

Building safely for children

By Reader's Digest Books
For AP Special Features

An important aim for every do-it-yourselfer is to avoid building anything that might be hazardous for children.

Here are some of the areas recognized as posing risks to children:

■ A child's head can become entrapped in openings between slats, railings and other spaces that young children are likely to peek through. To avoid that hazard, keep those spaces to less than 3 1/2 inches wide.

■ Small parts can be a choking hazard for children under age 3.

Make sure that no toy or removable part of furniture (such as a knob) is less than 1 3/4 inches in size.

■ Sharp corners and thin, sharp edges on drawers, coffee tables and other furniture can cause more than scratches and bruises. Remember that children are short — a hazard that might jab you in the thigh is at a child's head and eye level. Round all exposed corners and edges that children may encounter — or pad and tape them.

■ Pinch and crush points can cause painful injuries. These are tricky to assess because adults don't have tiny fingers and

wouldn't think of grabbing things the way children often do. To prevent finger pinching, enlarge any opening that might admit a three-sixteenths diameter rod so that it is enough for a one-half-inch rod. Example of a pinch point to avoid: a wagon with wheels mounted close to the wagon bed, where tiny fingers could be caught when the rider grabs the side of the wagon.

■ The leading causes of child injury from toy chests and boxes are falling lids, pinching hinges and entrapment leading to suffocation. Always equip a lid with a positive support mechanism and never use an automatic locking device. Drill ventilation holes so that a trapped child can breathe. Make the gap between the front edges of the box and the lid at least one-half-inch wide, so small fingers can't be crushed by a closing lid.

■ Children can pull a large piece of furniture over on top of themselves. A child, for example, may try to climb up the front of a dresser using the drawers as steps. Bolt large pieces such as dressers, chests of drawers and bunk beds to the baseboard or the studs in the wall.

■ Unstable large toys are also dangerous. Keep the design of wagons, hobby horses and the like relatively wide and low, to reduce tipability. Test such toys on their "worst case" positions.

You may decide to add steps to rockers, or outrigger supports at the side of a toy to eliminate instability.

■ Children might strangle if a collar, drawstring or hood on their clothing becomes entangled. Make sure that cribs, bunk beds, railings, outdoor play equipment and similar items are free of projections that clothing might catch on. Also avoid dressing children in clothing that is oversized or has a drawstring.

■ Because children place toys in their mouths, make sure the finish on a toy is nontoxic. On wooden toys, no finish is safest, followed by a coat of mineral oil, the grade sold in pharmacies is safe for human consumption. Raw (not boiled) linseed oil, fresh shellac and waxes containing either carnauba or beeswax are also considered safe. In nontoxic paints, the safest choices are those sold in arts and crafts stores. Look for the label of the Arts and Crafts Materials Institute or the words, "Conforms to ASTM D-4236" on the label.

For further information, the publication "Standard Consumer Safety Specifications for Toy Safety" (F963) is available from the American Society for Testing and Materials, 1916 Race St. Philadelphia, Pa. 19103.

Plumbing tips keep home pipes peaceful

(NAPS) — Knowing more about your plumbing can help your home run as smoothly as possible and can improve the odds you won't end up all wet.

Here are some commonly-used plumbing terms and helpful hints to help you ask the right questions.

Terms to know:

■ Shower shock — A sudden blast of hot or cold water in the shower caused by a change in the water line pressure. Can be caused by a toilet flush or line change in a washing machine cycle.

■ Ballcock — The water fill valve in the tank of a commode or water closet.

■ T&P valve — The Temperature & Pressure relief valve, installed on water heaters in case of a temperature or pressure build-up that will route water outside the home.

■ Snaking a line — Machine used to unstop a sewer or drain. Also called a roter cleaning.

■ Backflow preventer — A

device to prevent backflow or siphonage of liquid waste into a potable water system, or backflow from a municipal sewer into a residential sewer.

Helpful hints:

■ Don't pour grease down your kitchen sink drain.

■ Run cold water through the disposal during and after use.

■ Pour hot water down the drain once a week.

■ In the laundry, use moderate amounts of biodegradable detergent.

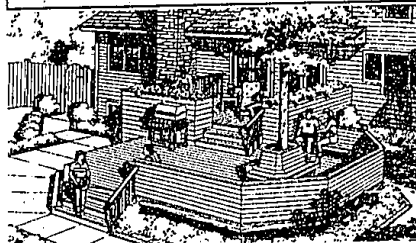
■ Never flush any paper, except for toilet paper, down the toilet.

■ Keep the strainer in the shower clean for efficient drainage.

If you encounter a problem you cannot easily solve — such as a clogged toilet or a basement leak — or a plumbing improvement project, it's best to call a professional licensed plumber.

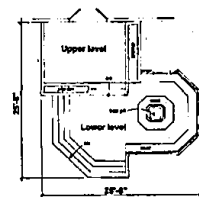
Make sure that the plumber you call is reliable. Since plumbing emergencies can happen at any time of the day or night, it's also a good idea to keep a handy list of plumbers who are on call 24 hours a day.

The Weekly Do-It-Yourselfer



Deck/Conversation Pit

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Some more things to do this summer

If you are bored sitting around and just can't find enough to do this summer, here are some ideas for summer weekend do-it-yourself projects around the house from the experts at The Home Depot.

Indoors

- Fix squeaky or loose hinges
- Repair torn screen doors
- Replace bent sliding door tracks
- Replace furnace filters
- Clean window air conditioning filters
- Clean deposits from faucet aerators
- Check drains and traps for leaks

- Fix dripping faucets
- Clean clogged shower heads
- Adjust hot water temperature

Outdoors

- Lubricate lawn mower gears
- Oil garage door opener chain & track
- Check to see if deck needs rescaling
- Repair damaged stucco
- Tuck-point missing mortar
- Fix cracks in blacktop & sidewalks
- Repair loose deck railings
- Fix chipped concrete steps
- Repair siding
- Replace broken window glass
- Clean out roof gutters
- Clean out downspouts

In the garden

- Fix leaky garden hoses
- Place soaker hoses in flower beds
- Install vacation watering timers
- Stalk plants before they reach full height
- Prune plants to encourage branching
- Remove fading flowers from plants
- Weed early and often

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