

# your home

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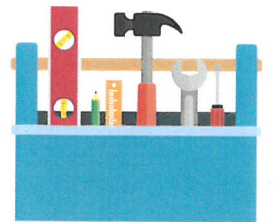
Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

## 7 GARAGE STORAGE mistakes



➤ If you use your garage as storage space, you're not alone. Unfortunately, because the space isn't climate-controlled, it's best to keep these items elsewhere, according to Realtor.com:

- 1 Family photos.** Pollutants, moisture and heat can quickly destroy your photos. Digitizing all photos is the best practice, or keep printed copies in a dry area inside your home.
- 2 Propane tanks.** These should never be kept indoors or too close to your home because they can leak or ignite. Store them outside on a flat surface instead.
- 3 Car batteries.** Batteries can be greatly affected by external moisture. Don't store them on the floor; rather, place them on a piece of wood or cardboard.
- 4 Artwork and collectibles.** Dampness can cause tarnish and mold to grow. Insects can infest and rodents can feast on certain items. Dirt and dust can cause stains and buildup on almost anything. And car fumes can penetrate textiles and canvases. Keep prized possessions indoors.
- 5 Food.** Unless you have a refrigerator or freezer in your garage, fresh food can attract vermin even in a sealed container. Canned foods are best indoors, as sweltering heat can hasten their spoilage and freezing temps aren't great either.
- 6 Paint.** If not sealed correctly and exposed to extreme temperatures, paint can actually spoil. Find a space that's dark, dry and cool, like a utility closet, laundry room or mudroom.
- 7 Carpet and rugs.** Fresh air is vital for rug fibers and garage spaces aren't usually well-ventilated, which can cause mold and mildew. Store in a place with low-humidity levels. Or if the garage is your only option: Block any direct sunlight and place a dehumidifier near it.



## 5 DIY TIPS

As a homeowner, there's no landlord or engineer to ask for help. So Realtor.com recommends you learn to handle these five basic problems:

- 1. Change HVAC filters:** Replace quarterly to keep your system running smoothly and cut energy bills.
- 2. Cutting the water supply:** Find and tag the shut-off valve when you first move in. When you need to turn it off, turn the handle 90 degrees.
- 3. Unclogging drains:** Chemical drainers may work, but a drain snake is also an excellent option.
- 4. Resetting a circuit breaker:** Open the panel cover and find the breaker in the "off" position, then turn to "on."
- 5. Clean gutters:** When gutters aren't cleared of debris, water can get trapped, seep into your house and cost thousands in damages. Clean them annually or every two years.

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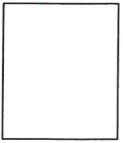
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# SMALL FLAWS can be a big deal

What may seem like small problems in your home can be a big deal to prospective buyers who will want to discount the price. Realtor.com names six of the minuscule things that could be big hurdles to closing:

- ➔ **An old electrical panel.** Buyers will want it "up to code." Get bids from multiple electricians to try and get a reduced repair quote, or offer that amount as a credit in lieu of repair at closing.
- ➔ **Ripped window screens.** Window screens will wear out over time, but tears should be taken seriously. Either replace them before listing or offer credit at closing.
- ➔ **The location of the laundry room.** The laundry on the 'wrong' level can be a big negative, especially in a three-level house or townhouse. Offer to move the washer and dryer to a new location if possible.
- ➔ **The bathtub or shower.** Some people prefer showers, others want bathtubs, especially parents with small children. A bathtub with a showerhead above is the best option.
- ➔ **Kitchen walls.** Many people prefer open kitchens. If you think your kitchen's walls make it feel cramped and that's stalling your sale, consider opening it up yourself.



- ➔ **Small closets.** There isn't much you can do to ease these concerns, but try to make your closets look roomier by de-cluttering. Hiring a contractor to build or extend closets where needed—or pointing out to buyers that they can do this themselves—is another fix.

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