

# FALL

# HOME IMPROVEMENT

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## Issue Three

- 12 ways to maximize vertical space
- Design ideas to give your home a farmhouse feel
- Make a dining room more elegant for entertaining





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# Design ideas to give your home a farmhouse feel

Farmhouse style homes are having a moment. A 2020 survey from Homes.com asked more than 5,000 adults across the United States about their favorite house style from a list that included bohemian craftsman, mid-century modern ranch, French chateau, and Tudor, among others. Modern farmhouse was the runaway winner, as participants in 42 of the 50 states indicated this simple, cozy style was their favorite.

Home renovation projects can help homeowners put their own unique stamp on their homes, and such projects can be both aesthetic and functional in nature. The following are some farmhouse design elements homeowners can consider as they look to transform their home interiors with this popular style in mind.

- **Exposed beams:** Exposed beams instantly evoke images of a farmhouse. The home improvement experts at BobVila.com note that this rustic renovation project can utilize real wood or faux beams that look like the real thing. Decorative beams that have nothing to do with a home's structural integrity can be installed by skilled do-it-yourselfers. However, even faux beams are heavy, and BobVila.com recommends homeowners have an engineer assess their existing structure prior to installation.
- **Distressed wood finishes:** Distressing is designed to make something look less than perfect. Distressed wood finishes can be found throughout many farmhouse style homes. Furniture and picture frames can provide the distressed look farmhouse fans are looking for. This is a relatively inexpensive project that many homeowners can tackle on their own after watching some online tutorials that recommend the right tools and techniques to get the job done right.
- **Kitchen sink:** Many components combine to create a truly classic



farmhouse kitchen. But perhaps no component is more essential than the classic farmhouse sink. The renovation experts at HGTV note that a classic farmhouse sink features a deep, wide basin. Farmhouse sinks are large enough to handle all the dishes that come after a big family meal. Old-fashioned porcelain sinks are worth consideration by homeowners who want their kitchen sinks to evoke a traditional farmhouse feel.

- **Countertops:** HGTV recommends butcher block countertops for homeowners who favor European farmhouse style. Homeowners overhauling their kitchens to create a farmhouse feel should consider installing a large island with a walnut butcher block countertop for an authentic farmhouse feel.

Farmhouse style homes are wildly popular. Some simple renovations can help homeowners with a fondness for farmhouse style bring this classic look into their homes. FH218159

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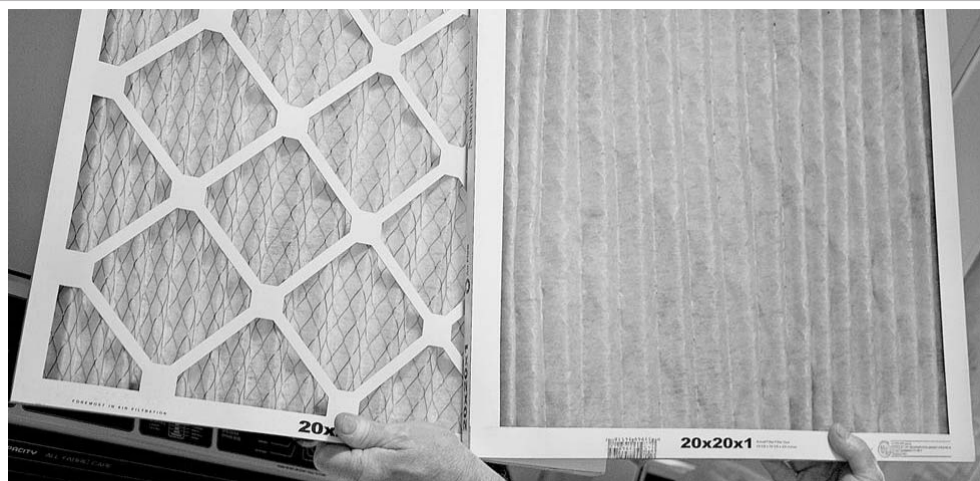
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# Inspect Your Furnace Before Winter Arrives

It is almost time to bid adieu to the warm days of summer. Chilly afternoons followed by continually dropping temperatures are on the horizon, and fall is the perfect time to service the home furnace to ensure it is ready to withstand the demands of winter.

Furnace maintenance should be done on a regular basis. The best time to do so is in late summer or early fall, when you still have enough time to address any problems before it gets too cold outside.

HVAC systems malfunctions are typically caused by one of a handful of common problems. Inspecting certain components can help to guarantee a furnace is in working order when the first cold days arrive.



that the area is free of leaves, debris and animal nests. Again, any blockages can impede the efficiency of the unit or cause it to fail.

## Thermostat

Very often a furnace may not turn over because the thermostat is faulty. Many a homeowner has spent money to have a service person come out to examine the furnace, only to learn they only need a new thermostat or battery in the thermostat.

Check the thermostat against a separate thermometer to ensure that it is reading the right temperature in the house. Raise the setting a few degrees to test if the heat kicks on.

## Fuel

Furnaces are powered by various energy sources. Electricity, gas or oil may be involved in the process. If fuel is not being delivered to the furnace, the pilot will not light and warm the air to be blown through the house. Some systems have an emergency shut-off switch that will halt fuel delivery to the unit. It's easy for these switches to be flipped accidentally if a furnace is located in a high-traffic area. Make sure the switch is in the "on" position before reporting a problem.

In addition to these steps, you may want to vacuum the vent screens around the house. This will reduce the amount of dust blown around. Also, if the furnace exhausts into a flue, be sure that the exhaust route is clear so that carbon monoxide does not back up into the home.

Many homeowners are fully capable of inspecting their furnaces to ensure they are ready for winter. If anything seems out of place or malfunctions, consult with an HVAC professional to make repairs. FH149529

*Installing a fresh furnace filter is one way to ensure the furnace runs smoothly through the winter.*

## Filter And Air Intakes

After several months of running the air conditioning, the filter on the heating and cooling system may need to be changed. Check the condition of the filter to see if it is heavily soiled. Furnace filters are relatively inexpensive. Since this thin barrier will be responsible for cleaning the air you breathe, it is important to keep a fresh filter in the unit. A clogged, dirty filter will reduce the efficiency of the HVAC system and may contribute to poor indoor air and allergies.

Check the air intakes around the house for obstructions. Do not place furniture directly in front of intakes or venting that delivers air to the home, as this can compromise air flow and force the unit to work harder. Without adequate air flow through the system, the furnace may not turn on.

Many systems also have some sort of external vent or exhaust pipe. Check

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# Fireplace trends help create attractive, comfortable rooms

Fireplaces are useful features in a home. Fireplaces are sources of ambient heat and also add style to indoor spaces.

Fireplaces can complement just about any interior style. Fireplaces can

be traditional and burn wood or connect to a home's natural gas supply for on-demand ambiance. What's more, fireplaces may come in vented or ventless varieties, depending on homeowners' preferences and what is allowed by community building codes. That means a chimney or flue may not be needed — expanding the list of rooms where a fireplace can be installed.

Light colors work well for a fireplace, and also fit with today's lighter color interior design preferences.

- **Minimalist style:** Many fireplaces are designed in neutral colors with minimal trim that directs focus on the fire and not the appliance. When the fireplace is not in use, it blends in with surroundings and will not compete for attention with other design elements.
- **Convertible fireplaces:** Homeowners can choose between open or sealed fireplaces. A convertible fireplace enables homeowners to have

the best features of these options. A convertible fireplace can be converted to wood from gas, or the opposite, in as little as 30 minutes.

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- **Nature-inspired materials:** Natural stone continues to be a material of choice in fireplace surrounds. Light colors work well for a fireplace, and also fit with today's lighter color interior design preferences. Natural stone also works perfectly with both contemporary and rustic decor.
- **Vintage fireplaces:** Vintage continues to be a buzzword in 2022, and the choice to go vintage also applies to fireplace styles. A room decorated in vintage elements can be complemented with a vintage fireplace or one designed to look vintage.
- **Integrate into wall decor:** Fireplaces that are built right into a wall save space. One can have a television and a fireplace on the same wall. These types of fireplaces work well in modern home designs. Other fireplaces may be built into bookshelves or other wall features. Fireplaces can improve the appeal of a home. Various trends are popular this year, making fireplaces highly coveted features.

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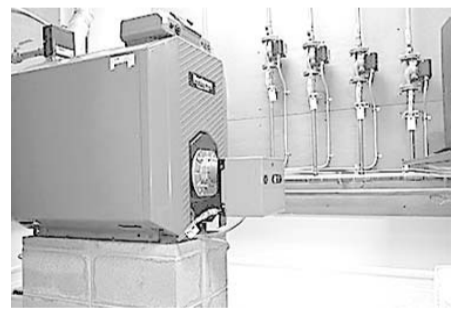
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# What to know about floor-to-ceiling windows

Modern homes showcase many dazzling features, but perhaps none draw as much as instant attention as floor-to-ceiling windows. Often seen in high-rise apartments that boast panoramic city views, floor-to-ceiling windows also are right at home in single-family dwellings.

Homeowners considering floor-to-ceiling windows may have lots of questions. The following rundown can provide some basic information that can help homeowners decide if floor-to-ceiling windows are right for their homes.

## Cost

Cost is often the primary consideration when mulling a home renovation, and that's even more significant as the world confronts the rising costs associated with inflation. The cost of installing floor-to-ceiling windows depends on a host of variables, including how many windows will be needed and where homeowners live. According to Modernize®, a service that facilitates connections between renovation-minded homeowners and local contractors, a floor-to-ceiling window wall costs somewhere between \$700 to \$1,600 per linear foot. Framing and glazing will add to those costs. Homeowners considering floor-to-ceiling windows are urged to receive several estimates for the project prior to choosing a contractor.

## Lighting and energy efficiency

One of the more appealing aspects of floor-to-ceiling windows is all the natural light they allow in. Of course, all that light also can drive up energy costs on sunny summer days. One way around that is to install energy efficient windows. Such windows include extra insulation to prevent cool air from escaping the home on summer days, which can reduce the need to lower

the thermostat on your air conditioning. A wall of glass also can provide less insulation against the cold. The extra insulation in energy efficient windows also helps keep warm air from escaping a home in the winter. Energy efficient windows may cost more than less efficient alternatives. However, over the long haul, a wall of less efficient floor-to-ceiling windows will likely cost more due to excess energy consumption.

## Privacy and fading

It's easy to be overwhelmed by the view floor-to-ceiling windows provide, especially in homes surrounded by serene natural settings like woods or properties that abut waterways. But that view outward also provides a view in, potentially compromising privacy. All that extra exposure to sunlight also can cause fabrics to fade over time. Floor-to-ceiling blinds and shades can protect homeowners' privacy and reduce fading on furniture, but this extra feature will add to the final cost of the project. Smart window tinting is another way to improve privacy and reduce fading, but this feature also will drive up the cost.

Floor-to-ceiling windows can be awe-inspiring. Homeowners considering such windows for their homes are urged to do their homework to ensure their homes are well-suited to this unique feature. FH228163



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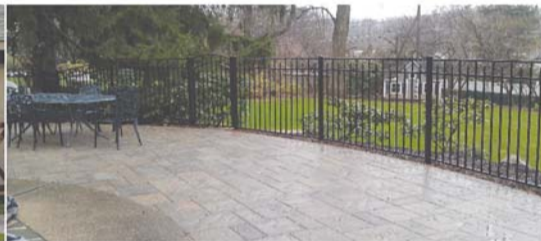
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  - Superior Plastics Cable
  - Keylink Aluminum
  - Keylink Aluminum Cable
  - Eastern Illusions Vinyl Railings
  - Eastern Ornamental Aluminum
  - Evolve Solid Plastic Railings
- Decking**
  - Clubhouse Cellular PVC
  - MoistureShield Composite
  - Evolve Solid Plastic Lumber & T&G Decking
  - Renew Decking & Trim
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  - TruNorth Composite
  - Duxxbak Composite Decking
  - Aeratis Cellular PVC Porch Flooring
  - Siberian Larch Wood Decking
  - Western Larch Wood Decking
  - Lunawood Thermowood Decking
  - Tropical Hardwood Decking
  - Southern Yellow Pine Porch Flooring
  - Western Red Cedar Boards, Decking, Siding
  - Trimax Plastics Structural Plastic Lumber
  - ZipUP Underdeck Ceiling Panels
- Fencing**
  - Superior Plastics Vinyl
  - Keylink Aluminum
  - Masterlink Chain-link
  - Eastern Illusions Vinyl Fence
  - Eastern Ornamental Aluminum
  - Eastern Cedar
- Siding**
  - Royal Vinyl Siding
  - Foundry Vinyl Shakes & Siding
  - MidAmerica Shutters & Siding Accessories
  - Koma Cellular PVC Boards & Trim
  - Metal Sales Steel Roofing & Wall Panels
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# How to stay safe on DIY projects

Home improvement projects can be costly. Depending on the scope of the project, the choice of materials and the skill level involved to see the project through to successful completion, homeowners could be on the hook for thousands of dollars or even more when renovating their homes. One popular way homeowners look to cut such costs is to do some, if not all, of the work themselves. Indeed, do-it-yourselfers can save a considerable amount of money. Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Housing Survey indicate that homeowners can save anywhere from 50 to 80 percent on DIY projects compared to what they might pay for comparable work to be performed by a contractor. However, the key there is "comparable." Cost overruns could derail DIY savings rather quickly if homeowners have little renovating skill or experience. But homeowners' wallets aren't the only thing in jeopardy if a DIY project goes awry. Renovation projects require attention to detail, and that includes an emphasis on safety. Homeowners who are injured on DIY projects may face costly medical bills, while projects that are completed without incident could later pose safety hazards that require work to be redone, which is both expensive and a threat to personal safety in the interim. DIYers need not be discouraged from taking projects on themselves, but they should heed these tips to stay safe when working on their homes.

- Make sure you choose the right ladder. DIYers may spend ample time shopping for drills and other electronic tools and gadgets that are fun to use. But ample time also must be afforded to the type of ladder you intend to use on a project. Estimates from the West Bend Insurance Company indicate that roughly 90,000 people visit the emergency room due to ladder accidents each year. Never use a broken ladder or an aging ladder that's uneven. In addition, do not use a ladder that forces you to reach far away. If you're leaning while using a ladder, the ladder is either too short for your project or positioned too far away from the wall. The National Home Security Alliance advises DIYers to place their ladder one foot from the wall for every four feet it rises above the ground. Test your ladders for their sturdiness prior to beginning work so you aren't tempted to use a subpar ladder.



- Be especially careful with power tools. Power tools can do a lot and they're fun to use. But it's important that DIYers do not let fun distract them from safety. The Power Tool Institute urges power tool users to wear personal protective equipment, including eye and hearing protection and a dust mask, whenever using power tools. The PTI also advises users to make sure tools are powered down before plugging them in and to inspect the tool before using it. Inspections can confirm that all guards are in place and that tools are up to the task at hand. Much like it's unsafe to overreach on a ladder, overreaching when using power tools increase the risk for mistakes, accidents and injuries.

- Avoid electrical work. Complicated electrical work is best left to the professionals. Estimates from the Electrical Safety Foundation International indicate that electrical malfunctions cause more than 50,000 house fires each year. Such malfunctions can occur for myriad reasons, and a lack of experience working with electrical circuits and breakers could make homes vulnerable to malfunctions and fires. It's also worth noting that homeowners' insurance policies may not cover damage caused by DIY electrical work. So at the very least homeowners should contact their insurance providers to determine if any accidents or injuries caused by DIY electrical work would be covered by their policies.

DIY renovation projects can save homeowners a lot of money, but those savings aren't worth compromising your safety and the safety of your loved ones. TF226991



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### Contest Rules:

1. All single-family entries must be owner occupied.
2. Property must be located within the City of Norwich.
3. Entries will be judged by exterior improvements to residences.
4. Entrants must complete the entry form and provide before and after pictures.
5. Improvements must have started after March 1st, 2024 and be completed by October 31st, 2024. Deadline for entry is November 15th, 2024.
6. Employees of the Evening Sun and directors of Norwich Building Tomorrow Foundation, Inc. are not eligible.
7. All decisions by contest judges are final.
8. Evening Sun has right to publish any or all contest pictures.
9. All applicants must submit a written statement of improvements and provide executed contracts when appropriate.
10. Mail your entry form and pictures to:

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 Or email: [contest@evesun.com](mailto:contest@evesun.com)

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IMPROVEMENT GOALS:

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 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

# Must-have features in your bathroom remodel

Veteran homeowners recognize the value of remodeling their kitchens and bathrooms. Kitchens and baths tend to appear dated more quickly than other spaces, such as living rooms and bedrooms, which can always be revamped with some fresh paint and new furnishings.

The home improvement pricing resource Home Guide indicates an average bathroom remodel costs anywhere from \$5,500 to \$15,000 depending on the size and scope of the renovation. However, a bath redo can increase a home's resale value and can return as much as 68 percent of homeowners' investments. As homeowners plan their bathroom renovations, it's a good time to consider improvements that will improve function and add design appeal for years to come.

- **Floating vanity:** Add an airy feeling to the room by creating space between the vanity and the floor. A floating vanity can be a counter with a vessel sink or even have cabinets, as long as the vanity doesn't extend to the floor.
- **Freestanding traditional sink or tub:** There's something elegant about a freestanding tub or pedestal sink. Such features can lend a classic vibe to a space. However, freestanding fixtures also come in modern or eclectic forms, so there are options for any design style.
- **Frameless showers:** Switch to a walk-in shower option, which improves aesthetics and makes it easier to "age in place" in a home. Pair that frameless shower with clear glass shower doors so sightline in the space remains unencumbered.
- **Natural textures:** Create a calm and serene sanctuary in the bathroom with light, natural hues and materials. Nature-inspired colors on tiles, walls and vanities can add to the spa vibe.
- **Dual sinks and vanities:** With a double vanity, two people can share the space and easily use the bathroom without getting in each other's way. One vanity with two sinks works, but homeowners can create even more personal space by dividing vanities and mirrors.
- **Small textured tile on shower floors:** Small textures are appealing and add



safety. The added texture and grouting will keep feet from slipping on wet floors. Also, opt for mold-resistant grout to make cleanup even easier.

- **Special shower heads:** Invest in shower heads that can run the gamut from creating steam showers to rainfall effects. Some showers will have multiple shower jets to offer an invigorating experience.
- **Improve drainage:** Increase the diameter of the drain pipe in the bathroom from the standard to a two-inch drain pipe. This will reduce the risk of clogs and overflow leaks.
- **Install a window:** Natural light and air flow can reduce the risk for mold and mildew growth, and windows add some aesthetic appeal to a space. Just be sure to choose frosted privacy glass.

Additional considerations for a bath remodel include heated floors, well-placed and attractive storage options and a toilet enclosure (water closet) for added privacy. These and other bathroom renovation ideas can add value and improve the appeal of the room. TF21A423

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# Make a dining room more elegant for entertaining

The kitchen may be the heart of a home, but when it comes to entertaining, a dining room — if one is present in a house — tends to be the prime gathering spot for meals.

*Rather than a bulky piece of furniture, a large piece of statement-making artwork or framed photos over a more minimalistic buffet table or small service bar is preferable.*

Dining rooms may not be top on the list of spaces to renovate, as they tend to be used infrequently. But a dining room makeover may still be a worthy endeavor. Here are some simple ways to make the dining room more elegant and functional.

- Clear out the clutter. The first step toward improving a dining room eating area is to remove any extraneous items from the space. If the dining room table is not used very often, it likely has become a catch-all for other items, such as bills, newspapers or kids' homework.

Rather than using the dining space as a makeshift office or homework station, invest in a rolling cart to store those papers and other items. Simply roll it into a closet or another room when it's time to host a party.

- Hang a statement light. Few decorative items add as much drama and ambiance to a dining space as a new overhead light. People hear chandelier and think a bejeweled or crystal design. But various chandelier styles can fit the aesthetic of a home. The light will be a focal point and instantly make the dining area more elegant. Install the light on a dimmer to adjust the illumination as needed to set the mood.

- Invest in new linens. Purchase coordinating table linens that will be used for special occasions. A decorative table cloth or table runner



coupled with cloth napkins and placemats helps to set the scene of the dinner party.

- Add a piece of artwork. Many modern homeowners have eschewed the China cabinet that once was standard in dining rooms. Rather than a bulky piece of furniture, a large piece of statement-making artwork or framed photos over a more minimalistic buffet table or small service bar is preferable. Choose artwork that complements the colors in the space.

- Include a centerpiece. Centerpieces add sophistication to the table and tie into the event. Floral arrangements, a bowl or basket of fruit, pine cones or greens from outdoors, or collectibles like shells in a tall canister can serve as centerpieces.

There are many simple ways to dress up dining spaces and make them more elegant. DE22B424

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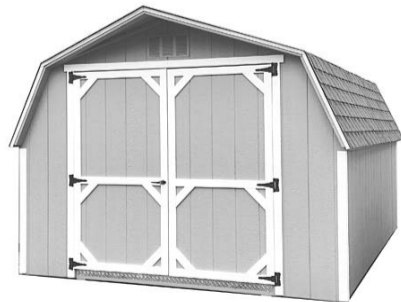
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# 12 ways to maximize vertical space

Who hasn't, at one point in their lives, lamented a lack of space and organization at home? A lifetime's worth of items have to be kept somewhere, and without the right organizational strategy, clutter can quickly take over.

The home improvement site Home Therapy says that, when square footage is limited, tapping vertical walls is the fastest way to maximize and multiply the space available. Hooks, rods, shelving, built-ins ... the sky is the limit when it comes to finding additional storage and adding a bit of personality to tight quarters. Even homes that may have adequate space can benefit from vertical solutions.

Here are some ideas to put vertical and other less-utilized areas to work for you.

1. Hang wire or plastic file organizers on the inside of kitchen cabinets to easily store cookie sheets, trays and cutting boards.
2. Save on counter or cabinet space with hanging spice racks. These can be hung directly on walls or on the inside of cabinet doors.
3. Stack all the stuff you can, including washers and dryers, beds (with storage drawers underneath) and even stacking nesting tables.
4. Choose furniture that is tall rather than wide. This can mean swapping out a dresser in a bedroom for an armoire or vertical chest of drawers.
5. Canvas bags hung on a towel bar on a wall can keep dirty clothes wrangled until it's time to wash them. This also eliminates clothes hampers on the floor.



6. Add a second rod or shelving to the inside of closets to create more space for clothing and other items.
  7. Take kitchen cabinets all the way to the ceiling. Store lesser used items on the uppermost shelves and the items you use each on the most accessible shelves.
  8. Install a shelf over the entryway to a room to utilize this seldom-used space. Shelves also can be custom cut and placed in oddly shaped areas, such as in attic rooms under the eaves or on slanted walls.
  9. Dowels or curtain rods and some fabric can be used to fabricate slings to hold books or magazines.
  10. Invest in some magnetic boards that can hold keys or notes by the front door or store knives on a kitchen wall.
  11. Install two towel bars parallel to one another on the wall of a bathroom. These can hold extra toilet tissue or rolled hand towels.
  12. Use rope plant hangers to store potatoes or onions near prep areas. The same plant hangers can wrangle stuffed animals and small toys in kids' rooms.
- Utilizing vertical areas in a home is a great way to increase storage capacity and keep rooms more organized. TF191646

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# Why excavation is best left to the professionals

When shopping for a home, buyers often try to envision themselves living in a given property. Images of family gatherings and holidays may instantly come to mind, but prospective homeowners also may begin to envision changes they would make to a property if they were eventually to call it home.

Changing an existing structure or building an entirely new home on an empty plot of land can be exciting. Such changes typically require excavation, which is a complicated process that may be necessary for projects big or small.

## What is excavation?

Excavation is the process of extracting material from the ground by digging. Earth, rock and other materials may be moved during the excavation process.

## Can do-it-yourselfers excavate?

Skilled DIYers who have participated in excavation projects in the past may be able to handle a project on their own. However, it's important that homeowners recognize that excavation is about more than just digging in the ground. It's a complicated process that requires the use of specialized tools and equipment. In addition, a strong understanding of the land that will be excavated is required for the project to be safe and go smoothly.

## Why hire an excavation professional?

Even the most skilled DIYer might be better off hiring an excavation professional than going it alone. That's true for a number of reasons.

- **Liability:** Homeowners who hire a fully licensed and insured professional excavation firm can rest easy knowing that they will not be responsible for



any damages or injuries that may occur during the project.

- **Permits/requirements:** A professional excavation firm typically files all the necessary paperwork for work permits or can advise which permits homeowners will need to go forward with the project. In addition, professionals will know the local laws regarding building and excavation. For example, homeowners may be unfamiliar with the concept of lateral support, which refers to landowners' right to have their land physically supported in its natural state by adjoining land and underground structures. This is an important concept to understand during an excavation project, and professionals can advise homeowners if a project they want to undertake will violate lateral support laws.

- **Experience:** Perhaps the best reason to work with excavation professionals is their experience. A lack of excavation experience can result in damage to a homeowner's property and surrounding properties, which can prove costly. DIYers may not know the type of soil they have on their property nor recognize the different types of challenges each type of soil can present during an excavation project. Such knowledge comes with experience and is often invaluable.

Skilled DIYers can tackle many home improvement projects on their own. However, the complex nature of excavation makes these types of projects the kind that are best left to skilled professionals. FH218165

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