

There are ways to silence squeaking floors

AP — A squeaking floor is not one of the most serious problems that a house can develop, but it is one of the most annoying.

A floor generally consists of three layers: the joists, the subfloor and the flooring. When it squeaks, the usual culprit is wood rubbing against wood or wood rubbing against a nail.

It's best to eliminate the cause entirely. But this isn't always possible, and a temporary solution is to lubricate between the boards. Many lubricants work. Try sprinkling talcum powder or powdered graphite between the boards. Or use penetrating lubricant spray. If none of these do the job, try dripping furniture wax or liquid soap in the cracks.

A more permanent way to quiet noisy floorboards is to drive small triangular metal glazier's points, used to install windowpanes, into cracks between the boards. Space the points about 6 inches apart and sink them below the surface with a nail set or putty knife.

If squeaking occurs in a floor that has exposed joists in the basement or crawl space underneath, try repairing the problem from below.

First check the cross braces, known as bridging, between joists. Some of the pieces may have worked loose over the years, allowing the joists to move when someone walks on the floor above them. Reattach the bridging with common nails.

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A gap between the subfloor and a joist can also cause squeaking by letting the two pieces rub together. To stop it, dab glue on a wood shingle or shim and tap it between the joist and the subfloor near the squeak. Don't force it too far.

Sometimes when you fix a squeak in one place it moves to another spot. The solution is construction adhesive, a squeak-stopper you can apply to large areas of a floor. Put a tube of adhesive in a caulking gun and run a bead of adhesive along both sides of a joist where it supports a subfloor. The squeaks should be gone for good.

If the floor joists are not exposed, make a repair from the floor surface. At the squeak, drill small pilot holes through the flooring, preferably going into the joists. Angle the holes so that they're directed against each other like a "V." Then drive spiral-shanked floor nails through the flooring. Sink the nailheads and cover the holes with wood putty in a color that matches the

floor finish.

Wall-to-wall replacement time offers a great opportunity to track down and eliminate squeaks in an unfinished floor. After the carpet is up, walk over the entire area to find the squeaks. Whenever there's a problem, run 2-inch dry-wall screws through the floor and subfloor into the joist below. A line of existing nails is often the best clue to locating a joist.

When it comes to squeaks, stairs can be worse offenders than floors. Most stair squeaks are caused by a tread (the horizontal part you step on) rubbing against a riser (the vertical part) or against the stringers (side pieces).

If a squeak seems to be coming from

the front of a tread, drive nails at opposing angles through the tread into the riser.

If it seems to be coming from the rear of a tread, insert thin, glue-coated wood wedges in a crack between the bottom of the riser and the tread. Use a sharp knife to cut off the exposed ends of the wedges so that they are flush with the riser. Then cover the repair with molding to conceal it.

If the underside of the stairs is exposed, you can often silence squeaks by fastening small wood blocks where a riser meets the tread above it. Attach the blocks with glue and screws short enough so they don't protrude through the surface.

Please don't call this furniture 'recycled'

AP — Modern furniture is about much more than a complete break with the past. In fact, one of the most noticeable trends at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF) in New York this spring was turning old into new.

But rather than recycling old furniture, hardly a new idea, these artisans seek a wide range of materials for their creative pieces.

Thierry Valfort, a French architect based in Nice, uses high-tech parts from scrapped airplanes. But don't say he's recycling.

"Recycled suggests garbage, and this stuff is not garbage," Valfort says. "Nobody could afford to buy these parts, which are made of aluminum and titanium."

Valfort uses a titanium helicopter rotor as the base for a glass table and refashions pieces of an airplane's fuselage into fanciful bookcases. He also has turned aluminum air brakes into a bench.

While a few of his pieces, such as the table and bookcase, are mass produced, most are one of a kind.

The New York show was the first in the United States for Valfort, who began production about two years ago. Prices start at \$2,700.

Stephen Kowalski of Berkeley, Calif., creates clocks from found objects, antiques, even old clockworks. To get the parts, he haunts junk shops and flea markets around the world.

One of his most commanding pieces at the ICFF was a table with a large clock face under a glass top. Kowalski collected the necessary pieces in California and Hong Kong. The table, including old pocket watches as ornament, is \$6,500.

Another clock, \$2,000, is made of an old tea box from Chile, a clock dial from an old American car, feet from a lamp base and drawer pulls and other sundries from a large inventory that Kowalski keeps in his Berkeley workshop.

A graphic designer, Kowalski began

building clocks from old parts about three years ago.

"People like the fact that the clocks are made out of recycled objects and are useable," says Kowalski, who generally uses quartz innards but sometimes reconditions mechanical movements "in reverence to clockmakers of the past."

Chinese furniture repainted in colorful tiger motifs is an example of recycling in a more traditional vein. The work is done in Hong Kong and imported to the United States by Artemis, a Hong Kong-based design company showing at the ICFF for the first time.

Artemis' owners, Doris Leong and Dicky Tam, find the furniture in China and Tam repaints it. Prices for the completed pieces range from about \$1,500 to \$6,000.

Marriage chests work well as storage cabinets for home entertainment components. Long, low cabinets that once held painted scrolls are now used as tables and storage pieces. Pedestals that could have shown off a piece of porcelain have been converted into floor lamps. Narrow canopy beds are used as seating.

While it is difficult to get a license to export antiques, the Chinese government is not so strict about furniture, Leong says, adding that items such as the 18th- and 19th-century wedding chests are in good supply.

The ICFF, a trade show, was notably free this year of eccentric pieces. Rather, emphasis seemed to be on simple wood furniture such as that from Berkeley Mills.

The Berkeley, Calif., design firm, new to the show, offered two distinct design idioms: Decks and storage units are adapted from simple Japanese cabinets known as tansu, and seating is based on American Arts and Crafts pieces. It isn't surprising that the two styles complement each other. One of the originators of American Arts and Crafts furniture, architect Frank Lloyd Wright, was inspired by Japanese furniture and buildings.

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