

10 most-likely do-it-yourselfer mistakes

By [Pat Curry](#) • Bankrate.com

The standard rule for do-it-yourself projects is that they will take twice as long and cost three times as much as you expected. Or maybe it's take three times as long and cost twice as much.

Either way, the reason is the same. DIYers make mistakes. Lots of mistakes. The good news is that you can learn a lot from mistakes. The bad news is that mistakes always wind up making your home improvement project more expensive and more time-consuming than you wanted.

With that as a premise, Bankrate.com asked home improvement experts for their lists of the top DIY goofs, with advice on how to avoid repeating the errors in the future.

Our experts are:

Ed Del Grande, host of DIY Network's 'Warehouse Warriors' show. A master plumber, pipe fitter and fire-sprinkler fitter, Del Grande has more than 20 years of construction experience.

Lou Manfredini, the official Ace Hardware 'Helpful Hardware Man.' (You didn't think it was John Madden, did you?) The home improvement expert for the NBC Today Show, the Chicago-based contractor also answers tons of questions from DIYers on the [Ace Hardware Web site](#).

C.J. Ramsel, owner of Unlimited Inc., in Miami, Fl., and home improvement contractor to the stars, including Madonna, Rosie O'Donnell, Gloria Estefan and Ricky Martin.

Barbara Kavovit, owner of Anchor Construction, the largest woman-owned construction firm in the country. Based in New York City, she's worked on Carnegie Hall, Bloomingdale's and Sotheby's -- and sells a DIY tool kit especially designed for women.

Here are their top 10 DIY mistakes:

Not taking out the required permits. This is a big issue with both Del Grande and Manfredini.

Considered a bother at best by many DIYers, permits actually serve a greater purpose than just raising money for the government.

"People in permitting offices aren't evil," notes Manfredini. "They're there to make sure the job is done right and you don't hurt yourself."

Plus, for some jobs, such as putting in a wood stove, you need proof of the permit or your insurance carrier won't cover it.

Not sure if your job requires a permit? Del Grande says that the rule of thumb is that you need one for anything larger than painting and wallpapering. It doesn't hurt to call the building department and ask.

Nothing slows down a job more than not having all the materials you need. Manfredini notes that one reason the pros can do what they do is that they buy quality tools. "There's always a bargain bin," he says. "It's not a wise investment. You lose time and money."

Inadequate preparation of the job site. If you do a small addition, they'll be delivering materials. You don't want them out of order or exposed to weather while you are working, Del Grande says. Or worse, they could be stolen if they're not properly stored. (If you have a septic

tank, make sure you know where it is. If a supplier delivering materials in a heavy truck drives over it, you could be looking at a cracked tank. Yuck.)

Skimping on materials. Kavovit says she often sees DIYers use quarter-inch drywall for building walls. You need at least five-eighths-inch; three-quarters-inch works well for a good sound barrier. The same rule applies to plywood for subfloors. Go with three-quarter-inch. It creates a much stronger floor, especially if you're installing wood floors over them

Using the wrong paint. One of the most popular DIY projects around, painting can make a place look great. Manfredini says flat paint should be used only for ceilings. Interior paints should have at least an eggshell or satin finish so you can scrub it.

On outdoor decks, "sun and rain tear the heck out of the wood," he says. Clear sealers don't block the UV rays, and they peel. Use a linseed oil-based stain; it drives the pigment into the wood and preserves it.

Improper preparation of walls for painting. A good quality paint job is 90 percent preparation, Manfredini says. Clean the walls, sand them and patch any holes before you paint. Ramsel recommends a coat of primer or stain blocker if you're trying to cover over oil-based paint, stains, peeling paint or if you're painting a lighter color over a darker color

Unsafe job conditions. Nothing diminishes your return on investment like a trip to the emergency room. Wear safety goggles when using power tools or working with drywall or wood, wear hard hats when you're working under other people on scaffolding, and open some windows when you're painting, staining or stripping old finishes off floors or walls, Del Grande says. Ramsel cautions against wearing loose, hanging clothing, especially when you're using power tools. Wear gloves when you're carrying wood, metal and rock, or when hammering, and wear a nail or tool pouch to prevent damage to your floors and more importantly, the feet of people and pets.

Inaccuracy. Ramsel lives by the rule, 'Measure twice, cut once.' It's so important for things such as building walls, hanging drywall or cutting baseboards, counter tops or pipe. If you're going to err, err on the side of too long. You can always make something shorter; you can't make it longer. Spackle can cover up to an eighth of an inch seam, Ramsel says; if it's a quarter of an inch, the seam will pop the spackle and show.

Working beyond your limits. Everybody has them. Del Grande won't work on a roof; yours might be plumbing or electrical work. Don't stand on the top steps of ladders and don't try to work beyond your reach.

Failure to get a clue. You don't want to start to learn how to do a project on your own house. If you have a friend who is a contractor or an experienced DIYer, offer your assistance on a project. No one will turn away free labor.

Failure to get a clue, part 2. If you need to remove a supporting wall, have an engineer look at it to see what kind of beam you need to replace it. "If you have a saw in your hand and have a question about what you're doing," Del Grande says, "stop. Follow that little voice in your head."

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