthetic Steel Wool from 3M

Don't you love steel wool? It rusts, splinters, pokes into your fingers and catches on wood grain. But there is nothing like steel wool to smooth a clear finish or scrub a finish with a solvent/refinisher. Or is there? I say toss the steel wool and use 3M Synthetic Steel Wool. It won't shred, splinter or rust. It outlasts steel wool and will not poke your fingers. It can also be used with water-based and solvent-based products. And it comes in grades of coarseness, just like real steel wool.

Smart System Twist-Lok Extension Pole from Mr. LongArm

The key to using a good roller and roller frame is a good telescoping painting pole. The pole attaches to the roller so that you can paint ceilings and walls without a ladder. Mr. LongArm's pole locks in place with the push of a button. This fiberglass pole has removable adapters for roller frames and other attachments.

Roller screen and Five-gallon pail

When painting, don't forget the roller screen. An inexpensive (\$5 or less) screen fits inside a five-gallon pail. The pail holds the paint, and the screen evens paint on the roller skin. The key is to work from a standing position, with the pail on the floor. Dip the roller edge into the paint and even the paint on the roller with a roller screen. The excess paint remains in the pail. You need to see one to understand how well it works.

Six-In-One tool from Hyde Tools; 11-in-1 Multi-Purpose Decorating Tool from Red Devil

I love my multi-purpose tools. There are scrapers, caulk removers, hammers, roller scrapers, screwdrivers, and more. I always carry one in my pocket when I am painting, scraping and performing general repairs. This versatile tool can set a drywall nail, remove glazing compound and caulk, pry open a paint can, tighten a screw, and so on.

Jomax from Zinsser Co.

Got outdoor mildew problems? We all do. Jomax is a mold and mildew remover concentrate. You mix it with laundry bleach and water to create a powerful cleaning solution. Spray it on the surface with a garden sprayer, allow it to stand for five minutes, and rinse well. Heavy mildew stains may need a second application and/or light scrubbing. Jomax works on most exterior surfaces: siding and trim of all types, including vinyl; stained or painted decks and fences; stucco; brick; and painted concrete or cement block. (I think Joe and Max got together on this one.)

STAIN REMOVERS, PROBLEM SOLVERS

Lift Off #1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 from Motsenbockers

Lift Off is my secret weapon for stain removal. You can purchase it as a stain removal kit with special products for stickers, labels, food, grease, graffiti, spray paint, latex paint, ink, markers, and the list goes on...and on... Lift Off #3, the one that tackles ink, markers and graffiti, is the best stain remover I have ever found.

MEX All-Purpose Cleaner from UGL

Talk about a powerful cleaner—MEX is the one. In Wisconsin, to protect our water, phosphate cleaners are banned—so you can't purchase TSP. Yet MEX is just as effective as TSP and does not contain phosphate. It is a powder you mix with water. This multi-purpose cleaner works for walls, floors, woodwork, brick, hearths, garage floors, patios, and even the garbage can. It will remove shellac and wax from wood. Great for removing grease and oil from a garage floor.

Oops! Multi-Purpose Remover from Homax; Goof Off and Goof Off 2 from Valspar

All of these products will remove old dried latex paint drips. They also remove chewing gum, tar, lipstick, ink, magic marker, oil, grease, and many other stains. Oops and Goof Off are flammable and require adequate ventilation during use.

Dry sponge

A dry sponge is like a soft rubber eraser that absorbs dirt without wetting or damaging the surface you are cleaning. It can be used to remove smoke and oil stains. Professionals often use dry sponges in fire restoration to remove soot and smoke stains. Use it to clean fabric wallpaper, acoustical ceilings, lampshades, and rough surfaces. You will find dry sponges in wallpaper or lampshade stores. With a little luck and patience, you can even remove soot from fireplace brick or stone with a dry sponge.

Zud Heavy Duty Cleanser and Zud Liquid Cleaner from Reckitt Benckiser

Zud will remove rust stains and mineral deposits. Make a paste from the powder to soak and remove rust stains. Oxalic acid is the secret ingredient that makes this a very effective rust-removal product. Liquid Zud is great for cleaning the kitchen sink.

Clean Shower from Arm & Hammer

No rinsing. No wiping. No scrubbing. No squeegeeing. No harsh fumes. After a shower, just mist the shower walls with Clean Shower and you will never scrub again. It eliminates soap scum and hard water deposits that nourish mildew. Give it a try. It's cheap to use!

Rust Stain Remover from Whink Products Co. You know this product. It has been sold for over 50 years in little brown bottles in the grocery store. It is one of the best products for removing rust from colorfast fabrics: clothing, carpeting, and more. Dampen the rust stain with water and apply

a few drops of Rust Stain Remover. Rinse thoroughly and launder. Also works on white sinks, toilet bowls and tile.

Rust & Iron Stain Remover from Whink Products Co.

Another great Whink product. This is the one in the white plastic bottle with a red and blue label. It will remove rust stains from tubs, tile, toilets, sinks, white clothing, dishwashers, washing machines, concrete, boats, RVs, dishes, glassware and more. For hard surfaces, dampen the stain with clean water, apply the cleaner to a wet cloth, and rub lightly. For deep stains, allow the cleaner to remain in place for five minutes. For large areas like concrete, mix with water and apply.

MY SECRET TOOLS AND PRODUCTS

4-in-1 screwdriver

This is my second-favorite tool, after my secret picture-hanging tool. The sturdy screwdriver has four bits: two straight and two Phillips. The bits fit in a sturdy frame that is strong enough to pound with a hammer and use as a pry bar. (I never do that, of course. I never use tools improperly.) You will find 4-in-1 screwdrivers at most hardware stores, labeled with the store name, for about \$5. Buy one each for the shop, the garage, the car and the kitchen drawer.

Caulk Remover from 3M

Caulk Remover works on any caulk. It softens caulk for easy removal. Apply a thin coat of this thick, creamy remover and allow it to stand for at least two hours. Once the bond is broken, loosen the caulk with a putty knife. Caulk Remover will not harm tubs or ceramic tile but may harm paint or wall coverings. This product is great for removing caulk around tubs, tile and tub surrounds.

Dripless brand caulking gun from Dripless, Inc.

The name says it all—after you let go of the trigger, no caulk will drip or leak from the tip. This gun also has a seal punch and spout cutter. This really is a no-drip caulk gun. You don't need to twist and retract the rod; the caulk gun does it automatically. You have got to see it to believe it.

Gel-Gloss from Granitize – TR Industries

Gel-Gloss is a cleaner and polish for hard surfaces such as acrylic, fiberglass, synthetic marble, and plastic laminate. I use it to "refinish" plastic laminate countertops. A little elbow grease with Gel-Gloss will remove stains, and then applying a thin coat restores the gloss while masking scratches. Apply a light coat just as you would with car wax, allow it to dry, and buff the light powder with a soft cloth. Great for synthetic tubs and shower stalls, because it leaves a smooth, shiny surface that sheds water, limiting hard water stains, dirt buildup and mildew.

Wall hangers from EZ Hangers; Elite Picture Hangers from Anchor Wire Corp.

Hanging pictures is my most common and least favorite job. The pictures never seem to be in the right place. Try these

picture hanger hooks for a simple, attractive alternative to old-fashioned picture hooks. E-Z Hangers are very small and don't protrude from the wall; pictures will lie tighter against the wall. Remember to use my exclusive secret picture-hanging tool to put the picture in the right spot every time. (You must attend my seminar to learn about the secret picture-hanging tool.)

Flat Twine from Nifty Products

Flat Twine is a cross between clear plastic wrap and rope. It sticks to itself, not to the stuff, and provides a strong bond. It's great for tying up loose sticks, boards, rods, pillows, the futon cushion, or anything that is out of control in your household.

Squeeeeeek No More from ATCI Consumer Products

For squeaks in second-story floors or any place where access to the subfloor and joist is difficult, try Squeeeeeek No More. It can be installed from above, directly through carpeting or hardwood flooring. A special bracket positions a notched screw above the floor squeak. You drive the screw through the carpet; the bracket controls the depth. The screw head then snaps off just below the floor covering, and the repair is invisible.

V-Seal Weather Stripping from 3M

This is the best weatherstripping around—a thin vinyl with self-stick adhesive. You cut it to length with a scissors and apply it to door and window frames. Since it so thin, it can fit in narrow spaces. For instance, it fits between a window and the window frame without interfering with the operation of the window. This product looks like a thin vinyl version of the old brass weatherstripping found around entrance doors.

Gutter Seal gutter repair tape from Cofair Products, Inc.

This wide aluminum tape is backed with a thick black adhesive. To repair a rain gutter, clean the surface and apply the tape. You can cut the tape with a scissors. The thick adhesive bonds and conforms well to irregular surfaces. The aluminum foil backing provides a water barrier and protects the adhesive from sun damage. Besides gutters, this tape works on flashing, metal roofs, skylights and other places.

Fresh Wave – OMI Industries

www.Fresh-Wave.com

Wow. A great line of odor-neutralizing products made from all-natural ingredients. The gel, spray, candles and other products really work. No fragrance – they just clear the air.

Zip-It Drain Cleaner

Insert this long, slender plastic stick with barbs into the drain. Pull it out with all that hair and yuck. A great way to clean a drain.

Spot Shot from WD-40

My favorite spot and stain remover for carpet and cloth. Removes pet stains, red wine, oil, coffee, lipstick, greasy foods and more. Spray it on, blot up the stain, rinse.

Gorilla Glue – 100% Waterproof Polyurethane Glue

Billed as the "Toughest Glue on Planet Earth," Gorilla Glue is a dream come true for nearly anyone who has ever broken anything. Gorilla Glue bonds to just about everything. Great for indoor and outdoor use, Gorilla Glue is waterproof. It will foam to about three times its size and has an open working time of 20 minutes. It goes on dark but dries to a neutral light tan color. It can be sanded and stained. Works on wood, metal, rocks, ceramics, fabric, paper, rubber, glass, and the list goes on...

Zar Ultra Max Wipe-On Polyurethane Finish

A great product for repairing an existing clear finish or creating a new finish. Great for woodwork, furniture, and cabinets. Water cleanup, low odor, quick drying; applied with a rag. Will stick to existing finishes if you clean and clean and dull the surface. Perfect for us DIY folks.

Need more information or a great reference book? Check out Mr. Fix-It's books, described below. You can obtain them from Amazon.com or directly from Tom Feiza, Mr. Fix-It.

Just Fix It – \$14.95

The absolute best home repair tips. Hundreds of tips Tom has gathered in over 15 years of giving "how-to" advice via radio and print. How can you remove that rust stain on the driveway? What's the best way to paint dark paneling? How can you make your old countertop look like new? And much more...

How To Operate Your Home – \$24.95

The ultimate guide for operating your home—just like an owner's manual for your car. Answers all those questions about how a home works and how you should be operating your home. This guide includes service checklists for maintenance contractors...operation and maintenance schedules to help you keep your home in top shape and prevent disasters...and more.

HOME TIPS Written by Tom Feiza

See Tom's book
How To Operate Your Home
(ISBN 0-9674759-3-7)
for great information
on "operating" a home.
© Mr. Fix-It Inc., 2009

The book is available at
www.amazon.com or through Tom at:
www.howtooperateyourhome.com
or www.htoyh.com
(262) 303-4884



Tom Feiza, "Mr. Fix-It," Inc.