

Spring

HOME

IMPROVEMENT 1

- The basics of molding replacement projects
- Don't get shocked by home electric safety issues
- How to make a laundry room a more functional space



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The basics of 3 popular siding materials

Few home renovation projects can change the look of a home as significantly as new siding. New siding can make a home look brand new, and a new color can dramatically change the perception of a home. As homeowners begin to consider siding replacement projects, they might be surprised to learn their options in relation to materials are so numerous. Though it's great to have options, it also can be difficult to pick a material when there are so many products to choose from. Vinyl, fiber cement and wood are three popular siding materials, and understanding the characteristics of each can help homeowners make more informed decisions.

Vinyl

Vinyl siding has long been among the most popular siding materials. The National Association of Home Builders notes that popularity has declined in recent years, with the market share of vinyl siding dropping 5 percent over the last decade and nearly 13 percent over the last 20 years. Despite that declining popularity, vinyl remains a strong option for many homeowners due to its affordability and minimal maintenance requirements. Consumer Reports also notes that vinyl siding is impervious to insects and water, an attribute that's highly appealing to many homeowners.

Fiber cement

Consumer Reports notes that fiber cement siding blends cement, sand and cellulose. Many homeowners like fiber cement siding because of its aesthetic appeal, as it looks like real wood without the vulnerabilities



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associated with wood (see below). The home renovation experts at This Old House report that fiber cement siding has exceptional durability and offers great resistance to environmental factors like harsh weather, UV rays and moisture. Fiber cement siding also is a low-maintenance, insect-resistant option that won't warp or rot. Fiber cement siding is not easily installed, which contributes to a higher overall cost.

Wood

Siding materials don't get much more traditional than wood. It shouldn't surprise homeowners to learn that wood siding can warp or rot, and anything made from wood can be vulnerable to insects. However, well-maintained wood siding can be very durable and certain types are less vulnerable to rot than others. Local climate will affect which wood siding options are best for a given area. Many see wood siding as characteristic of a high-end home, making the somewhat higher price tag compared to vinyl siding easier to justify. There's no right or wrong decision when choosing siding materials for a home. Homeowners are urged to do their homework, including studying cost and the local climate, before choosing a material for their home. SH262600

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A rundown on countertops

Kitchen renovations continue to top the list of improvements that offer a high rate of return on investment. Buyers pay attention to kitchens, which undoubtedly affects the ROI of kitchen renovations. According to the Journal of Light Construction's "Cost vs. Value Report 2025," a minor kitchen remodel offers an ROI of 113 percent, while a midrange remodel offers an ROI of 51 percent. Replacing a kitchen countertop can help homeowners see improvements to the functionality of their spaces and improve the value of their homes.

According to data from Grand View Research, the U.S. countertops market is projected to reach \$35.57 billion in 2026, driven by homeowners who desire high-value renovations over relocating. Those thinking about overhauling their spaces with new countertops can consider the leading materials and how they rank in cost, maintenance and durability.

Engineered quartz

The National Kitchen & Bath Association reports that 78 percent of design professionals expect quartz to be the preferred countertop material over the next several years. Quartz is non-porous, so it will resist stains, scratches and bacteria infiltration without having to be sealed. Unlike natural stone, quartz offers pattern uniformity, which makes it easier to map out seamless transitions. Quartz costs between \$50 and \$150 per square foot installed.

Granite

Granite still holds a considerable chunk of the countertops market and remains a solid standard for those who value a one-of-a-kind look of natural stone. Granite has exceptional heat resistance and adds significant resale value. However, it requires periodic sealing to



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maintain its good looks. Costs range from \$40 to \$190 per square foot.

Porcelain

Porcelain tiles and slabs are projected to become the fastest-growing segment in the ceramic tiles market, according to reports from Yahoo Finance.



High-precision printing technology enables porcelain to mimic rare marble and other stone with superior accuracy. Porcelain is even harder than granite and effectively impervious to UV rays. This makes the material a solid choice for outdoor kitchens. Plus, at a cost of \$60 to \$120 per square foot, it is competitive with other similar materials.

Butcher block

Those who appreciate a soft, organic texture and “warmth” in their spaces can look to butcher block. Wood is making a comeback, as many homeowners are moving away from stark, white designs. Butcher block is self-healing, meaning scratches can be sanded out. Butcher block costs between \$50 and \$150 per square foot.

Laminate

Laminate is a budget-friendly option for homeowners at \$20 to \$80 per square foot, but is not as durable as other materials. Some laminates mimic the look of high-end materials, and they don't require much maintenance.

Countertops affect the look and feel of kitchens and other interior and exterior spaces. Choosing materials comes down to cost, durability and maintenance. HI264736

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How to make a laundry room a more functional space

Functionality is important when designing the interior spaces in a home. Homeowners who redesign their interior spaces can emphasize functionality to help reduce clutter and create a more efficient and even calming space.

Laundry rooms may not be the most glamorous rooms in a home, but they do get lots of usage, particularly in homes with children. Because laundry rooms tend to be well trafficked areas, it makes sense for homeowners to make them as functional and user-friendly as possible. With that in mind, homeowners can consider these tips to make laundry rooms more functional spaces.

- Purchase laundry pedestals with storage capacity. Laundry pedestals make useful additions to a laundry room. Many homeowners place their washing machines and dryers on top of pedestals with storage drawers, which can be used to store everything from dryer sheets to clothes irons to stain removal kits. Pedestals can be particularly useful in cramped laundry rooms where the only means to adding storage is to go up and not out.
- Install a freestanding laundry sink. A laundry sink also adds function to a laundry room by enabling homeowners to hand wash certain clothes and apply stain removal products in the same space where the rest of their clothes are being cleaned. Installing a laundry sink is a relatively inexpensive job, but the cost may go up if new plumbing, venting or electrical work is necessary.
- Add a countertop work space. If you already have ample storage and won't be placing the washer or dryer atop a laundry pedestal, then installing some countertop above the appliances can add function and aesthetic appeal. A countertop workspace above a dryer provides an



accessible space to fold laundry the moment it dries, reducing the likelihood that clothes will become wrinkled and ensuring you won't put off folding.

- Install floating shelves. Floating shelves won't cost a lot of money, but they can be ideal in cramped laundry rooms. Shelves provide a space to store detergent and other items that may not fit inside laundry pedestals, including baskets.
- Add hanging storage. Some articles of clothing should not be dried in a dryer for fear of shrinking the fabric or destroying the item. In such instances, some readily accessible hanging storage capacity can make the laundry room more functional. Items can be hung on hangers or over a hanging rack suspended from the ceiling if space is minimal. Laundry rooms are heavily used spaces in a home, so it makes sense to take steps to make these areas as functional as possible. HI264732

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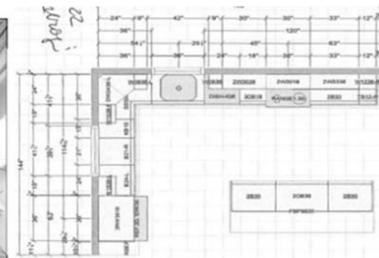
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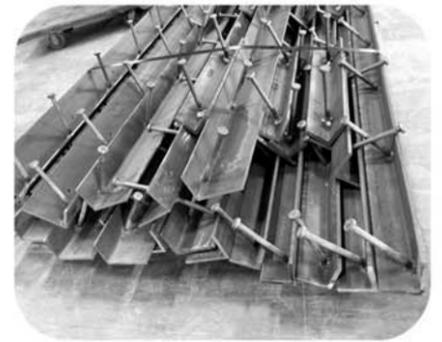
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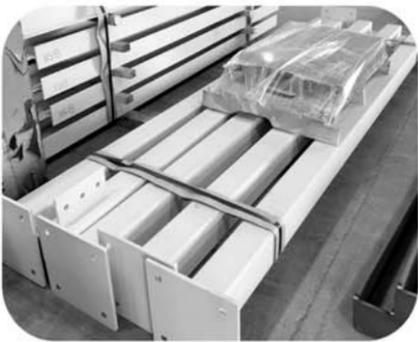
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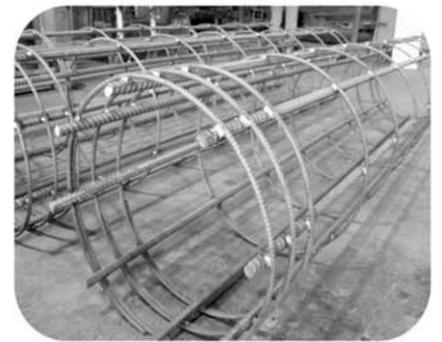
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Even though electricity is designed to make people's lives more convenient, it's easy to take it for granted and become complacent about the safety needed to use it effectively. The Electrical Safety Foundation International says each year electrical malfunctions account for 35,000 home fires causing more than 1,130 injuries, 500 deaths and \$1.4 billion in property damage. Since the average American home was built in 1977, many existing homes of this age and older simply cannot handle modern demand for electricity without modification.

The following are some warning signs that electrical issues could lead to bigger problems:

- Tripping of circuit breakers or blowing of fuses regularly
- Dimming of lights when other devices are in use
- Buzzing sounds from outlets or switches
- Discolored outlets
- Seemingly underpowered appliances

Additional warning signs can include a tingling feeling when an electrical appliance is touched, rubbery smells or an aroma of burning.

Individuals can take certain precautions to ensure electrical safety at home and at work. Here are nine guidelines to follow, courtesy of the National Fire Protect.

1. Have any home you are buying or renting inspected by a qualified

private inspector in accordance with local requirements.

2. When electrical work is needed, hire a qualified, licensed electrician.
3. Use only one heat-producing appliance plugged into a receptacle outlet at a time.
4. Do not use extension cords for major appliances like ovens, washers, stoves or microwaves. They should be plugged directly into a wall receptacle outlet.
5. Ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) should be installed in kitchens, bathrooms, garages, and basements to shut off an electrical circuit when it becomes a shock hazard.
6. Extension cords should only be used temporarily. Have an electrician install more outlets if they are needed.
7. Keep the area around the electric meter clear.
8. Make sure outdoor lights and other fixtures are rated for outdoor use.
9. Label the circuit breakers to understand the different circuits in the home and know which to turn off when electrical work is being conducted.

It doesn't take much for an electrical issue to become serious and start a fire or cause shocking. Treat all electricity use in a home or business seriously. TF235980



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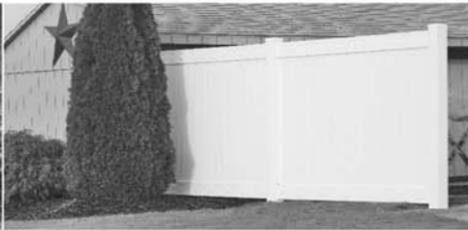
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Popular kitchen flooring materials

It's well-documented that kitchens are popular gathering spaces in homes. Perhaps that's one reason why homeowners looking to sell their homes direct so much attention to the kitchen before listing their properties. The real estate experts at Trulia note that emphasis is well worth it, as buyers inspect kitchens and primary bathrooms more than

The smooth surface of laminate flooring makes it easy to clean, and its resistance to water is another characteristic that appeals to homeowners

any other spaces in a home. Cabinets and countertops garner considerable attention when pondering kitchen renovations, but it's equally important that homeowners pay attention to flooring when planning a remodel. The following are some notable flooring materials homeowners may want to consider as they plan to remodel their kitchens.

- Ceramic tile: Ceramic tile is a popular

kitchen flooring material. The flooring experts at Avalon Flooring note that ceramic tile boasts an elegant and clean feel. Ceramic tile also is durable and easy to maintain. That simple maintenance includes ease of cleaning, as ceramic tile can be quickly cleared of spills and dirt tracked into a kitchen from outside. Ceramic tile also comes in a wide variety of colors, a versatility that undoubtedly adds to its popularity.

- Porcelain tile: Porcelain tile is another versatile option that can add instant aesthetic appeal to a kitchen. Porcelain tile is waterproof, which appeals to many homeowners looking to renovate their kitchens. Porcelain also is easily cleaned and durable, as flooring experts estimate that porcelain tiles can last anywhere from 15 to 50 years. Porcelain tile also requires minimal maintenance, which appeals to busy homeowners.



- Engineered hardwood: Engineered hardwood is a popular choice that many homeowners appreciate due to its strength and aesthetic appeal. This flooring material is made with real wood that's reinforced to make it even more durable and water-resistant. The result is an easily maintained product that also can last as long as solid wood flooring so long as it's well-maintained. Various shades, designs and textures are available, which makes this a versatile option.

- Laminate flooring: Laminate flooring is a budget-friendly option that's available in a wide range of styles, colors and patterns. The smooth surface of laminate flooring makes it easy to clean, and its resistance to water is another characteristic that appeals to homeowners. But spills on laminate floors are best cleaned up quickly, and the material is vulnerable to warping and staining if exposed to moisture for extended periods of time.

These are some of the options homeowners can consider as they ponder which material to install on their kitchen floors as they remodel these popular rooms. HI264739

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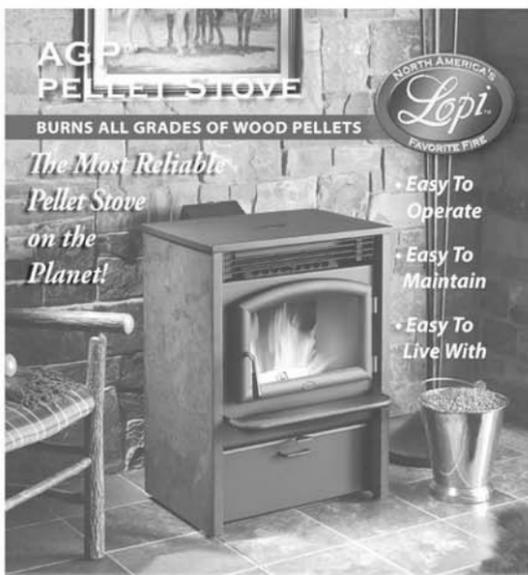
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The basics of molding replacement projects

The right renovation project can change the look and feel of a home. Major undertakings like a kitchen remodel might be the first projects homeowners think of when considering ways to transform their home interiors, but small projects also can go a long way toward remaking spaces in a home.

The molding in a home is a small yet important feature that can affect the look and feel of interior spaces. New molding might not offer the wow factor of a kitchen redesign, but new molding still has a dramatic effect and is well worth the investment of time and effort, particularly if existing molding has begun to show signs of wear and tear.

When should molding be replaced?

Replacement may be necessary when molding is showing signs of rot or damage or when paint is peeling. Rotting molding may feel soft, while warping and swelling indicates the molding is damaged and in need of replacement. Molding that is detaching from the walls also may need to be replaced. But such a condition also can occur as a house is setting or due to seasonal fluctuations of humidity within the home. If this occurs with molding that still looks good, then re-nailing may be the best approach.

What should I know about molding before replacing it?

Molding comes in many shapes, styles and sizes. Molding helps to maintain cohesion in spaces throughout a home, so it's necessary to identify the current type of molding that's in a home if you only need to replace pieces here and there. If all of the molding must be replaced, then you may have more flexibility. Molding styles include colonial, ogee, cove, and step and double step. The height and thickness of the molding as well as which material type, such as solid wood or PVC,

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also may determine the right product for your home. Working with an interior designer and contractor can help homeowners who are uncertain about their existing molding make the right choice when installing a new product.

How much does molding cost?

The cost to install new molding will be determined by a number of variables unique to each home, including where the home is located, which materials homeowners choose, which molding is being replaced (i.e., crown molding, baseboard molding, or both), and how much is being replaced. The renovation experts at Angi.com estimate that the range for a crown molding replacement project is between \$600 and \$2,100. Angi.com notes a similar price range for a baseboard molding replacement project, which typically runs between \$800 and \$2,250. Replacing fading or damaged molding can subtly but effectively transform interior spaces in a home. Homeowners are urged to work with a contractor to identify the right molding products for their homes. HI264737

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Simple ways to breathe new life into a foyer

A foyer may not garner as much attention as a kitchen, living room or formal dining space, but the entryway to a home is the first place residents see upon arriving home and it's also where guests begin to form their impression of a home. That makes a foyer an important, if easily overlooked, space in a home. Homeowners hoping to give their entryways a little something extra can consider these simple means to breathe new life into a foyer.

- **Add seating.** If a foyer is large enough to accommodate one or two armchairs, such an addition can immediately contribute to a welcoming and comfortable ambiance. Upholstered chairs can offer some color and provide a space for residents and guests to put on and remove their footwear.
- **Make a statement with lighting.** Foyer lighting is meant to make an entryway warm and welcoming, but it also can be used to make a statement. An impressive pendant light fixture in the foyer can make a strong first impression on guests and establish a vibe residents can keep in mind when addressing other interior spaces throughout the home.
- **Conquer clutter.** Foyers big and small can feel a little claustrophobic if there's too much going on. Though furnishings like seating and console tables can dress up a space, make a concerted effort to ensure they don't become dumping grounds for outerwear and unread mail. In addition, designate an ideally concealed space to store footwear if the foyer will serve as residents' primary entryway.
- **Add some artwork.** If an existing foyer lacks personality, some simple



artwork can add a pop of color without overstimulating residents and guests. Artwork can be hung above a console table to create a calm and welcoming vibe. Homeowners can even utilize artwork to change the vibe in the entryway so it reflects the seasons, hanging a picturesque winter landscape painting or print when the weather is cold and some bright and breezy beach art come the summertime.

- **Incorporate plants into the entryway.** Plants can add vibrancy and a pop of color to an entryway. Plants also can brighten up the space. If the foyer tends to be a bit dark throughout the day, consider faux plants so residents and guests are not greeted with withered, sun-starved greenery upon entering the home.

A foyer is easily overlooked when designing a home's interior. But an inviting entryway can set the tone for other interior spaces in a home. HI264731

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Improving storage in common areas

Increasing storage capabilities at home is a popular goal among many homeowners and renters. Despite how much space a person may have at home, there's often a desire to have more or maximize the areas that are there. According to the Self-Storage Almanac, there are an estimated 51,206 storage facilities operating in the United States today, and MJ Partners Self-Storage Update says 11.1 percent of households currently rent at self-storage facilities. IBISWorld indicates the Canadian self-storage industry has grown at an average annual rate of 3.1 percent over the last five years.

People often turn to external storage facilities to house their belongings when space is at a premium at home. Others may focus their organization energy on closets, garages and basements to free up room. But common areas around the home also can provide additional sources of storage. Common areas are locations where people come together for activities.

Living room/ Family room

Living rooms and family rooms are areas of the home where people spend many hours. These tend to be multifunctional spaces where people entertain, lounge and even enjoy movies or gaming. Possibilities in these living spaces that can create extra storage include furniture that serves double-duty. For example, a storage ottoman adds decorative appeal but also can be filled with board games or books. Cabinet-style TV stands may not be as streamlined as mounted versions, but they're ideal places to stash games, remote controls and other accessories.

Entryway

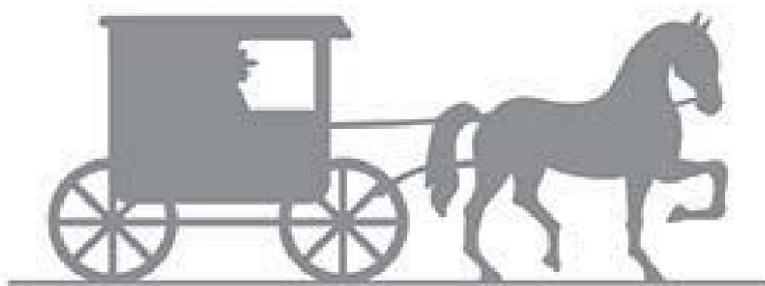
An entryway or mudroom can quickly succumb to clutter. When



organizing such a space, think about the needs of the household. A storage bench will be a place where everyone can sit to put on shoes, and then stow footwear underneath when not in use. A wall-mounted rack can hold the current season's jackets or sweaters, as well as purses or backpacks for easy access. A shelf with some hooks can store keys or hold a basket to store the daily mail.

Hallway and Closet

Closet organization systems can be the unsung heroes in closets utilized by multiple members of the family. These customizable components can be sized accordingly for the space, and then configured as needed with a balance of shelves and hanging racks. An out-of-the-way nook or long hallway can be enhanced with a bookshelf to hold photo albums or that library that only continues to grow as new reading material is acquired. Homeowners can make common areas more functional with the addition of storage. TF23C528



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