

Speaking and Listening Discussion

Let's Talk About... Home Improvement

New Vocabulary Mark the stressed vowel sound in each word or phrase:

- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1. accident | 6. DIY | 11. mess | 16. renovation |
| 2. achievement | 7. electrician | 12. overalls | 17. repair |
| 3. botched job | 8. extension | 13. planning permission | 18. safety |
| 4. damage | 9. flooring | 14. plumber | 19. self-build |
| 5. decorating | 10. interior design | 15. power tool | 20. toolbox |

Discussion Questions Ask and answer them with a partner or small group:

- Are you **DIY**-mad? Own your own **overalls**? Love browsing DIY superstores on Saturday afternoons? Do you enjoy painting and **decorating**? Do you always have a project on the go and handle **power tools** like a pro? If yes, how did you learn DIY techniques? Are there any DIY tasks you can't do? Do you believe that parents should hand down these practical skills to their children? What is your favourite home improvement job? Do you feel a great sense of **achievement** with a job well done? How do you put up with the **mess**?
- Have you got a massive **toolbox**? Do you know the names of all the tools? Do you know what they are for? Can you say when and why you would use these tools: a) hammer, b) screwdriver, c) wrench, d) saw, e) chisel, f) drill, g) tape measure, h) sandpaper, i) ladder, j) spirit level, k) spanner, l) pliers, m) scissors?
- Have you ever considered doing a **self-build** – building a new home from scratch? Is it possible in your country to buy a plot of land and build a house? Would you rather design it yourself, or buy a template?
- Do you need **planning permission** from the council if you want to make physical changes to your property? Why? Have you ever been refused permission to perform work on your own home? What happened?
- Is DIY the exclusive domain of men? Are girls keen to become professional tradespeople? Is the language used around home improvement sexist, e.g. 'handyman' and 'tradesman'? Why? / Why not?
- Is there anything that needs doing in your home? When are you planning to do it? How will you ensure your and others' **safety**? Have you ever hired a cowboy builder and watched them make a **botched job**?
- Are your neighbours heavily into DIY? Do you often hear drilling and banging from next door from morning till night? How do you deal with the disturbance? Maybe *you* are a noisy neighbour. Is it OK to disturb other residents in the name of home improvement, or should people be more considerate?
- Is it better to become an apprentice and train to be an **electrician**, **plumber**, or builder, rather than going to university to study a 'soft' subject like Media Studies or Art History? Why? / Why not?
- Have you ever had an **accident** while carrying out home improvement? What caused it? What was the result? Do you regret your actions? What is the most dangerous tool in the toolbox?

English Idioms about Home Improvement

Say a new sentence with each idiom:

- a bad worker always blames their tools
- an Englishman's home is his castle
- be as hard / tough as nails
- be careful / take care
- be in a good / poor state of repair
- (don't) bite off more than you can chew
- drive somebody up the wall
- give it your best shot
- hammer something home
- have the right tool for the job
- if a job's worth doing it's worth doing well
- if it ain't broke, don't fix it
- know the tricks of the trade
- lay the groundwork
- make a mess
- rock something to its (very) foundations
- safety first
- take your time
- there's no quick fix
- tool up

Discussion Situations about Home Improvement

What would you do if...?

- Your partner gets heavily into **interior design** and decides to change every room in your home, including your favourite room.
- While excavating ground for your home **extension**, you find an old chest containing ten thousand Spanish doubloons.
- You get home from a DIY store to find that the laminate **flooring** you bought is slightly the wrong shade of egg-white.
- While undertaking a routine DIY job at your mother-in-law's home you crack an ancient vase. You must **repair** the **damage**!
- The continual racket from different neighbours' DIY projects has been driving you up the wall for months.
- A friend has broken the wrench your father left you in his will.
- You discover a wonderful old abandoned building which is in dire need of careful **renovation**. Unfortunately your bank won't lend you enough money to begin the work.
- It's your first day as a builder, but you can't find your thermos.
- You want to improve your home but your partner is not sure.
- You make a botched job of your neighbours' bathroom refit.
- You are refused planning permission to build a new conservatory because one person has objected.
- Your daughter tells you that she wants to become a brickie.

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1. Describe the pictures. 2. Discuss them. 3. Compare them. 4. Create a quiz about them using different question types: comprehension, wh-, yes/no, true/false/unknown, etc. 5. Improvise a dialogue or story.
Extension: Now try each exercise again without using any of the 20 keywords!

Picture A



Picture B

