

home care + repair

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PULL THE WRINKLES OUT OF YOUR CARPET

The holidays are coming, and even though your “favorite relatives” might not comment on those wrinkles in the living room carpet, trust us, they’ll notice. More important, if you ignore the wrinkles, they’ll wear and become permanent eyesores—even if you stretch them later. You don’t have to hire a carpet layer—fix it yourself with rental tools and our instructions. Rent a power stretcher and knee kicker for less than \$40 (for four hours) at an equipment rental store. Then buy a carpet knife (not a utility knife) for about \$6 at any home center.

You’ll be stretching from the center of the carpet and pulling it at an angle into a corner. So move any furniture that’ll be in the path of the stretch. Loosen the carpet in the corner (**Photo 1**). Next, set up the power stretcher at an angle across the room. Set the tooth depth on the power stretcher based on the carpet pile depth (**Photo 2**).



1 PULL THE CARPET FREE
 Grab the carpet right next to the baseboard and pull it straight up. Then loosen the rest of the carpet along the wall.



Operate the power stretcher with the lever and capture the excess carpet in the tack strip as you stretch. Use the knee kicker on both sides of the locked power stretcher to help lock the carpet into the tacks. Once the wrinkles are out and the carpet is secure in the tack strip, cut off the excess (**Photo 4**).



3 SINK AND STRETCH
 Set the teeth into the carpet near the wall and push down on the stretcher handle. Then lock the stretched carpet into place by jamming it behind the tack strip with a putty or linoleum knife.



2 DIAL IN THE CORRECT TOOTH DEPTH
 Adjust the tooth depth by loosening or tightening the screws on the spacer bar. Set the bar so the teeth grab just the carpet pile, not the jute backing or pad (the pad is stapled to the floor and shouldn't be stretched).



4 TRIM OFF EXCESS CARPET
 Fold the excess carpet so the backing is facing up. Then cut it off with the carpet knife.



SMOOTH TALK ABOUT WRINKLES

Professional carpet installer Steve Hoover explained how carpet gets wrinkled. "Carpet has to acclimate to interior conditions before it's installed. That's especially important if the carpet has been in a cold truck or exposed to high humidity. If it's installed while it's still cold or humid, you're going to have wrinkling problems later on," he said.

Improper stretching during installation is another cause. "Some installers lay the pad and carpet and secure it with just the knee kicker. Since the carpet was never really stretched, it's going to wrinkle after it's seen some traffic," he added.

“ If the carpet wasn't stretched during installation, it's going to wrinkle later. ”

Steve's advice? Make sure the installers allow enough time for the carpet to acclimate and insist that they actually stretch it with a power stretcher during installation.

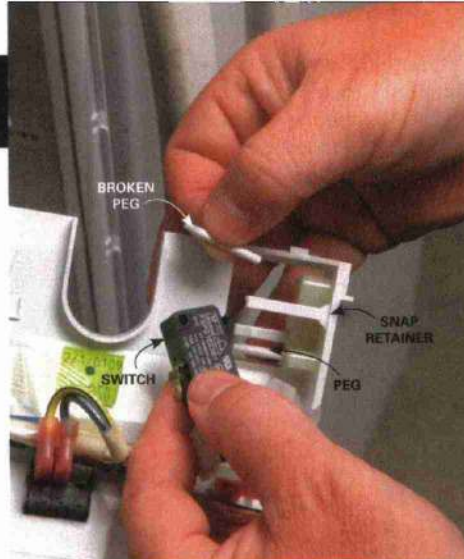
FIX A BROKEN WATER DISPENSER SWITCH IN THE REFRIGERATOR

So the kids were really thirsty and jammed their glass into the water dispenser on the refrigerator door. Now the paddle is hanging by a wire, and you're seeing a \$300 repair bill. No way! You can do this repair yourself with ordinary hand tools in about an hour. A replacement paddle/switch costs about \$75. I'll show you how to make the repair on a Whirlpool refrigerator. Repairs on other makes are similar.

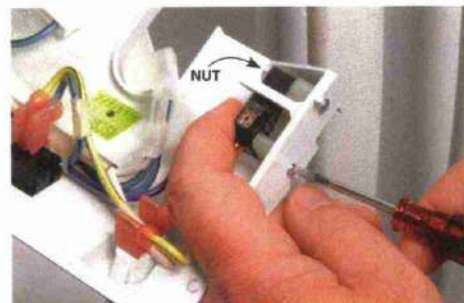
Open the fridge door and write down the model and serial number of the fridge. Then contact a local appliance parts dealer or use the Internet (repairclinic.com is one

online source for discounted parts) to buy a new switch and paddle.

Start by unplugging the refrigerator. Then remove the drip tray to expose the trim panel screws. If you don't see any screws, unsnap the panel using a plastic putty knife and paint can opener (**Photo 1**). Lift the trim panel off the door. Next, remove the microswitch (**Photo 2**). The switch retaining pegs are usually broken, so replace them with screws (**Photo 3**). If the paddle is broken, first disconnect the water tube. Then remove the metal paddle retainer plate and swap in a new paddle (**Photo 4**).



2 REMOVE THE MICROSWITCH
 Pull the snap retainers away from the switch and slide it off the pegs.



3 REPLACE THE PEGS
 Drill out the pegs and replace them with two No. 4 x 1-1/4-in. machine screws. Slide the new switch onto the screws and tighten the nuts.

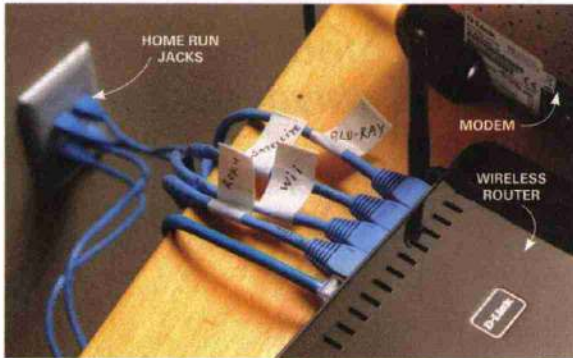


1 REMOVE THE TRIM PANEL
 Locate the detents in the trim panel. Slip a plastic putty knife up against the trim and wedge off the trim with a screwdriver or paint can opener.

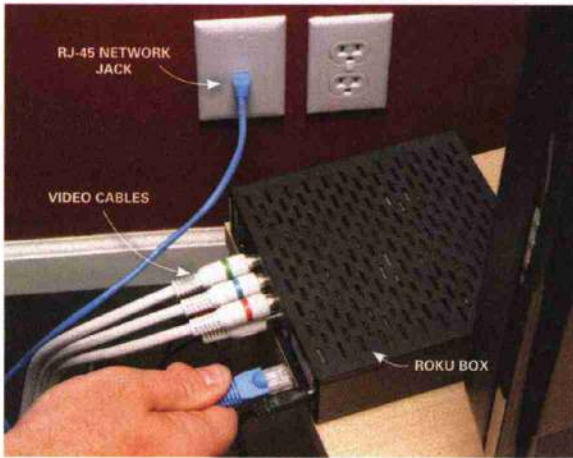


4 INSTALL A NEW PADDLE
 Remove the metal retainer plate (not shown). Replace the broken paddle with a new one. Reattach the water tube.

BOOST INTERNET SPEEDS WITH A WIRED NETWORK



1 CONNECT PATCH CORDS AT THE ROUTER
 Snap the patch cord into an unused port on the back of your wireless router and connect it to the "home run" jack you just installed.



2 FINISH THE INSTALLATION AT YOUR TV
 Run a patch cord from the new jack to your streaming device. Then reprogram the unit to turn off the wireless mode and find the hardwired connection.

Guess what? Wireless networks don't always live up to their promise of reliable high-speed service. Wireless performance depends on the distance between the router and your computer or streaming devices, and your home's construction. If your streaming device isn't getting a strong signal, you can experience a complete loss of signal (dropouts) or excessive "buffering" (the video stops while it downloads more data).

To fix the problem, run hardwired "home-run" cabling from your streaming devices to the wireless router. Yes, that'll mean drilling holes and fishing network cables through your walls. And you'll have to install network jacks at each end of the runs. But when you're done, you'll have fast, reliable service.

Most wireless routers already have four jacks located in the back of the unit. So you'll just need cable, RJ-45 jacks and patch cords. Go to familyhandyman.com and search "installing communication wiring" for step-by-step wiring instructions. Then run patch cords between the jack and your devices (Photos 1 and 2).

STOP SUMP PUMP CLUNK

Q My sump pump makes a loud "thump" every time it turns off. It's enough to wake the dead or at least the sleeping. Any solutions?

A Your sump pump probably has an in-line ball-style check valve on the discharge line. As soon as the sump pump shuts down, water slams the check ball against the seat, making a loud "THUMP."

If the thumping noise is keeping you up at night, replace it with a quieter check valve. One choice is the Campbell Quietsump No. B-0823-15C valve (\$26 from amazon.com), which gets consistently high reviews from users.

If you have the same problem with the check valve in your sewage pump, replace that with a quiet valve (such as the Campbell Quietsewage No. B-0823-20C; \$25 from amazon.com).



COMMENT

He's got a wheel to grind
 I don't know if George Ingraham, M.D., is a DIYer in real life. But when it comes to grinding wheels, he knows his stuff. George wrote to us with a tip to add to our piece about bench grinders ("Home Care & Repair," May '11, p. 20). He advises running a new or reinstalled wheel for 10 minutes (with you out of the room) before starting a grinding project. How did an M.D. come up with that advice? Well, he treated a patient whose grinding wheel exploded from an unseen crack. The explosion caused a severe facial

“ If a wheel has an unseen crack or other internal flaw, it can blow up in your face. ”

injury, with deep lacerations and facial bone fractures requiring surgery, and almost resulting in a lost eye. OK, George, the tip is now on our list.

EARBUD FIX

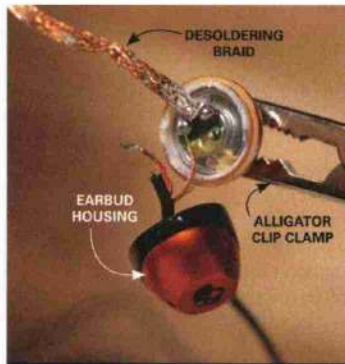
Cheap earbuds are disposable, but don't toss out an expensive pair. If the problem is a broken connection, you can fix them yourself with a soldering iron and electronics solder.

First locate the problem. If only one speaker is acting up, the problem is likely the connection in that earbud.

Use a small flat-blade screwdriver to pry the earbud housing apart. You may have to superglue the two pieces back together when you're done. Look for a wire that's broken away from the circuit board. If you find one, first remove the blob of old solder with desoldering braid (from an electronics store) or an old piece of lamp cord (**Photo 1**). Then resolder the loose wire with .032-diameter electronics solder (**Photo 2**).

Allow the soldered connection to cool and then test the earbud. If the earbuds still don't work, you may have a broken wire at the jack. If so, resolder the broken wire.

If neither channel is working, the problem may be in the plug or jack. Replacement jacks are available online or at an electronics store for less than \$5. Make sure you allow the solder to cool down before placing the bud in your ear.



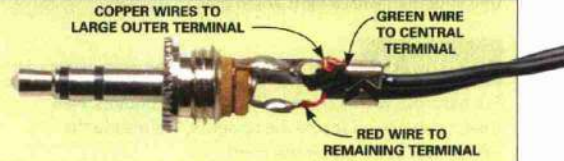
1 DESOLDER FIRST
 Wick up the old solder with desoldering braid for a fresh, clean start. Find it at an electronics store or online. Or use a scrap piece of lamp cord to soak up the solder.



2 SOLDER THE CONNECTION
 Place the wire on the circuit board and hold it in place with the tip of the soldering iron. Add solder. Then remove the hot iron and hold the wire in place until the solder cools.

CHECK THE CONNECTIONS AT THE JACK

Unscrew the plastic protective barrel and look for a broken wire. If you find one, resolder it.



FIX SAGGING CABINET SHELVES

Stocked up on canned goods, did you? Now the shelves are sagging and you're looking for a quick fix.

If your cabinet has a center stile, check the back of the stile and the back of the cabinet to see if the manufacturer drilled shelf bracket holes to support the center (**Figure A**). They're hard to spot and often ignored by whoever installed the cabinets.

If you find predrilled holes, just buy some brackets at the hardware store and install them. That'll support the center of the shelf. If there are no holes, you have two choices: You can drill holes or you can make a "bridge" (**Figures B and C**).

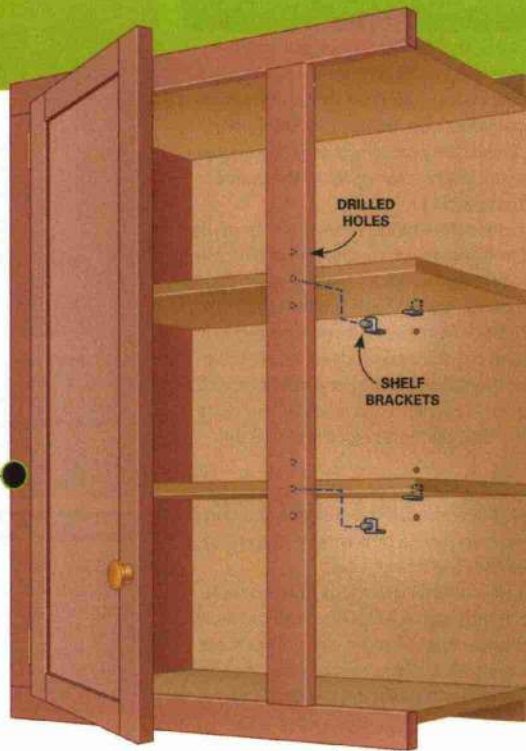


Figure A

Install brackets in predrilled holes or drill your own with a right angle drill.

Figure B

For cabinets with a center stile, build 1x2 bridges. Nail the crosspiece on top of the uprights. Then slide the bridge into place under the shelf.

Figure C

For cabinets with no center stile, position the crosspiece between the two uprights. Secure with decorative screws and washers.

