

YOUR HOME

SEPTEMBER
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TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING



No More Tangles

Tired of heading to the computer room every time you want to look something up? A wireless network can offer a solution. Even if you're not fluent in tech-speak, setting up a network is easy. If your computer isn't already outfitted with wireless capabilities (most newer models are), there's an easy fix: desktops need a USB wireless adapter; laptops need a wireless card. If your desktop is already using all of its available USB ports, you can buy a hub that plugs into the computer, leaving open ports on the hub that are still connected.

Once you begin to set up the network, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, it's best to purchase a wireless router versus a wireless access point. Access points let one user access a single network, while routers allow for more than one computer to access the same network using one IP address that is provided to connected computers. Another key difference between a router and an access point is that routers include firewall technology for better network security.

When choosing a router, pay attention to the letter after the speed (it'll be "a," "b," "g," or "n," in order alphabetically from oldest to newest). Though "n" is the newest choice, the better choice may be "g" if you don't have the latest computer model. If not fully compatible, you might experience a lag in service.

If you live in a large home rather than an apartment, you may want to purchase a signal booster. It will increase the strength of the base station, improving wireless connections throughout the home. If you choose to go without a signal booster, choose a central location for the router such as the living room or den, where you would most likely use your computer.

Be sure to secure your network with passwords and network names that are difficult to guess. If possible, enable settings to WPA (Wi-Fi Protected Access) encryption versus WEP (Wired Equivalency Privacy), which offers better protection from would-be hackers.

Code of Conduct

Want to build a new staircase or add a porch to your home? In addition to researching costs, be sure to find out if your new project adheres to local building codes.

Your contractor should know associated building codes for specific projects, but if you want to do your own additional research, there are a few ways to find up-to-date codes. The best way to find them — collectively called International Building Codes (IBC) — is to head to the reference section of your local library. Or you can find an explanation of codes on the building section of your local county and state government websites. You should be able to find codes within these department websites.



The International Code Council (iccsafe.org) is dedicated to developing a single set of comprehensive and coordinated national model construction codes, and also can offer insight on building codes. Common queries might include how large a building can be in a specific area or mandatory fire prevention additions. These codes are available in print form, but the codes are updated frequently, so it's best to go to the website for the most recent versions of codes.

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fast fact » » » » » » » »

Overwatering your houseplants is the No. 1 mistake homeowners make. To check if your plant needs watering, place a finger up to two inches into the soil. If your finger is dry, the plant needs hydration.



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Island Time

Whether you're looking for more prep space, a bar area or more storage options, an island is a great kitchen addition. But if you haven't found a ready-made option at the store that suits your needs, you can build one yourself. It's easier than you might think, as long as you keep these tips in mind.

First, make sure your kitchen is large enough to accommodate an island. Experts recommend leaving between four feet to 54 inches around all sides of the island to allow for easy opening of the cabinet doors. You can go as low as three feet, but it'll be a tight squeeze. Use tape on the floor to demonstrate where the island would be to determine if the space is right.

To form a kitchen island, buy packaged cabinets at local home goods stores and then attach them to one another. These cabinets can come preassembled, or you can do it yourself. When screwing the cabinets together, put spacers in between the cabinets and be sure that all exterior surfaces are flush before fastening the units together. Take care when buying cabinet hardware to ensure it matches or complements the rest of your kitchen.

Preassembled cabinets will need a backing to make the cabinets appear as one cohesive unit. Beadboard is a good option for this, and ranges in price from \$20 to \$40 per bolt depending on the material. Beadboard is easily affixed to the backs of the cabinets with glue and nails, but will give the kitchen island a professional look.

Lastly, be choosy in selecting countertops. If you'll be preparing food, make sure that the finish and material is conducive to the task at hand — for example, a polyurethane top would not be the best option for chopping veggies, since it's not always food safe. Instead, choose a stone such as granite or marble or even ceramic tiles for a decorative touch that can withstand utensils scraping the surface.

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