



List in Progress

DIY HOME IMPROVEMENT

A DIY Guide to Remodeling Sources

While most products can be sourced from your local hardware store, sometimes you'll need to think outside the "big box." That's where this guide will be really handy. Some items are best purchased from specialty shops or online. Some items should really be installed by professionals. If you're planning to start a new project, I hope you will find this guide to be a useful resource!

Source KEY:

Big hardware store (Home Depot, Lowes...)

Local hardware store (Ace, True Value, independent)

Specialty store (i.e. kitchen & bath, tile, plumbing, doors)



FLOORS

[This blog post](#) covers a fairly comprehensive overview on flooring types for every room in your house. Here are material sources:

Big hardware stores - Usually the most affordable places to buy porcelain tile, ceramic tile, vinyl tile and vinyl plank, luxury vinyl tile (LVT) and luxury vinyl plank (LVP), laminate, carpet, engineered hardwood, etc. A good place to start, just to consider options and see products.

Carpet, tile, and flooring specialty stores - Much wider selection of options based on the store's particular focus, low- to high-quality products, slightly more expensive, more installation support (if needed). National chains include: Lumber Liquidators, Empire, Floor & Decor, The Tile Shop, and others.

Online - Sometimes you can find a better price when you've narrowed down your search. For example, tile is easy to buy online, once you choose a specific product. Home Depot, Lowes, Wayfair, and Amazon are good online sources. Some flooring is only available through specialty retailers.

Discount stores - Sometimes you'll find a great local business selling quality flooring at a discount. Carpet and hardwoods are decent possibilities. Check Yelp and Google reviews for resources like these. If you live near Denver, check out [Sloan's Carpet Secret](#) for great prices and service.

DIY Tip: We have installed almost all of our floors ourselves. I would recommend hiring a contractor to install carpet, tile around drains, and hardwoods, if you don't have a nail gun. Otherwise, give DIY a try!

For more ideas, check out these blog posts:

- [The Best Flooring for Every Room in Your House](#)
- [How to Install Groutable Vinyl Floor Tile](#)
- [Choosing a Kitchen Floor Tile Layout](#)



DOORS

Big hardware stores - If you're happy with the products you find in these stores, this is the easiest and fastest option for doors. They sell lower quality products, but doors are fairly expensive anyway, so it may still feel like a big purchase.

Specialty door stores - The interesting thing about doors is that most of these shops can order the same door lines. I've found that door stores vary widely in pricing and reviews, so call around once you have a specific door in mind. [Simpson](#) makes great doors, and there are many style options.

DIY Tip: No matter what door you buy, make sure to get it "pre-hung." Otherwise, the hinges and latch probably won't align with an existing frame. Here's a [guide](#) to replacing an exterior door. You'll also need to know the type of [swing](#) before you order.

For more details, check out these blog posts:

- [How to Buy a New Front Door](#)
- [Tips to Install and Stain a New Front Door](#)



TRIM + CASING

Trim is a general term for all decorative baseboard, ceiling, door, and window woodwork. Casing is specifically around doors and windows. If you're updating your trim, first decide on MDF or real wood. MDF is basically sawdust and glue, but it is more "true" than real wood, which just means straight and even. It can also be purchased pre-primed and painted, which can be a *huge* time saver. MDF should not be installed in a wet area like a bathroom, because once it's wet, it will swell and be ruined. Stick with real wood in those areas. Real wood trim comes in a variety of species and can be stained or painted. It's stronger, unlikely to chip, and can be cut to more precise angles in detail work, if desired.

[Big hardware stores](#) - Since we usually paint our trim, we are happy with the affordability of trim at these stores. You can buy both MDF products and real wood trim.

[Millwork](#) - Most cities have millwork sources for custom trim and molding in real wood species. You will pay a premium for these products, but you'll find higher quality products and can customize pieces. If you plan to stain your trim, this might be the route to take.

For more details, read this post:

- [How to Create Craftsman-style Door Trim](#)



DRYWALL/CEILINGS

Drywall work is DIY-friendly, but the finishing takes practice to master. Take it slow on these projects.

[Big hardware stores](#) - Just buy everything here. Sheetrock/drywall typically comes in a 2-pack of large 4x8 sheets and is HEAVY. Lifting and transporting it is the hard part. Actually, installing it is no piece of cake either, but you can do it. Spreading joint compound on seams and matching your existing wall texture takes patience and practice. Here is a [tutorial](#) on hanging drywall, and here is a [tutorial](#) on taping and mudding the seams.

DIY Tip: If you have the budget and want finished drywall and texture to look as professional as possible, hire a drywaller to do the finish work (apply joint compound and any texture).

CAUTION - If you want to remove a popcorn ceiling, be sure to do an asbestos test if your house predates 1980. Removing the ceiling texture is not hard, but it is super messy, as well as awkward to work above your head. You might consider hiring a drywaller for this project.



PLUMBING

Plumbing is generally moderate-skill-level DIY. You might make a few extra trips to the hardware store (big or small), but you don't necessarily need to hire a pro to install a sink, garbage disposer, toilet, etc. First watch YouTube videos related to your particular project for guidance (and perhaps to decide if you can tackle it).

Big hardware store - Similar to lighting and hardware, you'll find basic fixtures here including sinks, toilets, tubs, drain assemblies, faucets, and all the parts and pieces to install them. Larger selection online.

Specialty plumbing stores - Visit a local shop to see a wider range of options in person. IKEA also has a selection of affordable sinks and faucets, but their plumbing installation is unusual (for Americans). Just a heads up.

Online - If you're not finding the right items to fit your vision, check out retailers like Signature Hardware, Rejuvenation, AllModern, Wayfair, Build, and Amazon.

DIY Tip: In some (or all) cases, you might want to hire a plumber. Just don't be afraid of plumbing - with some research, you can do it!



PAINT

Here's my favorite DIY home improvement category! Paint is one of the easiest and cheapest ways to update your home.

Big hardware stores, smaller local hardware stores - In addition to many mainstream paints, you can buy all of your other painting supplies at these stores. Read about helpful [painting tools and tips here](#).

Specialty stores - Benjamin Moore, Sherwin Williams, and other upscale paints are sold at their own, licensed retail shops.

Online - Here you'll find smaller, specialty paints and some of the helpful tools and supplies mentioned in [this blog post](#). Annie Sloan Chalk Paint and General Finishes Milk Paint are both great products for furniture. I've purchased both GF Milk Paint and my favorite paint sprayer on Amazon.

A Few Other TIPS:

Paint Colors - Start researching paint colors on Pinterest. Then try samples on the wall or furniture. Look at the colors at different times of day, based on changes in lighting, to see the hue in your own space.

Best Paint for Interiors - I almost always buy house paint at Home Depot because Behr makes great paint. It's affordable, high quality, and holds up really well. I prefer the Ultra Premium Plus line because it's low VOC, so it doesn't smell. Benjamin Moore is my second favorite, only due to the price. It's a great paint line.

Best Paint for Kitchen Cabinets - Read [this post](#) for two great cabinet paint recommendations.

Methods - Another decision is whether to paint with brushes and rollers or a paint sprayer. Now that I've mastered [this paint sprayer](#) with my latest kitchen cabinet reno, I would highly recommend it for cabinets if you have a) enough garage space or a painting shelter and b) the patience to learn a new skill.



LIGHTING

Change a light fixture, change the world... isn't that how it goes? Just consider a few factors before you buy your next light. It's important to have multiple sources of light in a room, as well as fixtures that provide the right *kind* of light for the space. Here's a [lighting overview](#) to explain.

Big hardware store - One-stop-shopping for a range of builder-grade lighting and all related components. Larger selection of fixtures online.

Local lighting stores - See lights in person to judge size and style, but they'll have a limited selection. IKEA also has a modern lighting section.

Online - Great lighting sources to check out include West Elm, World Market, CB2, Anthropologie, Rejuvenation, Schoolhouse Electric, Serena & Lily, Lamps Plus, Shades of Light, Lighting Connection, Build, Wayfair, and Amazon. Some of my favorite lights have recently come from Amazon, and they can be very affordable!

DIY Tip: If you fall in love with a high-end light, look for a dupe or knock off version on Amazon, Wayfair, Etsy, or Build. [Here's a blog post to show a few examples](#) - dupes are pretty common in the lighting world!

More lighting inspiration here:

- [Affordable Wall Sconce Ideas](#)
- [Outdoor Ceiling Lights Under \\$120](#)
- [High/Low Designer Lighting Dupes](#)



HARDWARE

Talk about the perfect DIY project - hardware is an easy update for your home! If you're researching doorknobs, levers, hinges, and cabinet knobs and pulls, there are a ton of choices online and in stores.

[Big hardware store](#) - A basic but limited selection of cabinet and door hardware, and all the fasteners you'll need to attach them. Larger selection online.

[Online](#) - Likely the best resource for more specialty or unique hardware. Check out Signature Hardware, D. Lawless Hardware, Pottery Barn, CB2, Rejuvenation, Schoolhouse Electric, Wayfair, and Amazon. If shopping on Amazon, I would look for "authentic" or at least highly-rated brands like Emtek, Amerock, Liberty, Franklin Brass, Atlas, and Top Knobs, just for example. You'll get a better product, not a cheap knock-off.

DIY Tip: Use a template to attach cabinet hardware. For high use areas, spring for the best hardware your budget can handle. It's worthwhile if you'll touch it constantly and it needs to hold up to wear and tear.

Also, I found [this](#) blog post really helpful when I was debating types and placement of cabinet hardware in our kitchen.

More hardware ideas here:

- [2021 Cabinet Hardware Ideas \(and Where to Shop\)](#)
- [Modern Black Door Hardware Ideas](#)
- [High/Low Hardware Dupes - Get the Look for Less](#)