Who Needs a Handyman?
Here are 10 home repairs every dame can do herself

by Emma Johnson

Sometimes it can be too easy to just call the repairman and get out your checkbook. Leaky faucet? Call! Tub tile cracked? Call! Here are 10 repairs that every woman should know how to do—for a fraction of the cost of calling a pro. “Some projects might seem a little dirty, but a bar of soap is a lot less expensive than an hour of a handyman’s time,” says Daniel Vannoni, founder of the website ProperSee, which connects consumers with home repair information.

1. Change a showerhead

**Why:** “Showerheads can clog with mineral deposits and sediments over time, and newer models have low-flow designs saving on your water consumption without sacrificing the strength of spray,” Vannoni says.

**Tools:** Crescent wrench or slip-joint pliers and Teflon tape

**Time:** Five to 15 minutes

**More help:** Home repair expert Barbara K of AOL’s home improvement channel provides guidance in this video titled “How To Change a Showerhead.”

**Tip:** “Be gentle so you don’t break the shower pipe,” Vannoni says.

2. Fix a running toilet

**Why:** It wastes water and has an annoying sound. This usually indicates that the flapper and sealing flange need a cleaning or replacement.

**Tools:** A flapper replacement kit from the hardware store

**Time:** Five to 15 minutes

**More help:** Check out Howcast’s video “How to Fix a Running Toilet” on identifying and fixing your porcelain throne’s issues.

**Tip:** Wash your hands afterward.

3. Change a light fixture

**Why:** That wicker ceiling fan got you down? Want more wattage? Swapping out a light fixture can turn around a room.

**Tools:** Wire tester, screwdriver, pliers, electrical tape and ladder

**Time:** 30 minutes, depending

**More help:** Buildipedia’s YouTube video “How to Replace a Light Fixture” gives some safety and DIY tips.

**Tip:** “Just make sure the circuit is off,” Vannoni says.

4. Regrout your tub

**Why:** It’s important to remove old grout that’s cracked or moldy to prevent deep-water damage in the wall and floor.

**Tools:** Screwdriver for scraping as well as grout and a sponge

**Time:** 30 to 60 minutes, plus drying time

**More help:** Los Angeles contractor Chris Wade demonstrates “How to Regrout a Bathtub” on a flamingo-pink tub.

**Tip:** Get in there and use your finger to apply the grout.

5. Stem a washing machine water supply hose leak
6. Fix cracked ceramic tiles
Why: Safely remove the broken tile to replace with a new one.
Tools: Safety glasses, hammer, chisel, grout saw, adhesive, grout, new tile and grout
Time: One hour
Tip: "Remove the broken tile by gently working from the crack outward," Johnson says. "Do not use good tile edges as leverage to pry the broken one out."

7. Keep the dishwasher door gasket/seal from leaking
Why: The rubber seal is worn down and needs replacing.
Tools: A new gasket (take the old one to your hardware store along with the dishwasher model number)
Time: 10 to 15 minutes
More help: RepairClinic.com gives a quick "Door Gasket Replacement" demo.
Tip: Before replacing, first wipe down the gasket to make sure that food and mineral gunk are not preventing a proper seal. Note that the seal may be located on the door or inside the machine. Soak new seal in warm water before replacing.

8. Replace the furnace filter
Why: It keeps your air clean, prolongs the life of the appliance and reduces energy costs.
Tools: Just a new filter
Time: Two seconds (once you identify the filter location)
More help: It really is simple; just check out this "How to Change a Furnace Filter for Dummies" video.
Tip: If the filter is any color but white, it’s time to replace it. Plan to switch it out every 30 days during cold months. Make sure the arrows are pointed in the right direction—toward the blower motor or furnace.

9. Fix a leaky faucet
Why: Dripping plumbing wastes water, leads to stains and causes an annoying sound.
Tools: Faucet repair kit, which should include any needed hardware, plus a wrench set and Philips screwdriver
Time: 20 minutes
More help: Lowe’s shows you "How to Fix a Leaky Faucet With a Single-Handle Design" and "How to Fix a Leaky Faucet With a Two Handle Design."
Tip: Close the drain and drape a towel at the bottom of the sink or tub to prevent hardware from going down the drain.

10. Repair small wall holes and dents
Why: Smooth out your wall to prep for a clean paint job.
Tools: Mesh, spackle, putty knife and sandpaper
Time: 10-plus minutes
More help: AOL’s Barbara K shows you “How to Patch or Repair a Hole in a Wall.”
Tip: “Always prime these areas,” says Joe Kowalski, a training manager and paint expert for Glidden paint.