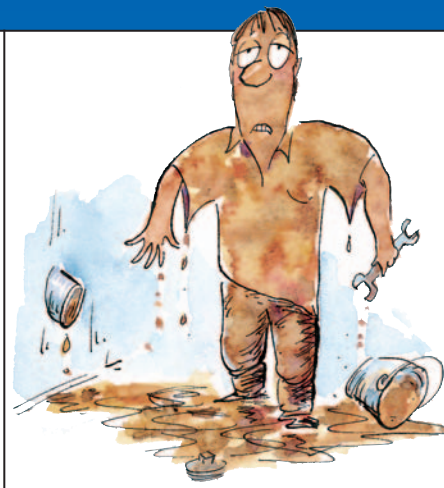


GreatGoofs[®]

Collector's Edition



The Family
Handyman[®]



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF DIYERS LEARNING THE HARD WAY

“The error of the past is the success of the future.
A mistake is evidence that someone tried to do something.”

— Anonymous

Ten years ago we ran a little one-sixth-page snippet from a reader about a “DIY mistake.” Wow! The mail came pouring in. It turns out that DIYers make lots of goofy mistakes, and some of us are not shy about sharing them. Now Great Goofs is one of our most popular departments. With any luck, we can learn from someone else’s goof (in addition to our own) and have a good belly laugh to boot.

We hope you enjoy this 10th Anniversary Great Goofs Collector’s Edition.

The editors of *The Family Handyman*

P.S. Keep those crazy DIY calamities coming in. Email your Great Goof to greatgoofs@readersdigest.com or mail to Great Goofs, The Family Handyman, 2915 Commers Drive, Suite 700, Eagan, MN 55121. We pay \$100 for every one we print! *Original contributions become our property upon acceptance and payment.*

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Steve Björkman, the illustrator who brings Great Goofs to life, says, “Great Goofs is by far the most fun of all the jobs I work on. Perhaps it’s because I so often identify with the situations I get to illustrate!” Steve lives in California with his wife, three kids, a dog, cat and wandering desert tortoise. See more of his work at www.stevebjorkman.com



1ST GREAT GOOF EVER PUBLISHED



Honey, I cracked the toilet!

“When you install or replace a toilet, don’t make the same mistake I did. I noticed a gap between the toilet and the floor, so I cranked down hard on the toilet bolts. Crack! There went the brand new toilet and also the edge of the closet flange (the plastic ring that the toilet bolts to). We had to buy a whole new toilet, and I had to screw a gadget called a Super Ring to the floor to repair the flange. Total cost: \$200.”

— Bill Filipkowski

PaintingGoofs



Pretty in pink?

To spruce up the house and give it some curb appeal, we decided to add red shutters around the windows. Painting shutters with a brush can be slow, so we decided to rent a paint sprayer and paint them assembly-line style in the garage. We laid down dropcloths, opened the doors and windows for ventilation and sprayed on primer and two coats of paint. After finishing up for the day, I closed the overhead garage door and saw that our nice white door was now a uniform pink! The overspray from the sprayer had risen and settled on top of the door while it was open for ventilation. The next day was taken by still another painting project—the garage door!

— Robert A. Jones

Painting faux paw

When my mother decided it was time to paint her living room, I told her I'd help. We took all the usual precautions like placing dropcloths and masking the trim to keep cleanup to a minimum. The painting was going fine until the cat decided to pay us a visit and proceeded to jump into the half-full roller pan. The cat freaked and ran a circle around the room and then dashed up the staircase. It wasn't hard to "track her down" and scrub the paint from her paws, but the rest of the cleanup job took several hours. We now keep the curious cat in another room while we paint!

— Robert Toms



PaintingGoofs



Fuzzy French doors

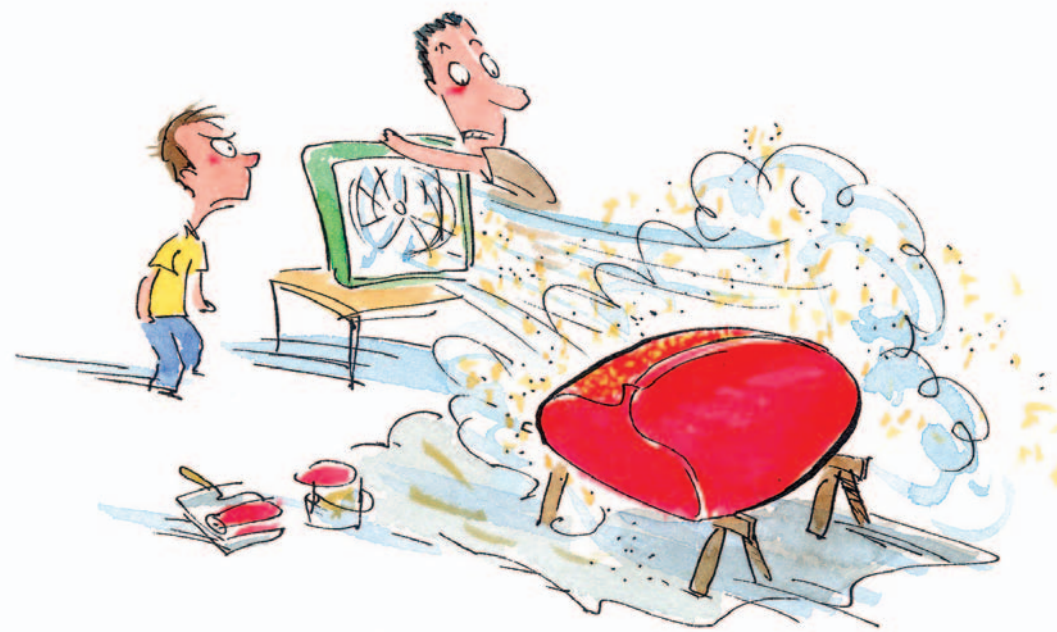
I installed a set of French doors for my wife that open onto a private courtyard. I decided to spray-paint them right away with a good-quality oil paint. When I finished painting, I called my wife out to the courtyard to admire the near-perfect finish. She smiled with delight, and wanting to thank me, said she'd take care of the nasty job of cleaning my work clothes. She put them in the washer and then into the dryer, without thinking that the dryer vent empties into the courtyard. The still-wet beautiful doors became embedded with lint. We're now the proud owners of fuzzy French doors!

— Mike Dobbs

Sunken hopes

My son and I built a wooden rowboat in our garage for his high school shop project. It turned out great. We sanded it and got set up to paint. After we rolled and brushed the paint, we were anxious for it to dry, so I grabbed the box fan from the corner of the garage and aimed it toward the boat. Bad idea! The fan had accumulated the sawdust from the project on its blades and blew all of it onto the freshly painted boat. My son looked at me with a long face and requested that I warn him before I had any more clever ideas.

— Mark Hawley



Electrical Goofs



Cut the lights

When I built my house, I wanted a tall garage opening to accommodate our full-size trucks. That meant I had to mount the garage door track just a few inches from the ceiling. The installation went without a hitch. The first time I hit the garage door button, the door opened perfectly, rolled smoothly along the rails—and sheared off my ceiling lights!

— Ernie Smith

Unplugged

Recently, I was cleaning my yard with my electric leaf blower connected to a 100-ft. long extension cord. The blower kept cutting out, so I checked the cord and found it had a damaged spot about a foot from the end. When I finished the yardwork, I went up to the hardware store to get a new end for the cord. I cut off the bad end and installed a new plug end. I then rolled up the cord and hung it in the garage. The next time I needed it, I plugged in the blower and then grabbed the other end.

Luckily, I didn't touch the prongs or this story would have had a tragic ending! I'd mistakenly put another male end on the cord instead of a female end. With only my pride short-circuited, I unplugged the cord and replaced the goof.

— Mike Butchart



ElectricalGoofs

Sparks in the dark

Recently I decided to replace a ceiling light fixture with a ceiling fan in my computer room. Instead of turning off the power at the breaker, I just shut off the light switch and got to work. I changed the box and was finishing up the electrical work when a storm passed over outside. The storm darkened the room a bit, but I could still see fine to complete the job. Just then, my wife came into the room to help out. I asked her to hand me some parts and then she said, "Why are you working in the dark?" Taking matters into her own hands, she instinctively turned on the light switch and sparks flew from my screwdriver. Thank goodness my hands weren't touching the wires. Next time I'll turn off the power at the breaker!

— Pedro Espada



Hot closet!

After framing in a new closet with metal studs, I was ready to take a break. I had been working around an old electrical panel in our old house. As I sat down on the radiator, I grabbed hold of one of the studs to support myself and was greeted with a powerful shock. Upon investigating, I found that one of my screws had penetrated a wire inside an existing wall and had energized the new metal wall framing. What a wild ride 120 volts gives you! How lucky I wasn't hurt.

— Ted Labatte



Let there be light

My sister had just completed rewiring my porch light, but I screwed in a new bulb and—no light. She rechecked the wiring, flipped the switch and—no light. Then she redid the wiring—no light. Finally, I unscrewed the new bulb and noticed that a bar code label was glued to the bottom where the connection is made. I removed it and—lo! There was light.

— Wilhelmine Bennett

AutoGoofs



A slick conversation

I really enjoy changing the oil in my car and do so religiously every 4,000 miles. Last time I changed it, however, things didn't go as planned. I proceeded normally by removing the drain plug, draining the old oil into the drain pan and then removing the filter. As I spun on the new filter, the phone rang; it was an old friend and we must have talked for an hour. After the conversation, I started filling the engine with oil. As I bent down to pick up my tools, I noticed a large dark pool moving toward my feet. And yes, there was the oil plug lying in the middle of the pool of oil.

— Ronald March

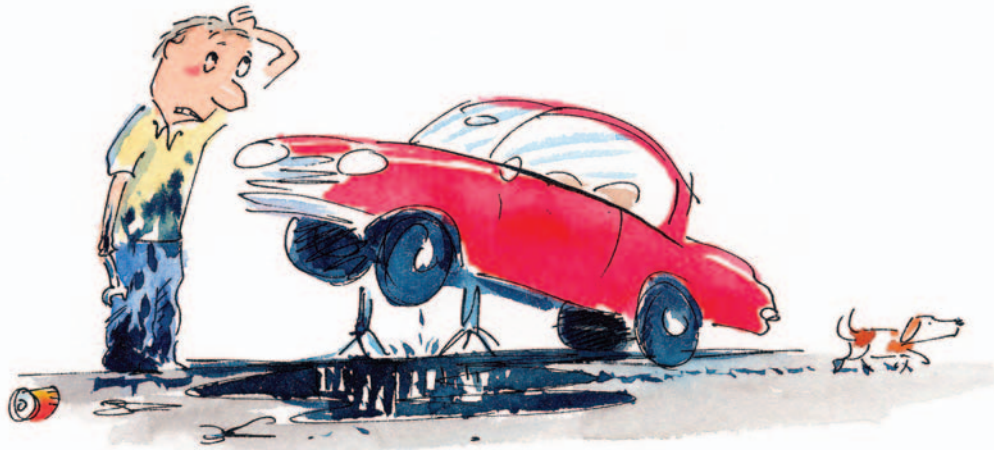
Turn off the bubble machine!

While waiting for our new house to be built, my wife and I moved in with my in-laws. Not being familiar with their garage, I grabbed a blue bottle of what looked like windshield washing fluid to fill the empty reservoir in my car. It was a particularly cold day, and when I hit the washer button nothing happened. I assumed the stuff had frozen. The next day was considerably warmer, so when the windshield got dirty, I hit the washer button again. Bubbles squirted all over my car and drifted onto the surrounding cars as I sped down the interstate. When I returned home, I grabbed the bottle and read closely. I had filled the reservoir with car wash concentrate!

— Dave McDaniel



AutoGoofs



Filter frustration

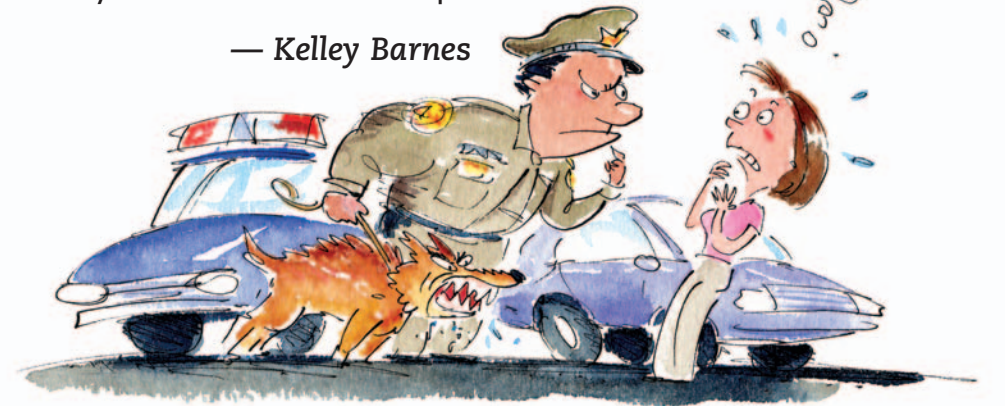
Being a 32-year-old automotive engineer from Detroit, I figured it was time to learn how to change the oil in my car. I bought some ramps, a filter wrench, drain pan and new filter and went to work. I removed the plug and drained the oil, but I couldn't free the old filter from the motor. As hard as I tried with my filter wrench, it just wouldn't budge. Frustrated, I went to a local mechanic and begged him to make a house call to remove it. He struggled with a chisel and the filter split with half of it still threaded to the engine. He had the car towed to his service station and repaired it. He said he'd never seen one so stuck. Seems that the last person who changed the oil really cranked it on instead of snugging it firmly like it says in the manual.

— Raghu Jainapur

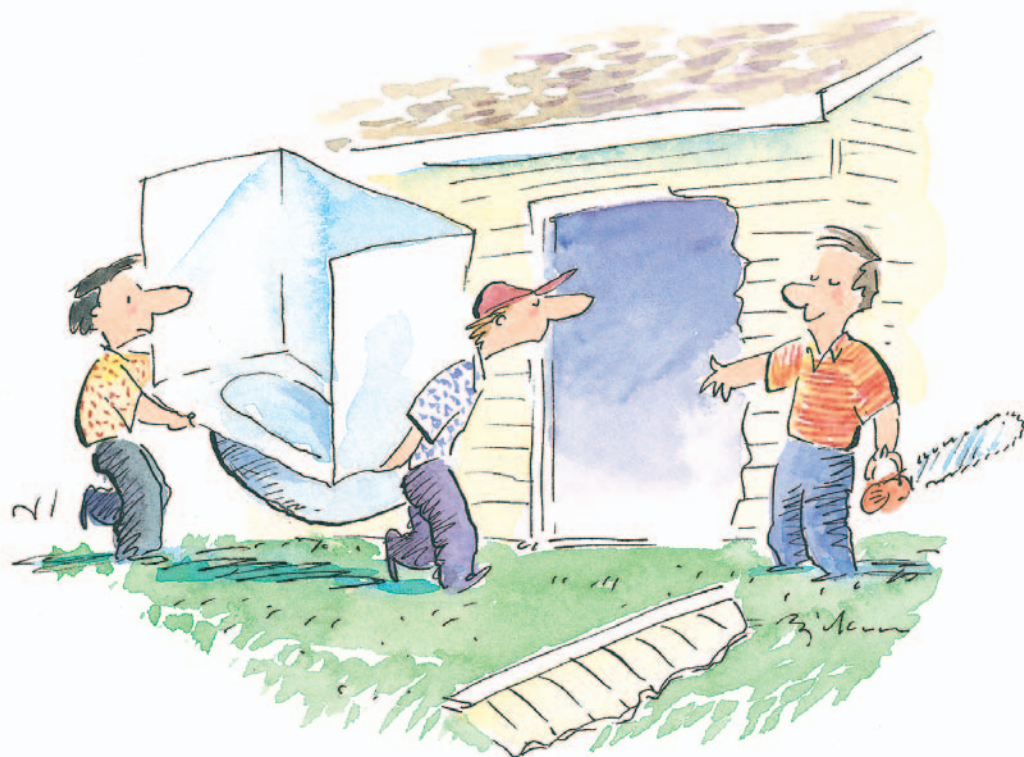
Near break-in

The remote control for my car door locks had begun showing signs that it needed a new battery, but with my busy schedule, I had put off replacing it. On the way out to my car recently, after a long evening of college classes, I pushed the keypad but nothing happened. With my keys under the floor mat inside the car, I figured I was in a real pickle. I called security and a guard came out and began to jimmy the door lock while I filled out the consent form. When I began to fill in my plate number, I glanced at the plate and discovered the number on it wasn't even close to mine. I scanned the parking lot and saw my identical car, four rows down! I yelled to the security guard to stop. I've since replaced the remote battery and am working on charging my own battery with some extra sleep.

— Kelley Barnes



BathroomGoofs



Through-the-wall shower

Most one-piece shower/tub units are installed in new homes, where they can be put in easily, but we wanted to put one in our older home. We found one that fit, and measured the doorway to be sure it would go through. Unfortunately, when it was delivered, we discovered that it wouldn't make the turn into the bathroom! We ended up having to cut out the exterior wall of the bathroom so we could slide the unit in.

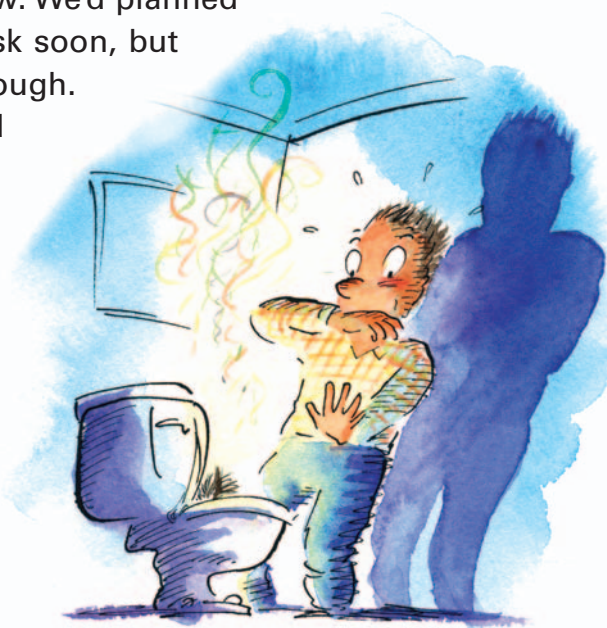
— Carolyn Burdge

Housewarming gift

My wife and I had just moved into our first house and a few days later decided to celebrate with a night out on the town. When we got home, I slipped into the dimly lit bathroom, lifted the toilet lid and slammed it back down in horror! How much beer had I had? I turned on the lights, brought in my wife and we confirmed that yes, that indeed was a huge, very dead squirrel floating in the bowl. I guess when a home inspector suggests you put a critter guard over the end of the plumbing vent on the roof, he means now. We'd planned on getting to that little task soon, but apparently not soon enough.

Even with the critter guard securely in place, we still have a houseful of squirrels, as friends and relatives send us lots of ceramic and stuffed varieties to remind us of our first houseguest.

— Geoff Flegel



BathroomGoofs



Take two aspirin and . . .

My wife and I decided to remodel our '70s-style bathroom and install a new vanity, medicine chest and light. We removed the old fixtures and eliminated the sconce lighting on each side of the original chest. Instead we chose to install a single light fixture above, since there was already a junction box there. The finishing touch on the remodeling job was to install the new light fixture. We thought it was perfect—until we decided to fill the medicine chest. We couldn't open the medicine chest door because the light fixture hung down over the top.

— Chris Jachimowicz

In the bag

After removing an old toilet, I did the old handyman trick of stuffing a bunch of plastic bags into the sewer opening. This kept the stench from seeping into the bathroom while I installed the new toilet over the weekend. After setting and hooking up the new commode, I did a test flush. It was very satisfying to watch the water swirl down and the bowl fill up—and up and up! The toilet gushed water all over the floor. Turns out the other half of that trick is removing the bags from the sewer opening.

— Rob Kiesling



The \$500 toilet seat

I was using a hammer to tap a frozen nut loose while replacing a toilet seat. Although I was careful, one of my blows cracked the toilet bowl, and the result was a flooded bathroom floor. I bought a new seat and toilet. While installing the new toilet, I excessively torqued the hold-down bolts and broke that "throne." I bought yet another toilet. This time, my wife got me out of the house while a friend carefully and successfully installed it.

— Thomas Bassman

PyroGoofs



Great balls of fire

Last spring we found our house being invaded by mice. My husband went into the crawlspace below to see where the critters were getting in and found a hole under the pantry and near the water heater. Using an aerosol can of spray foam, he got to work filling the hole. The pilot light on the water heater suddenly ignited the foam and flames shot across the kitchen floor. I grabbed my son and flew out the door yelling to my husband. Luckily he was able to put out the small fire and no one was hurt. I later noticed the warning label on the can. Now we're a bit more careful about pilot lights and spraying foam just anywhere!

— Jesse and Patricia Allen

Turn down the heat

After trimming an overgrown tree in my yard, I piled the limbs into the back yard about 20 ft. from my garage. On a calm day a couple of weeks later, I decided to burn the pile. To be safe, I had the garden hose ready. The fire started just fine but soon it was so hot that I had to step back a bit. This hot fire didn't last long and when it was nearly out, I turned around toward the garage. Yikes! The vinyl siding on the whole side near the fire was curled and melted from the heat. I'm now doing a project that wasn't on my list.

— George DeLozier



PyroGoofs



Fried extension cord

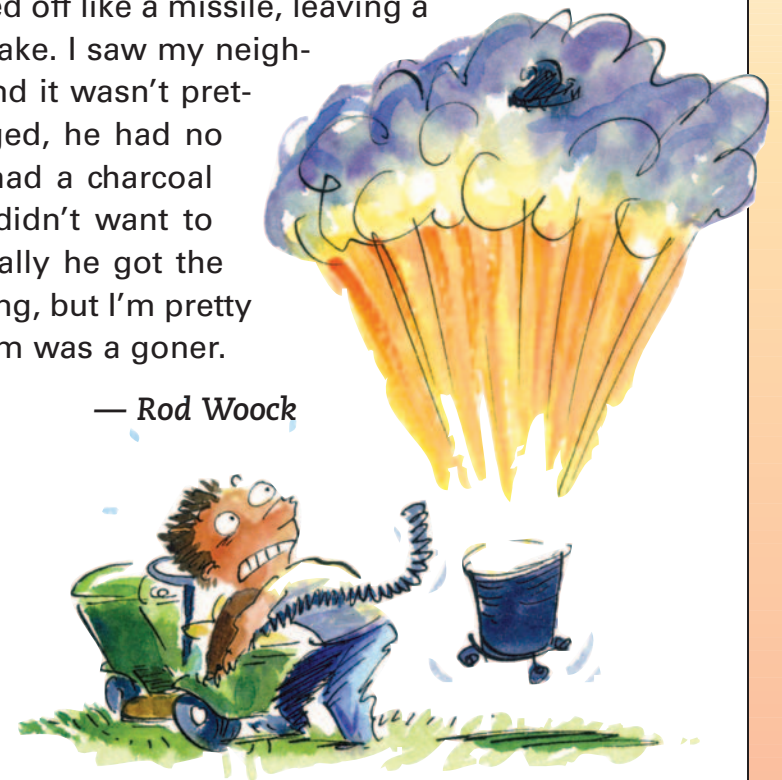
My bonehead move was to use a long coiled-up extension cord to power an electric heater. I had a nice plastic reel with 100-ft. and 25-ft. extension cords on it. Gluing up some shelves in the garage during the winter, I thought it would be good to heat the place up a bit to help the glue set. So I plugged the electric heater into the extension cord and left. An hour later, the garage was full of smoke, and the extension cords were melting. I lost both cords and the reel. I also decided to install a smoke alarm in the garage.

— Michael Fairbourne

Slow and steady saves your face

My neighbor was having trouble starting his riding mower at the beginning of the season. He nursed the machine up to his shed door and decided he should drain the old gas in the tank and replace it. Instead of siphoning out the gas, he came up with the brilliant idea of using his wet/dry vacuum to suck the tank dry. After about a minute of that, the vacuum ignited and the top blasted off like a missile, leaving a huge fireball in its wake. I saw my neighbor later that day, and it wasn't pretty. His hair was singed, he had no eyebrows, his skin had a charcoal hue and he clearly didn't want to talk about it. Eventually he got the mower up and running, but I'm pretty sure the shop vacuum was a goner.

— Rod Woock



BuggyGoofs

Chirp, chirp

One evening last summer, just after going to bed, my wife and I heard a chirping sound coming from the hallway. In the morning I promptly changed the battery in the smoke alarm, thinking that would fix it. The next night we heard it again. The next morning I changed the batteries in the remaining smoke alarms. That night we heard it again. I assumed that the smoke alarms must be faulty, as they were several years old. I went to the home center the next day and bought three new alarms and installed them. Eager for a good night's rest, we went to bed. That night the periodic chirping continued. I called the home center and asked what the problem might be. After an extensive search, we found it—a lonely cricket. I coaxed it into a jar and put it outside. Now I'm sleeping better than ever. No crickets, and all that peace of mind from the new smoke alarms.

— Ellis J. Biderson



Between hornets and a hard place

Hornets had built a good-size nest in our porch light, so I rounded up a can of insecticide and a large cloth and waited until dark, when the pests would be in their hive. That night I quickly wrapped the cloth around the light fixture to keep all the angry, buzzing hornets inside. But when I tried to grab the can of spray at my feet, I realized I couldn't reach down that far without letting go of the cloth—the only thing between me and an irate colony of stingers. Was I stuck! Fortunately, it was summer and the windows were open. After I gave a few desperate yells, my wife came and rescued me from my potentially painful pickle.

— Albert F. Reed



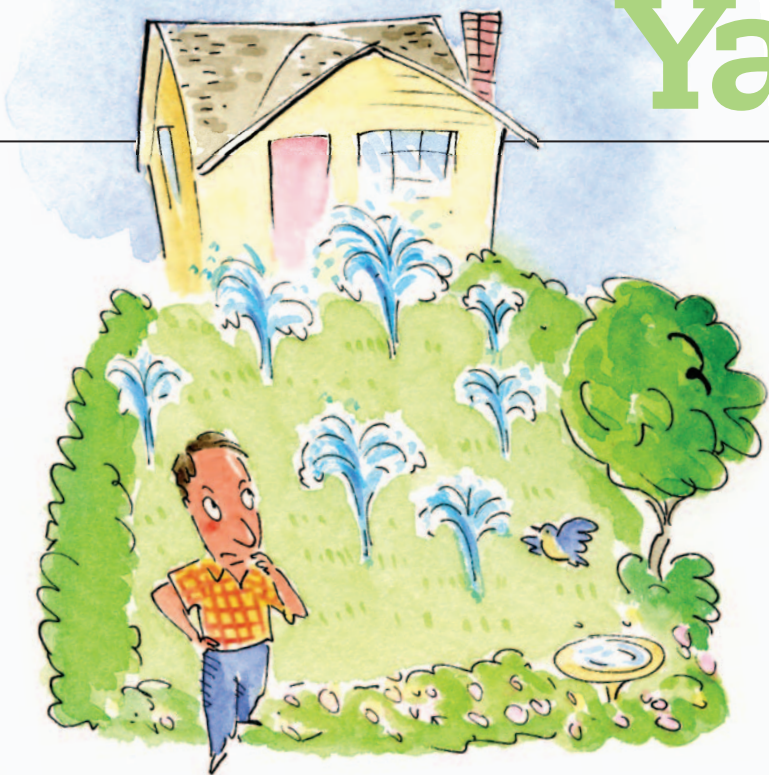
Sticky situation

Eager to cross one more project off my to-do list, I went outside to paint window trim just before dark. Who needs daylight when you have a 500-watt work light? I finished the first coat and returned an hour later to find an ugly surprise: Stuck to the paint like flypaper were hundreds of tiny insects that had been attracted by the work light! I waited until the next day to sand off the bugs and apply the final coat of paint—and this time I finished well before dark.

— Bruce Leising



YardGoofs



Water works

In an attempt to bring our lawn up to par with our neighbors', I installed an underground sprinkler system. A few months went by and the results were terrific—our lawn was green and weed free. A neighbor suggested we'd get even better results if we had our lawn professionally aerated. So of course I called up a lawn service and had it done.

The next morning, I peered out the window to see streams of water spurting up from random spots in the lawn. Apparently I hadn't buried the underground tubing deep enough and the machine that aerated the lawn punctured the lines. Now I can impress my neighbors with my pipe-patching skills.

— Rich Andreoni

I pushed and I pushed . . .

The previous owners of my new home left the yard looking like a hayfield, so I was anxious to get mowing. Not yet a proud lawn mower owner, I asked the clerk at the local hardware store to show me their mower selection. I quickly picked out the model I liked best but only half listened to his brief explanation of how it worked.

"How hard can it be to run a mower?" I thought.

I hauled the mower home and got right to task. After about an hour of pushing, I was soaking wet and panting like a dog after a foxhunt. I stopped for a break to refill the tank. While pouring the fuel into the tank, I noticed a handle with three icons: a rabbit, a turtle and a stop sign. Suspecting these symbols to be more than decoration, I started the mower and pushed the lever toward the rabbit sign. The mower lurched forward. As I ran to catch the now-self-propelled mower, I vaguely remembered the sales clerk saying something like "It practically mows by itself!"

— Marilyn Barnwell



YardGoofs



Super Bowl blackout

One mild Sunday morning this last winter, I decided to start digging up the ground for my new garden. The area was about 40 yards from the house, so I figured there were no underground electrical wires to worry about. What I didn't think about was cable TV. Well, you guessed it, I cut right through a cable line, which just happened to be the main feed for our entire neighborhood. No one had TV reception for the rest of the day. Talk about upset neighbors—it was Super Bowl Sunday!

— Armando Ramirez

Miffed by the mower

A few years back, I was working on some rental property and the yard was in serious need of mowing. I hired a 12-year-old boy to mow while I went to work on the projects inside. I heard the mower purring along and then all at once it stopped and I heard a very angry voice next door. I looked out the window and saw the neighbor giving the boy a serious lecture. It turned out the neighbor was painting the side of his house and the mower had shot freshly mown grass onto the fresh paint! I decided to stay inside until his temper subsided. The next day he was out there, scowling as he scraped the grass off the siding. We decided to wait another week to finish the mowing.

— Charles Ingle



PetGoofs



This side up

When we moved into our new house, one of the first things on the list was to install a cat door between rooms so our cat could do its business. I removed the door, set it on sawhorses and marked the opening with the cat-door template. After I made a remarkable splinter-free cut, something didn't look right. On further inspection, I realized that I'd cut the opening at the top of the door. The cat's name is Magic, but...

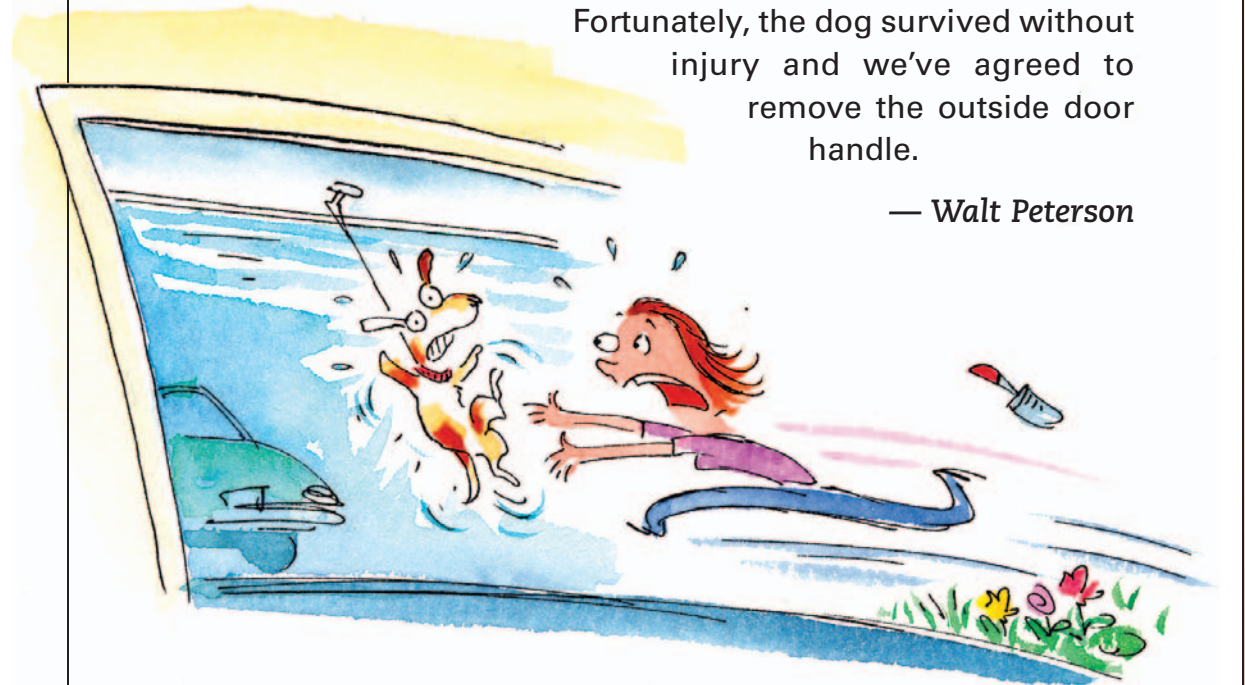
— Stephen M. Gray

Doggone

One day last summer, I was working on our faulty electric garage door opener and my wife was outside training our new puppy. After a while, she decided to pick some weeds and slipped the dog's leash over the closest, most convenient spot, the garage door handle. Unaware of this, I finished the repairs and hit the opener button on the wall. When the door got about halfway up, I could hear the dog yelping and my wife screaming as the dog was hoisted up by the neck.

Fortunately, the dog survived without injury and we've agreed to remove the outside door handle.

— Walt Peterson



PetGoofs

Doggone

Proud of my well-constructed doghouse complete with shingles and nameplate, I was ready for my German shepherd to move in. I had even attached an eyebolt to the doghouse to fasten the dog's leash to, since he's a bit rambunctious. On the trial morning of this new setup, I let the dog out, hooked up the leash and went back inside. A few minutes later, I went out to check on him. The dog and the house were gone! I looked in every direction and then across the street. There I saw him enjoying his new yard. The doghouse is now anchored to a concrete slab.



— Michael DiPardo

They call it puppy art

While painting our side door, I spilled a few drops of paint. As I was getting a rag to clean it up, my son came home from school. He opened the storm door and just missed stepping in the can of paint. Unfortunately, our dog, which I had carefully shut outside, came trailing in right behind him. A big, hairy paw stepped right into the can of black, oil-based paint. To make matters worse, the dog got scared and ran as I yelled and chased him, hoping to keep him off the carpet. His paint-soaked paw made a disaster across the house. When I was between cleaning the floors and the black-pawed dog, my wife came home. Calling it "puppy art" didn't lighten the situation.

— Carl Bernardi

The telltale cat

I worked feverishly to finish hanging the drywall in the bathroom before my wife got home. I succeeded, and we both were proud of my work. Later, she heard a faint meowing, traced it to the plumbing space behind the tub, and in panic ran out to demand that I free the cat from inside the wall. I promptly did so, by tearing out the drywall I'd been so proud of. The cat still has eight lives left, but now when I do repairs, my wife gets the pets, AND the kids, out of the house.

— Gerry Lamiette, Jr.



LadderGoofs

Circus act

Recently, I bought a powerful leaf blower that's been quite useful around the house. My clay tile roof was covered with debris from nearby trees, so I set up my ladder to blow the roof clean. I set the ladder as vertical as possible to avoid denting my metal gutters and climbed up with the leaf blower in hand. As I turned it on and started to blow the leaves off the roof, the ladder began to tip back from the house. I scrambled down the ladder as quickly as possible, jettisoning the leaf blower to one side. Somehow, I reached the ground safely just in time to catch the ladder as I was back-pedaling. My pride in my resourceful escape quickly dimmed as I realized that a crowd of people at the nearby bus stop was snickering and pointing.

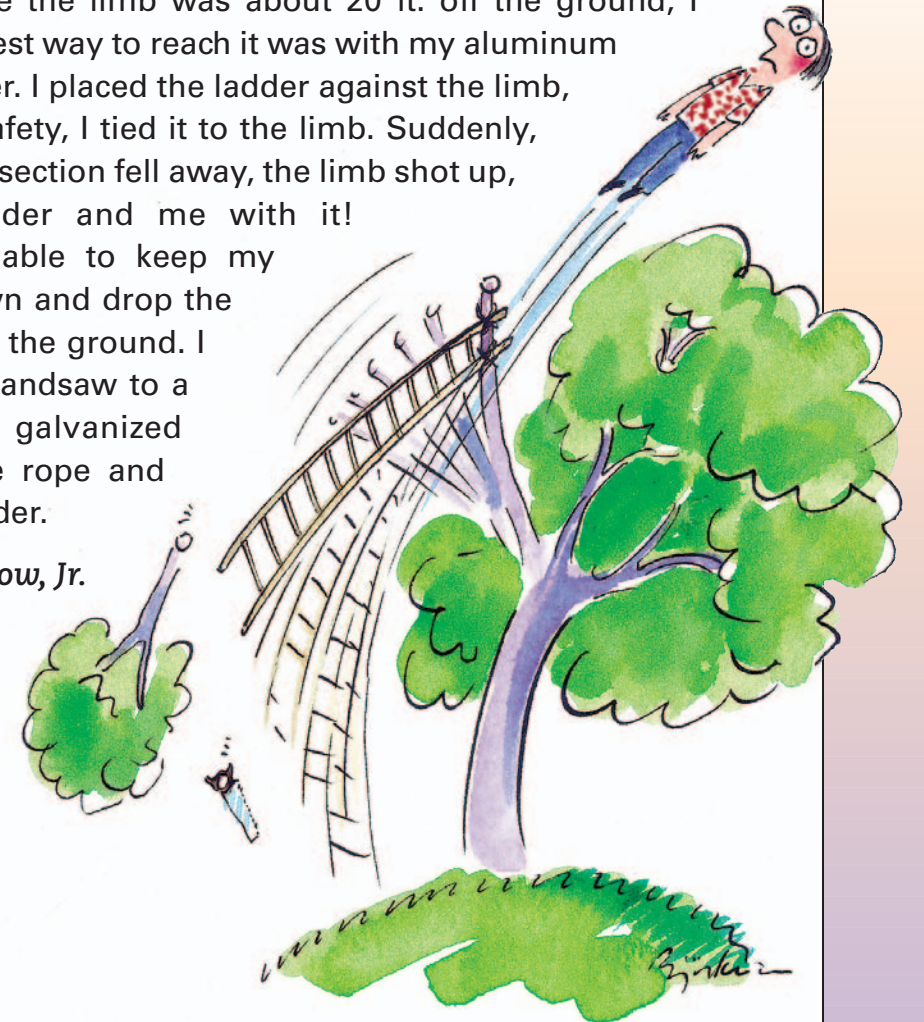
— Jim Mielke



Out on a limb

I needed to cut off a large chunk of a horizontal limb on our ficus tree. Since the limb was about 20 ft. off the ground, I decided the safest way to reach it was with my aluminum extension ladder. I placed the ladder against the limb, and for extra safety, I tied it to the limb. Suddenly, as the trimmed section fell away, the limb shot up, taking my ladder and me with it! Luckily, I was able to keep my grip, climb down and drop the 4-ft. distance to the ground. I had to tape a handsaw to a long piece of galvanized pipe to cut the rope and retrieve my ladder.

— Walter Morrow, Jr.



LadderGoofs



Ladder launch

After a near hit by Hurricane Floyd, I decided to trim the deadwood from our live oak tree. One particular 15-ft. limb was just within reach of my extension ladder, so up I went. I decided to cut off about 8 ft. on my first cut. As that portion hit the ground, the remaining portion, on which my ladder rested, suddenly rose up, relieved of the weight of the end of the branch. My ladder was no longer “just within reach.” On my way to the ground (without injury, thank goodness), I knew I had just experienced Great Goof material!

— Howard Creech



Express elevator

I knew my tall, 50-year-old wooden ladder had outlived its usefulness, but I thought I'd use it for one last job: installing the roof on my kids' treehouse. Perched on the second-highest ladder rung, I strained to reach the last nail of the final shingle. Then, without warning, the ladder rung broke and I plummeted painfully downward as one rung after another splintered under my weight. I wound up on the ground feeling like Wile E. Coyote. Fortunately, I sustained only minor injuries; I took a chain saw to the ladder.

— John H. Messina

ApplianceGoofs



Do the 'Mashed Potato'

While moving out of our house, I decided to throw out old packaged food instead of boxing it up and moving it. I ran across some old instant mashed potato mix and emptied it into the garbage disposer. I then ran the water and hit the switch. My disposer groaned as it went into a seizure and in a huge eruption, spouted mashed potatoes all over the sink, cabinets and floor. My husband heard the commotion and came running in and couldn't believe what I'd done. Now we always break into laughter when I ask him if he'd like mashed potatoes for dinner.

— Laura Sela

He blew it, all right

Not long ago, our refrigerator was cooling poorly, so I loosened the grille cover on the bottom of the fridge. Sure enough, I'd neglected that cleaning job way too long. The cooling coils were packed with dust. After failed attempts to rig up small tubing to the shop vacuum to clean between the coils, I went to the garage to find a better solution. The leaf blower caught my eye, so I brought it inside, plugged it in and aimed it at the coils and turned it on. Before I could switch to the low speed, a huge cloud of dust had billowed out from behind the fridge and covered the whole kitchen. Luckily, my wife wasn't home at the time. I got out the vacuum and spent more than an hour frantically cleaning. Later that day, she opened the cupboard above the fridge and asked me why there was a layer of dust and soot covering everything inside. I now use the leaf blower for outside work only.

— Steve Collum



ApplianceGoofs



Dismantled dryer

When I tossed a load of wet towels into our clothes dryer and pushed the start button, the dryer made an unbearably shrill squealing noise. “Sounds like it’s just a belt slipping,” said my husband, Eric, pleased with his budding home repair skills.

Hours later, however, he still couldn’t find a way into the dryer to remove the screaming belt. In fact, he was doubly embarrassed because he couldn’t reassemble the large number of small parts strewn around him on the floor. He declared defeat.

A pro came out the next day and made no comment when I handed him the bag of dryer parts. Then he demonstrated how easily anyone could open the large, hinged panel on the front of the dryer with a simple tug!

— Larrilyn Lindquist

Attention-getting dryer

I was installing a new, quieter dryer in a client’s high-end house. The power cord was unattached and had exposed connectors at one end. Like an idiot, I pushed the plug into the 240-volt outlet to see if the prongs fit. Well, the connectors at the other end were all touching one another and—WHAM! The loose ends shorted out and knocked me clear over. This in turn set off the house alarm system, alerted the police and set every dog in the neighborhood barking. It’s bad enough to goof—it’s far worse to have to explain your screwup to your client and your boss, a crowd of curious onlookers and the police.

— Ben Rall



Most CommonGoofs

RUNNING WATER WITH DISCONNECTED PIPES



Some goof-ups happen over and over again, even to seasoned do-it-yourselfers. Here are four that we've seen many variations of over the years. Do any of these hit home for you?!

Do as I say, not as...

The waste pipes under the kitchen sink kept dripping, so I asked my handy husband to move this fix-it to the top of his list. After replacing several parts, he concluded that the old slip joint washer was the problem. With half the pipes removed, he announced he was on his way to pick up the replacement part and that no one—repeat, no one—should use the sink until he returned. I left the room but was surprised to hear water gushing a few seconds later. I went back into the kitchen. With water all over his shoes and a red face, he said, “I thought I’d wash my hands before I went to the hardware store.”

— Joyce K. Hitt

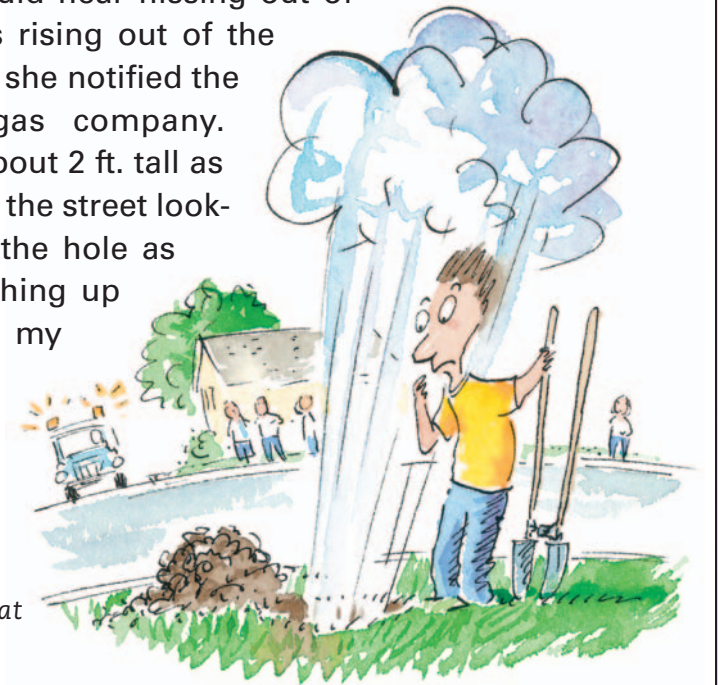
DIGGING WHERE YOU SHOULDN'T

I told you so!

Several years ago, my wife and I decided to build a new fence along the property line. My wife insisted that I call the local utilities (gas, phone, water, etc.) hot line before I dug the holes, saying, “After all, it’s just one number to call and the service is free.” Well, I never got around to it and started digging the fence post-holes. All was fine until I got to the last post. I jammed the digger down and hit something that felt like a rock, so I gave it another hard thrust. Oops! I could hear hissing out of the pipe and smell gas rising out of the hole. I told my wife and she notified the neighbors and the gas company. Needless to say, I felt about 2 ft. tall as they all gathered across the street looking at me standing by the hole as the gas truck came rushing up the street. I could see my wife staring at me and mouthing the words, “I told you so!”

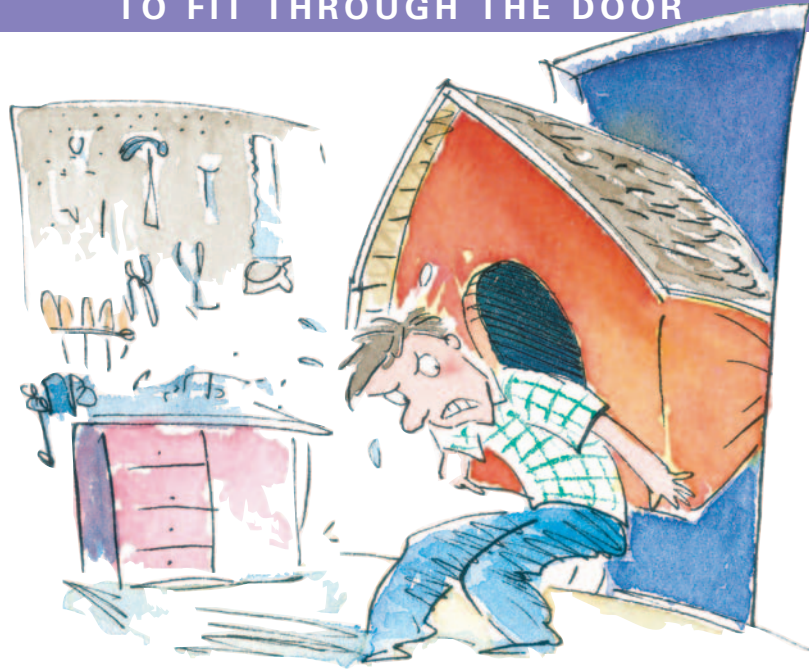
— Steve Smolinski

PS Steve, next time call the national dig-safe hotline at 811 or visit 811.com.



Most Common Goofs

BUILDING SOMETHING TOO BIG TO FIT THROUGH THE DOOR



Doggone it

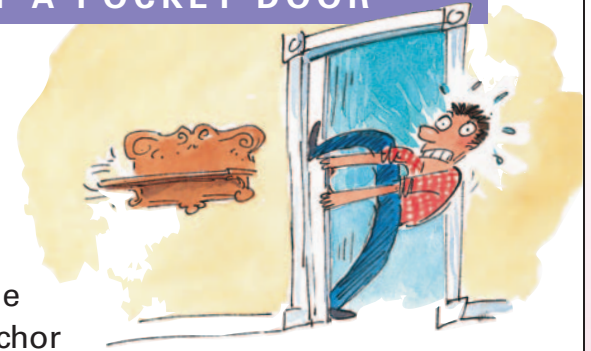
I was building a doghouse for my son-in-law's dog in my compact 8 x 12-ft. workshop. Everything went fine until it was time to take it outside and paint it. I tried to get it out the door front-to-back, then side-to-side, then flipped it top-to-bottom, but it was still a couple of inches too wide. After all this work, I wasn't about to dismantle this fabulous project. Two hours later, I finally got it outside—after I removed the trim, the door and the door frame!

— Carlos Quintero

NAILING/BOLTING SHUT A POCKET DOOR

Bolted shut

Our son recently moved into a new house, so my husband built a beautiful oak display shelf as a housewarming gift. But when he went to hang it on the wall, he couldn't find any studs. He decided to drill some holes and use anchor bolts to secure the shelf to the wall. It looked great. The next day my son went to use the washing machine in the adjacent room. To keep the noise down, he decided to close the pocket door to the room. It wouldn't budge. After a few seconds of inspection, he realized the anchor bolts were fastened through the door. The shelf is now hanging on a different wall, and the door works fine, but all agree, it looks much better closed!

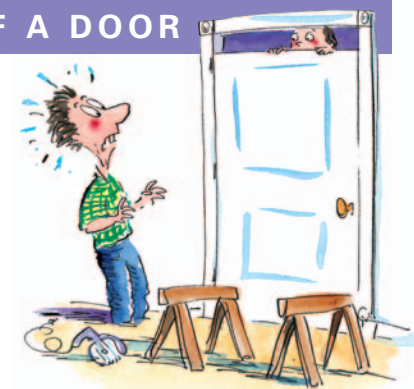


— R. Groeger

CUTTING OFF THE WRONG END OF A DOOR

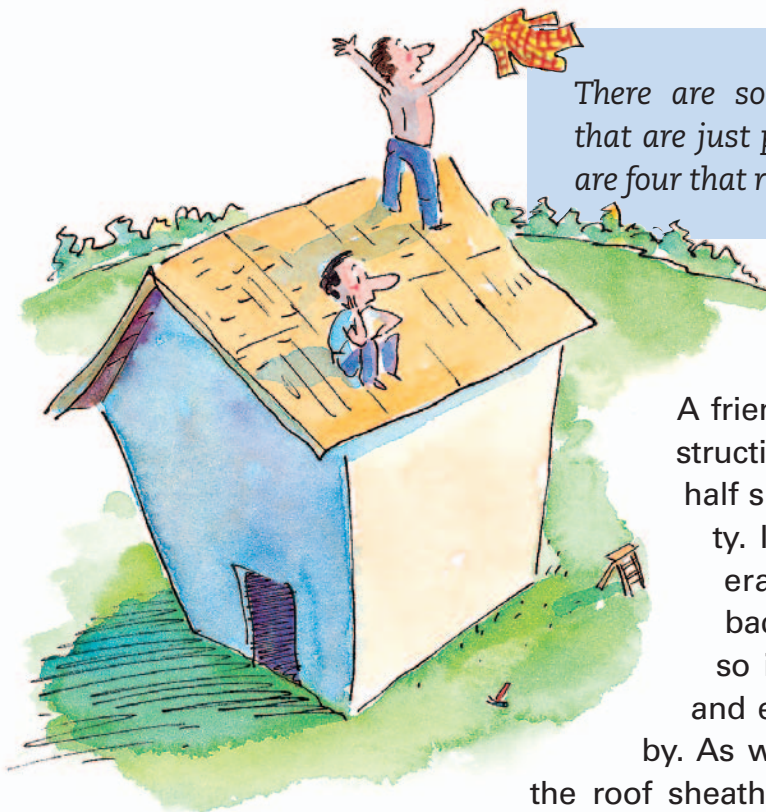
Top or bottom?

I can't believe I did this! I needed to cut an inch off the bottom of a door to clear my new carpet and pad, so I removed the door, put it on sawhorses, measured carefully, and cut very precisely—off the top of the door.



— Tom Wood

All-Time Favorite Goofs



There are some Great Goofs that are just plain funny. Here are four that really crack us up.

It's lonely at the top

A friend and I were constructing a story-and-a-half shed on my property. It was located several hundred yards back from the road, so it was out of sight and earshot of passers-by. As we began installing

the roof sheathing, we realized it was easier to pass each sheet up through the rafters than to climb up a ladder on the outside. After we nailed down the last sheet, we realized that because we'd worked from the inside, we were now stranded on the roof! After several unsuccessful attempts to shout for help and lower each other onto a feebly placed stepladder, we cut a hole in the sheathing and lowered ourselves into the loft. Needless to say, we had a good chuckle climbing onto the roof to repair the hole.

— Ted Conley

Drain cleaning with style

My bathroom sink stopped up and I had to take off the trap to pull out a clog of gunk. I removed the trap and caught the water in a bucket—scummy, soapy, toothpaste goobery, hairy water. I then positioned myself under the pipe to look up and make sure that all the gunk was out of the drain. I handed the bucket of water up to my 4-year-old son and asked him to get rid of it. He did what seemed perfectly natural to him—he poured it down the sink! All of the slimy water came right back in my face with a vengeance.

— Lindsay Gerard



All-Time Favorite Goofs



Wad a solution!

When I was a kid, the gutters on the front of our house wouldn't drain because they sagged in the middle. Dad went up on the roof and drilled holes in the gutter every 5 ft. to allow for drainage. When winter came, Mom slipped on the new front-porch ice rink created by the freezing, dripping water and sprained her ankle. So Dad decided, come spring, he would fix the holes. The first warm day he lined up all of the neighborhood kids, gave us all bubble gum to chew until it was soft, and went back up on the roof. He then put a wad of gum and a golf tee in each hole and pronounced the gutter fixed.

— Lindsay Gerard

Autumn rain

While winterizing our summer cabin, I couldn't find the hose to drain the water heater. I was in a hurry, so I rushed to the store and bought the cheapest hose I could find. I hooked it up to the heater, which was in the corner of a bedroom, opened the drain valve and left. An hour later, I returned home and found the bedroom and kitchen floors flooded. It turns out that in my haste I had bought a perforated soaker hose. Next time, I'll look at more than the price tag.

— Joseph A. Breen

