

# Real Life

HOME



Adapted from  
*The Homeowner's Manual*  
(Que Publishing, 2006)

## Easy Fixes for 4 Household Problems

Problems like squeaky stairs and oil stains on the garage floor can be quick turnoffs to buyers. But these common household troubles need not hold your listing back—particularly if they're relatively easy for a do-it-yourselfer to fix.

Lynda Lyday—carpenter, professional contractor, and a featured expert on the DIY cable network—provides dozens of simple fixes for common household problems in *The Homeowner's Manual* (Que Publishing, 2006).

While it's always best to bring in an expert to correct big problems, Lyday provides these tips for capable home owners who want to try their own hand at a solution.

### PROBLEM: OIL STAINS ON GARAGE FLOOR

**Lyday's solution:** "You can remove most of a stubborn stain with a bit of elbow grease and scrubbing. First, remove the surface oil by sprinkling some cat litter on it to soak it up. Then clear away the cat litter and focus on the stain. Make a paste of hot water and dry dish or laundry detergent. Use a stiff bristle scrub brush to scrub the area with the paste. Hose the area and let it dry. Another method is to use a product such as Spray 'n Wash on the stain for 10 minutes, along with a dry detergent. Your last option is to spray on some oven cleaner. Use this sparingly, wash it down thoroughly, and keep children and pets away from it."



### PROBLEM: LEAKY FAUCETS

**Lyday's solution:** "Most faucet leaks can easily be fixed with a rubber washer, an O-ring, or seals—depending on what type of faucet it is. By fixing the problem yourself, you can save a good bit of money since plumbers can be expensive and will charge you a standard fee even if it takes only 10 minutes to fix the problem."



### PROBLEM: NAIL POPS

**Lyday's solution:** "Nail pops are a problem across the country. The term comes from the nails that hold the drywall to the studs actually popping out through the face of the drywall. This is from either a house settling or the wood studs drying out over time, squeezing the nail out of the wood and pushing it through the drywall. The fix for this isn't terribly hard, but it's tedious because there are up to 32 nails in a 4-foot by 8-foot sheet of drywall. My suggestion is to pound the nail through the drywall to the stud. Then, just above it, place a drywall screw to hold the drywall to the stud, and finish it off with a few coats of spackle or joint compound. Finally, seal and paint it. Most home-improvement stores also sell nail pop kits that can make this job easier."



### PROBLEM: SQUEAKY STAIRS

**Lyday's solution:** "The most common problems that occur in a staircase are the treads (horizontal surface of the steps) coming loose, which causes squeaking. Also common are the spindles or balusters coming loose. If you can get underneath the staircase, fixing the treads is easy. You will need to attach an L bracket from the underside of the tread to the stringer (the long piece of wood that connects the treads and runs diagonally up the wall). If you can't get underneath the staircase, you'll have to make the repair from above. Squeaky stair kits are available that allow you to make this fix even through carpet. Otherwise, you can secure the tread to the stringer with a trim screw." ■

