

# THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



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**How Homebase could put its house in order**  
“The tool man rolled his eyes and said: “What has he told you he needs it for?””



By Katy Guest – The Independent Sunday

There was sad news, last week, for someone like me whose favourite designer is Wickes, who salivates over the Screwfix catalogue, and whose best ever birthday present was a rivet-reinforced tool belt with sturdy pockets and metal hammer hangers.

The news was that [Homebase](#) is to close one in four of its stores. Even worse, those that remain will move further into the soft furnishings market at the

expense of all the good stuff such as ironmongery, power tools, timber and (sigh) spirit levels.

Industry experts have blamed this decline on a generation that has forgotten how to do DIY, but some have gone further and attributed it to “fathers no longer passing the skills on to their sons”. Excuse me! Everyone knows that women are better at DIY than men – and not just because we supposedly have more cone cells in our eyeballs and therefore both know and care about the difference between several shades of pale sage green paint while most men just shrug and say, “I like the green one”.

Being DIY competent, practical though that is, is not merely an end in itself. A good DIYer has equipped herself with a raft of transferable skills. DIY teaches us to have vision, and patience; to prepare properly and source the right tools for the job; to know our limits but be tenacious in pursuit of a goal; as well as to keep a first-aid kit and a cold beer ready at the end of a long and productive day. However, this DIY-phobic generation would rather pay a Polish stranger than get their own hands dirty, they say. But who would you rather have on your team: someone who can save you money by installing her own shower, or someone who’d rather give up and “get a man in”?

Further to this, any women who can’t do her own basic DIY should learn, quick. Apparently, there are still girls out there who need to find themselves a man to rewire their light switches or sand their skirting, when they could just learn how to do their own household management and instead choose a man who brings other skills and benefits to a relationship.

By focusing on men and DIY, though, I think I know where the DIY stores may be going wrong. I recently went to my local [Homebase](#) to buy the right tool for a job, and when I asked the tool man where I could find the countersinking bits he rolled his eyes and said: “What has he told you he needs it for?” Please, Homebase: “he” wouldn’t know a countersinking tool if he tripped over one, whereas I am quite likely to countersink your foot if you patronise me like that again.

So how about it? Forget the dads handing down “I like the green one” to their sons, and focus on your female customers instead.

I’ve a rivet-reinforced tool belt that needs filling, and I’ve got my eye on a hammer to hang.

Read the full article here -

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/how-homebase-could-put-its-house-in-order-9818429.html>