



<< less bang for the buck

Q Whenever our washing machine changes cycle, the pipes rattle and bang like an old Plymouth Duster. It's the same washing machine we had at our other house, so I don't think the machine is the problem. What's up?

A What your pipes have is a bad case of the water hammer blues. Your washing machine has a special valve that starts and stops the flow of water almost instantly as it changes cycles. The sudden shutdown creates a small explosion which reverberates through the pipes, often making them rattle against other nearby pipes, ducts, studs or joists. The easiest solution is to install screw-in style water hammer arresters that act like little shock absorbers. They're available at most home centers and hardware stores for about \$20 each.

>> bump-free borders

Q We'd like to install a border along the top of our heavily textured dining room walls. Is there some simple way of creating a smooth surface?

A The easiest, fastest way is to mask off an area exactly the width of your border, then apply a skim coat of joint compound to smooth out the surface. Use a 10- or 12-inch drywall knife to apply a thin layer. If that doesn't smooth it out, apply a second layer. Lightly sand, coat the area with primer, and then hang your border.



shelf paper removal

Q The previous owner of our house clearly had a self-adhesive shelf paper addiction. The sticky stuff covers every shelf and drawer in the house. Please tell me there's a simple way to get rid of this stuff.

A Get the edge of a knife, putty knife or fingernail under one corner, and then use a hair dryer to warm the underside of the shelf paper as you slowly pull it up and away. You can also try spraying the underside with warm water from a plant mister as you gradually lift. If any sticky residue remains, try attacking it with an adhesive remover or product like Goof Off.