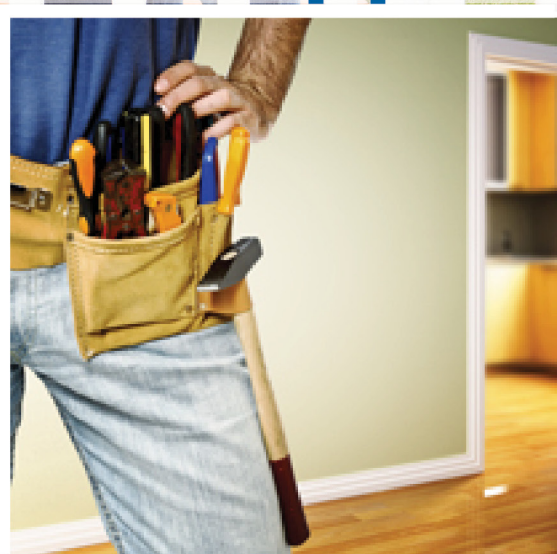




First Timer's guide to Fixing Up a Fixer-Upper



**Disclaimer: Always seek real-estate professional advice prior to making any real-estate purchase.*



The First Timer's Guide to Fixing Up a Fixer-Upper

Buying and owning a house can be fun, but not all homes are created equal. And if you're not buying new construction, chances are that you're going to have some degree of 'fixing' to do. In fact, older homes that are in need of repairs, maintenance and/or remodeling are commonly referred to as 'fixer-uppers.'

But just because a house needs some TLC doesn't mean it isn't worth it. Indeed, when there are cosmetic repairs or functional updates needed that the previous owner cannot or will not address, that's often when you can get the best price on a property.

Although buying a home 'as is' can be daunting, it's not necessarily inadvisable, because if you're willing to put in the work yourself, you have an opportunity to score a great deal and build your dream abode within your budget. True visionaries aren't discouraged by a fixer-upper because they can see the potential diamonds hiding under all that rough.

So don't fret — the [HomeDepot.com](https://www.homedepot.com) and [Homes.com](https://www.homes.com) teams have collaborated to bring you this first timer's guide to owning your fixer-upper, in order to help you navigate many of the ins-and-outs of making a property your own.

In this guide, you will be presented with solutions for some of the top issues you're likely to face with your fixer-upper. Here you'll find DIY advice ranging from tips on flooring, including hardwood and tile floors, to keeping your interior dry, ducts and pipes free flowing and making sure those pesky critters keep out. So let's get to it and fix up that fixer-upper!



HOW TO FIND A HOME THAT SUITS YOUR STYLE AND BUDGET

One of the main points of buying or renting a fixer-upper is the opportunity to make a smart financial move. Here are some tips on how to facilitate landing your fixer-upper.

- **Scour the Web** - Begin by checking local tax records for past sales prices, past tax bills, flood zone and insurance information. Here's a comprehensive resource listing [property tax information](#) according to individual states.
- **Foreclosures** - Your local Clerk of Court's website is a great resource for locating those potentially stellar deals (foreclosures and short sales, etc.). You can also [find foreclosure listings](#) on Homes.com.
- **Other Non-Conventional Sales Routes** - [Auctions and Estate Sales](#) are a great chance to score a good deal, but do your research before arriving and don't make uneducated bids.
- **Seek Professional Help!** - Don't forget about the valuable advice offered by real estate professionals. Their knowledge of a particular market can be invaluable to finding a deal early and making sure you offer the right amount. In addition to the home-buying wisdom acquired from their personal experience, they have the most up-to-date information related to comparable sales and average property prices in your area. [Click here](#) to find a list of professionals that can help you.



ASSESS THE HOME'S CONDITION

Here are some things to consider before jumping right in to the fixer-upper commitment.

Find a Good Home Inspector

The first step to uncovering the mystery of any home you are considering for purchase or rent is to have it thoroughly checked out by a [professional home inspector](#).

And since two heads are better than one, conducting multiple inspections is a good way to ensure that nothing falls through the cracks. Not only will you have a more accurate view of the repair or updating costs that you're likely to encounter (especially within the context of electrical, plumbing and heating and cooling systems), but you might even find some more bargaining chips to present to the Seller for repairs or price concessions.

Weigh the Pros and Cons

It's always important to consider all angles before purchasing a piece of real estate, but this is especially true in the case of fixer-uppers. In addition to making sure that you're ready to take on the challenge of rehabbing a property, you also need to be certain you've picked the right one. Weigh (and make a list) of all the [pros and cons](#) (and other considerations) before deciding that this is the fixer-upper for you.

[*Download this first time homebuyers guide to fixer-uppers checklist to help you with your decision.*](#)



Check the Key Components

Although every property is unique, they are all made up of certain standard parts, so make sure the house is solid (albeit in need of some TLC) before signing on the dotted line. What should you look for [when buying a fixer upper](#)? Reference this quick list:

- Structure
- Foundation
- Plumbing
- Doors and Windows
- Roof
- Electrical
- Heating

Cracking: Cause for Concern?

Because a house is, in essence, walls placed on top of a base, your most important key component to confirm is the foundation and its stability. But not every crack is cause for concern, so if you notice cracks in the foundation, consult [this comprehensive list](#) for determining the gravity of the problem – and figure out if it's just gravity!

Bid It Out

Even if you have all of your ducks in a row, you can still run into problems with construction delays and overages, so be sure to [consult multiple contractors](#) for upgrade and repair estimates – with timelines!

Tell Homes.com about the great fixer-upper you found! Tag @HomesDotCom on [Twitter](#) or on [Facebook](#).

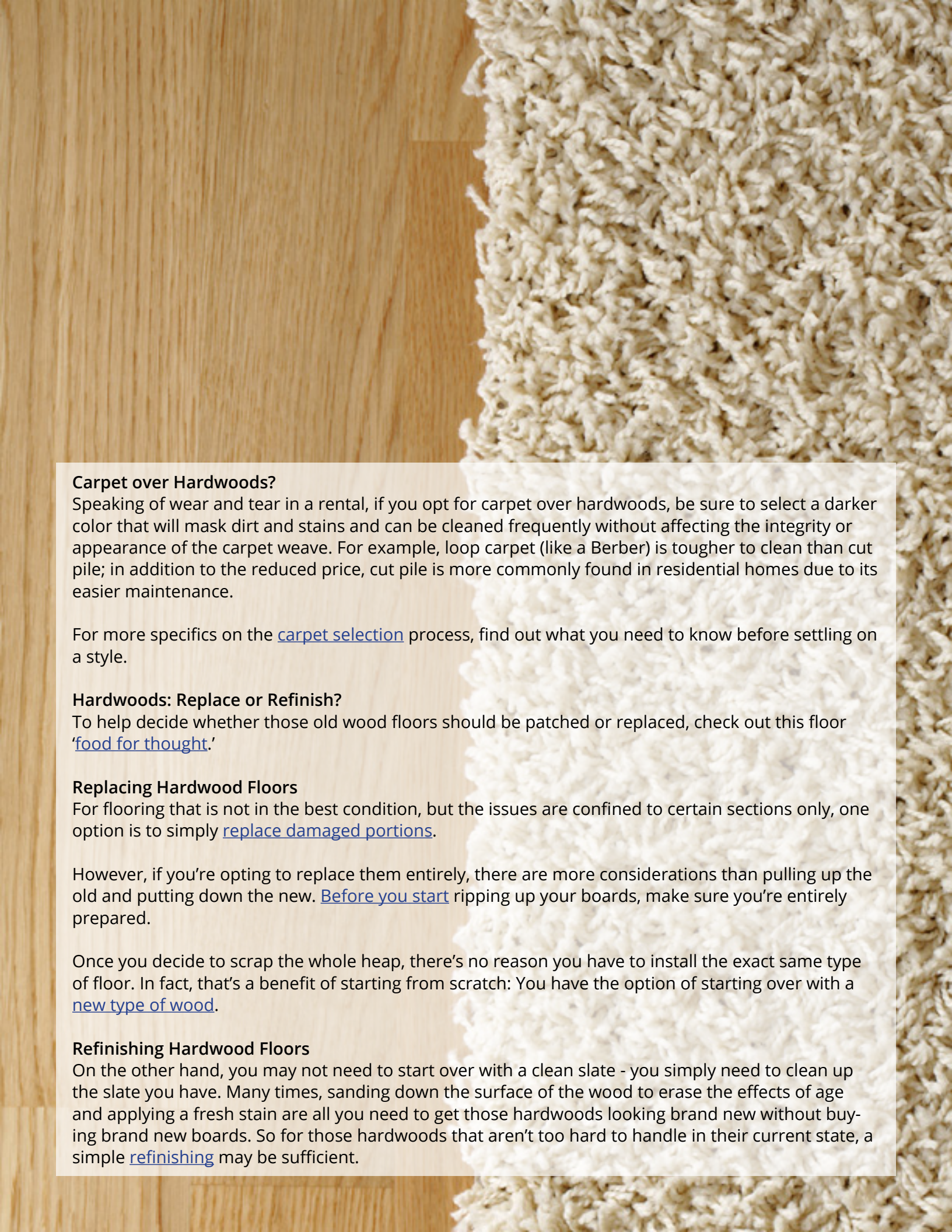


OPEN THE DOOR, GET ON THE FLOOR

Congratulations on your leap! Purchasing a home is a huge step. Here are some ways to fix her up once she's all yours. Once you're ready to move indoors, don't go any further until you check your floors.

There are several fundamental questions to address right off the bat to help [determine the best type of flooring to use](#).

- Do you plan on this fixer-upper being your final home purchase? If so, you have more freedom to select taste-specific options because this is, in fact, your ultimate dream home. This might include more unique materials and personalized colors - and always more expense!
- If you plan on only being in the home for a certain number of years, you should exercise restraint and favor mass appeal over personal preference. In other words, select something classic and tasteful that will retain its value over time and increase your resale value down the road. Good options include hardwood floors in classic stains that can be refinished before listing the property for sale. Fortunately, [there are more options than ever before](#), including easy-to-install panels in everything from solid hardwoods to bamboo.
- Finally, if you are updating to turn the fixer-upper into a rental property for income purposes, you need to favor durability and cost-effective value in addition to selecting neutral options that the majority of people will like. If you still want to use hardwoods, you might select a thicker wood that will allow for multiple refinishing treatments to combat the inevitable wear and tear that happens in a rental.
- To help make your decision process easier, check out details on the [pros and cons of carpet vs. flooring](#).



Carpet over Hardwoods?

Speaking of wear and tear in a rental, if you opt for carpet over hardwoods, be sure to select a darker color that will mask dirt and stains and can be cleaned frequently without affecting the integrity or appearance of the carpet weave. For example, loop carpet (like a Berber) is tougher to clean than cut pile; in addition to the reduced price, cut pile is more commonly found in residential homes due to its easier maintenance.

For more specifics on the [carpet selection](#) process, find out what you need to know before settling on a style.

Hardwoods: Replace or Refinish?

To help decide whether those old wood floors should be patched or replaced, check out this floor [‘food for thought.’](#)

Replacing Hardwood Floors

For flooring that is not in the best condition, but the issues are confined to certain sections only, one option is to simply [replace damaged portions](#).

However, if you’re opting to replace them entirely, there are more considerations than pulling up the old and putting down the new. [Before you start](#) ripping up your boards, make sure you’re entirely prepared.

Once you decide to scrap the whole heap, there’s no reason you have to install the exact same type of floor. In fact, that’s a benefit of starting from scratch: You have the option of starting over with a [new type of wood](#).

Refinishing Hardwood Floors

On the other hand, you may not need to start over with a clean slate - you simply need to clean up the slate you have. Many times, sanding down the surface of the wood to erase the effects of age and applying a fresh stain are all you need to get those hardwoods looking brand new without buying brand new boards. So for those hardwoods that aren’t too hard to handle in their current state, a simple [refinishing](#) may be sufficient.



Tons of Tiles

Not everyone wants carpet or wood flooring. Given the [wide array of tile options](#), you're sure to find one that suits your tastes perfectly. For example, in addition to ceramic and porcelain, you might select more exotic options like marble and other types of natural stone to help you achieve the look you desire.

Once your hardwood and tile floors are installed, a good way to warm up the area and to define the space is to use an area rug. Select your area rug from one of the Home Depot's many [options](#).

Best Bet for Bathrooms

Different types of floors are appropriate for different rooms. In the bathroom, you need something that will resist water and moisture. Here's a more in-depth look at what works best in a [bathroom](#).

Tips on Tiling

Once you decide on the type, it's time to tile! But there are other materials you're going to need in addition to the tiles themselves. For example, you need some type of thinset or mortar to attach the tile to the sub-floor, grout to fill in the cracks, and specific tools to end up with a professional looking floor. For additional guidance and best practices, check out these [tips](#).

Durability & Care for Different Kinds of Flooring for Pet Owners

People aren't the only inhabitants of a property. If you have pets, you also have the challenges of shedding fur, muddy paws, scratchy claws and the unavoidable stain from time to time! Keep your floors in tip-top shape when furry friends are present with these [tips](#).



MISCELLANEOUS SPECIFICS: UNDER, ABOVE, AROUND & THROUGH

Each fixer-upper is different. Yours will have its own set of unique characteristics that needs to be fixed! Whether it's a basement below, the roof above, the siding surround or sewer pipes and HVAC ducts within, there are items you may need to address in the home's 'under, above, around and through.' And quite a few of these projects need to be undertaken before you beautify your walls, so be sure to scan through this list before embarking on a total overhaul.

WATCH OUT BELOW

Prevent Basement Flooding

Certain seasons and locations are more likely to receive above average rainfall. In the instances where it's more than a light drizzle, you need to be prepared to keep the water from overtaking your property. Because water runs down, basement flooding is a particular concern, so for keeping everything dry below deck (and downstairs), review this [checklist](#).

Sufficient Sump Pumps

No matter how prepared you are, there's always the possibility of a flood or leak that can wreak havoc on your place if you're not ready with the right tools. Your best friend in that situation is a sump pump, but it will only help you if it's in working order when the time comes; follow these [steps](#) so you're not caught with your sump pump down in the event of a water emergency.



Evicting Annoying Animals & Critter Control

Just because you love animals and may have pets of your own doesn't mean it's open house for unwelcome 'tenants.' Whether incorporating certain barriers like fencing or lattice under your house or making sure not to tempt them to your pad by leaving trash and food exposed, there are many [ways](#) to keep those critters outside where they belong.

At the same time, no animals or people need to be harmed in the eviction process. Take an extra moment to keep your home free of damage and animals safe with these [anti-pest techniques](#).



DON'T BE CLOGGED

Wells and septic systems have different considerations than homes hooked to central water and sewage.

Wise Up About Wells

Water is a necessity of life and fortunately you don't have to be connected to group water lines to get the water you need. When you're drawing your water from your own well, make sure your supply keeps up with your demand by checking out these [guidelines](#).

Septic System Specifics

When plugging in to a main sewer line is not an option, you need a septic system to provide a means of safely treating and disposing of wastewater from your kitchen, bathroom and laundry facilities. For just about everything you wanted to know about septic systems and maintenance, consult this useful [resource](#).

Clearing Away Clogs

Oftentimes, clogs can be kept at bay by simply keeping hair out of drains and only flushing things that should be flushed (in other words, not treating your toilet like a receptacle for papers, debris and trash), but if you do run into a stubborn clog, here are the various [ways](#) you can get rid of it.

For the most part, if you are well prepared before you jump in to a fixer-upper, you can experience benefits above and beyond your expectations. But just in case you need a little extra assistance, don't forget about the helpful resources at your disposal, and the inclusions in this guide are a great place to start!

Have you ever dealt with a fixer-upper that turned into more of a project than you expected? Let us know if you have any other questions about fixer-uppers by tagging @HomesDotCom on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).