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The Enthusiast's Guide to Home Improvement



# 2018 HOME IMPROVEMENT

PRODUCT GUIDE & DIRECTORY



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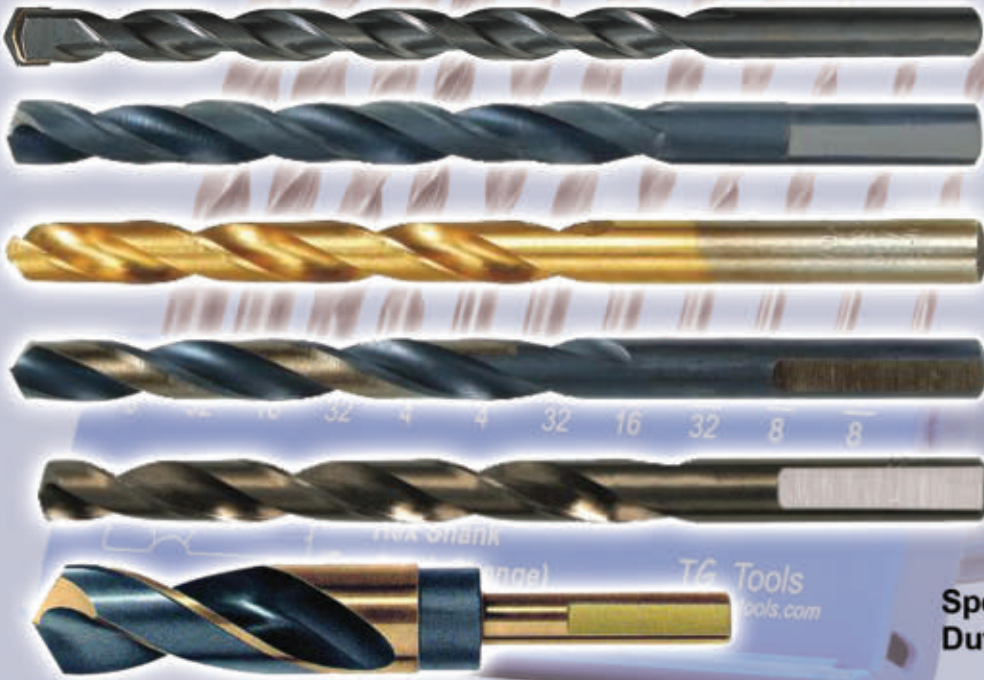
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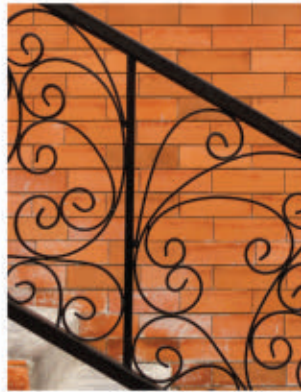
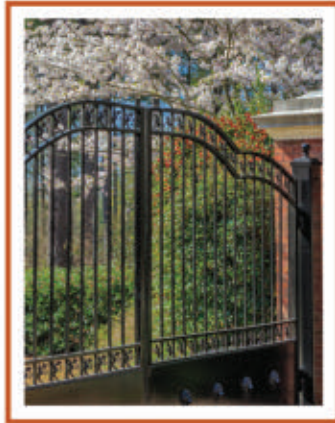
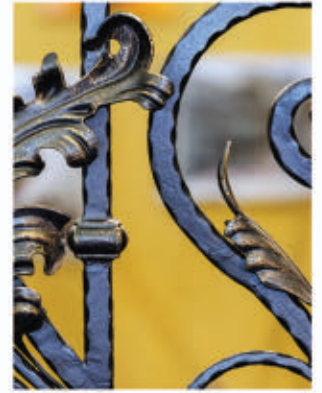
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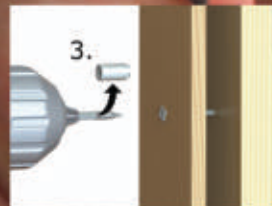
**OPENING DOORS TO QUICK INSTALLS  
AND ADJUSTMENTS**



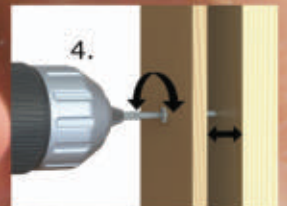
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If this magazine looks a little different than a typical issue of *Extreme How-To*, it's because we thought we'd to try something new for 2017. You're reading our first "Home Improvement Product Guide," a directory of suppliers of tools and materials for virtually any DIY project. This issue is meant to serve as a go-to guide to for you to look up what you need, when you need it, to tackle your next home remodel. From cabinets and countertops to roofing and flooring, we stuffed this book full of reliable contact information, including web-sites, phone numbers and more.

But that's not all... We decided to include some tool reviews and how-to stories as well. Check out our look at the latest technology in inverter-generators. These machines deliver clean, reliable electrical power in remote locations, and do so in a compact package that's much less noisy than the roar of a standard genny. Plus, this issue includes a few skillset articles, such as our in-depth tutorial on how to chop down a tree with a chainsaw, courtesy of the experts at Husqvarna. You'll also learn how to achieve the look of hardwood cabinets with inexpensive veneer, and how to seal your exterior doors with aluminum weather-stripping.

I hope you enjoy this new spin on an *EHT* issue. Keep it around your workshop, within handy reach when you need to replenish your supplies or order a new tool. That's the idea, because we're here to help.

Thank for reading,



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*Extreme How-To* is published by

**LATITUDE3 MEDIA GROUP, LLC**

2300 Resource Drive, Suite B  
Birmingham, AL 35242

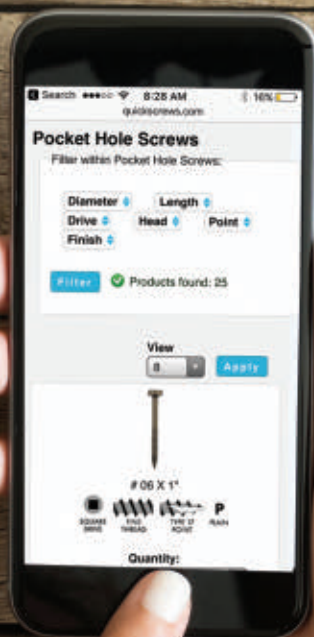
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**Q.** I plan to convert my unfinished basement into a finished living room. When installing drywall on the basement ceiling, do the panels attach directly to the underside of the joists?

**A.** Rather than attaching directly to the joists, the ceiling should have wood or metal furring strips attached perpendicular to the joists. In most houses, the ceiling joists will be inconsistent, with their lower edges

located at slightly different elevations that can result in an uneven drywall ceiling if directly attached. To install the furring, pull a string across the bottom of the joists and attach it to the opposite side of the ceiling. Check the string for high and low spots. High spots will need to be planed; low spots will need to be shimmed. For the furring strips, fasten wooden 1x3's or metal resilient channel across the joists, checking for level and shimming as required. Finally, install the ceiling panels across the furring strips, staggering the panel joints from row to row. A homemade "deadman" or T-shaped 2x4 brace will help hold the panels while you screw them into the furring.

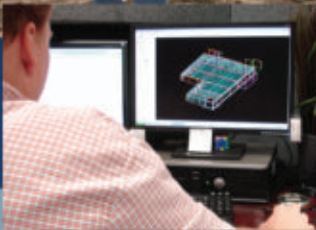
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**Q.** When building a cinderblock wall, should I fill the voids in the blocks with mortar?

**A.** We recommend filling the empty spaces of the blocks with sand topping mix or core-fill grout to ensure a solid core and strong wall. Increase the wall's vertical strength by inserting sections metal rebar into the filled voids to connect the blocks from course to course. You can also add horizontal reinforcement by setting ladder-shaped metal reinforcement grids into the mortar beds of every third course. Overlap the ends of the metal grids by about 6 inches.

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# Q&A Got a?

Questions About Home Building, Remodeling? Have Your Own How-To Tip? Visit our blog at [blog.extremehowto.com](http://blog.extremehowto.com) and click on Ask Our Experts.

**Q:** I'd like to change the top of a rectangular hallway entry into an arch and finish it with drywall, but how do I bend the drywall for the arch?

**A:** Remove the drywall above the entry from each side of the wall. Cut two replacement panels from 1/4-in. plywood with matching curves at the bottom. Screw them above the entryway, and add short 2x4 cripple studs sandwiched between the curved panels. You can then cover the plywood panels with 1/4- or 3/8-in. drywall to match the adjacent walls. To finish the bottom of the curved area between the two plywood panels, you have three options: (1) Use flexible drywall. (2) Create your own flexible drywall by scoring the back of 1/2-in.-thick drywall every 1/2- or 1 in. (3) Or, for the look of wood trim on the curve, you can use bendable plywood.

**Q:** Our basement bathroom has a sewer odor. How do I stop it?

**A:** The first suspect of a sewer odor is the toilet. Gently try to move the bowl of the toilet. If the bottom moves even slightly in any direction, then the sewer gas is probably escaping around the wax ring that seals the toilet to the floor. If this is the case, remove the toilet and replace the wax seal. If the toilet is not a problem then check the drains of other fixtures. When a plumbing fixture hasn't been used in a while, the traps below the drain can dry out, allowing gases to escape. If this is the case, pour a cup of water down the drain to reseal a trap. Also, clean the floor thoroughly and, if possible, ensure the bathroom has adequate ventilation and an operable window or exhaust fan. **EHT**

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# Seal of Approval

*Install Aluminum Weather-stripping Around a Leaky Door*



**By Matt Weber**

measured up to 1/2 in. at its widest point. Calculate the total area of that long, leaky opening, and it equates to leaving a window cracked. Conditioned air could be felt drafting out of the house at a notable rate.

The solution to a problem like this is to install a simple weather-stripping kit. This is an entry-level project that is well within the skill set of even the greenest DIY'er. All that's required is the kit, a drill/driver, measuring tape and a hack-saw, and you can stop the energy loss.

## **INSTALLATION**

Hardware stores sell several varieties of weather-stripping, but the best type for doors has a rigid aluminum bar along with a soft rubber gasket, called a bulb. When attached to the door frame, the bulb compresses against the closed door to prevent the passage of air and moisture. The kits are usually sold with three pieces, one for the top and two for the sides of the door. The side pieces

**E**ven the most energy-efficient HVAC systems boasting all the latest technology can still cost you plenty if that conditioned air is wasted through leaky doors, windows or walls.

One of our project houses had a door with a poor weather seal, leaving a substantial gap around its perimeter. Unlike an interior partition, this door separated the conditioned living space from an unfinished basement. A general rule of thumb: If you can see light between the closed door and the jamb, then you have a problem. In this case, the gap between the jamb and the edges of the door



*Visible light around a closed door is a sure sign of a poor seal.*





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## QUICK FIX



*This door had a gap that measured as much as 1/2".*

often come in standard door heights, but any of the three components can be trimmed to size.

Use a tape measure to determine the length from the bottom of the door frame to the top of the jamb. If it's necessary to cut the material, use a hacksaw to cut the aluminum and a utility knife to cut the rubber gasket. I had misplaced my hacksaw and trimmed the stripping with a powered cut-off saw, but a hacksaw actually works better because there's no risk of kickback.

Close the door and press the weather-stripping firmly against it. If installing in a metal door frame, then mark the screw holes in the weather-stripping with a pencil. Metal door frames will require pilot holes to be predrilled with a 1/16-in. spiral tip bit. If predrilling is not required, you can usually

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*Measure from the door sill to the upper jamb.*



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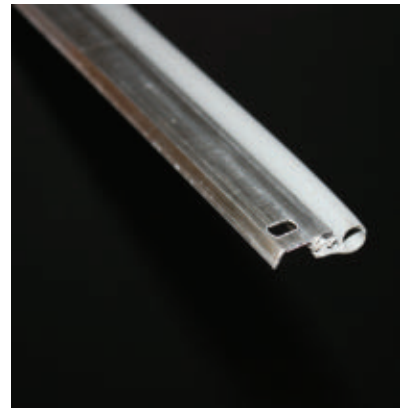
## QUICK FIX

drive the screws (included with the kit) directly into the door frame.

When driving the screws, leave them proud without securing them tightly. The

weather-stripping should be left loose until all the screws have been started.

Once they're all in place, make sure the door is tightly closed. The screw slots are oblong, allowing



The best weather-stripping has a rigid aluminum bar and rubber gasket.



Cut the strip to length. I used a chop saw, but a hacksaw works best.



Position the strip against the closed door.

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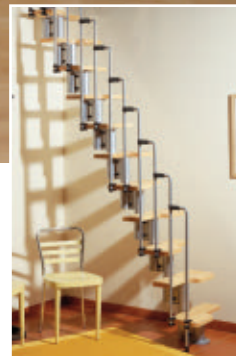
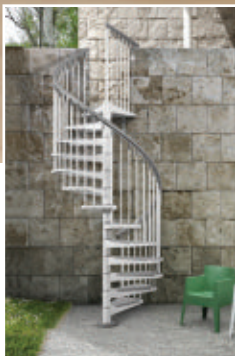
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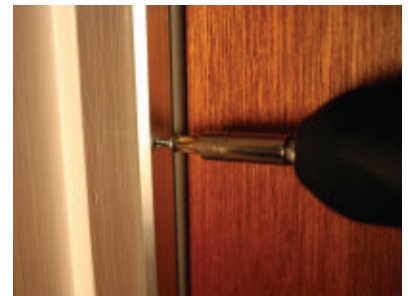
room for final adjustment. Press the weather-stripping firmly against the door, compressing the rubber bulb. (Don't compress it more than 50 percent or you could damage the gasket).

When you're satisfied with placement, drive down the screws tightly.

Repeat the procedure for the other side of the doorway. With both sides installed, measure



*Predrill the holes if fastening in a metal door frame. Otherwise, start the screws, but leave them loose.*



*Repeat the procedure for the opposite side of the door. Once the strips are in place, close the door and position the strips so the gasket is compressed against the door surface. Tighten down the screws.*



*Measure between the strips for the top piece.*



*Screw the top piece to the jamb.*

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## QUICK FIX

between the two strips to determine the length of the top strip.

When cutting, err on the side of too long and adjust as necessary. Install with screws just like the first two strips. Close the door a few times to check the seal and make minor adjustments. The oblong screw slots enable you to back out the fasteners, move the strip as necessary and then retighten until you've completely closed off the gap. **EHT**

*Adjust the weather-stripping to completely close the gap, then fasten all screws tightly.*



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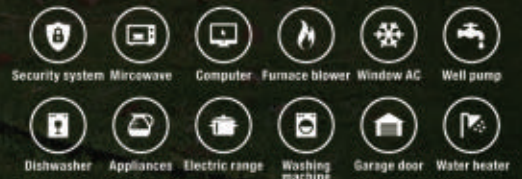
\*Run time is for operation at 25% load.  
\*\*As measured from 23 ft. (7 M)

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# POWER ON THE GO

The rise of inverter generators brings several advantages to the DIY market for portable power supplies. Inverter generators utilize a different type of alternator than standard generators to generate very clean AC power. The inverter technology reduces the generator's size and weight, but more importantly, the engine can run at varying speeds, significantly reducing the noise levels and fuel consumption. These units also offer cleaner power for sensitive electronics.

## HOW IT WORKS

Conventional generators consist of heavy copper coils that generate a raw form of electricity. The engine must maintain a constant speed to produce AC power, regardless of the load needed, and this full-power operation consumes a lot of fuel and produces considerable noise. The electricity produced by a standard generator also isn't as clean as utility power, so they're not recommended to power sensitive electronics like laptops and cell phones.

*Inverter  
Generators  
for DIY'ers  
and More*







Power capacities among inverter generators usually range between 1,000 and 4,000 watts. The unit shown is the Energizer eZV2000P inverter generator, which easily powered a circular saw and impact driver.





*Inverter generators offer portable power in a smaller, lighter, quieter package than conventional generators. Shown is the Briggs & Stratton P3000 inverter generator, which provides plenty of power for jobs like trimming this tree with an electric chainsaw.*

Inverter generators, however, utilize a different type of alternator to generate clean AC power made possible by advanced electronic circuitry and high-tech magnets. These units generally have 3-phase generators that output AC current like traditional generators, but that current is then converted to DC, and then “inverted” back to clean AC power that maintains a single phase, pure sine wave at the required voltage and frequency.

The engine can operate at varying speeds, which reduces noise and fuel consumption compared to standard generators. Small inverter generators are designed to power multiple small appliances simultaneously, whereas larger inverter generators produce enough power to start the air conditioner of an RV while simultaneously running a microwave. Some of the newest

models offer enough capacity to serve as a home backup generator. You can also pair two inverter generators in tandem to double your power while still benefiting from the clean, quiet power of an inverter generator.

This state-of-the-art technology was very expensive several years ago, but prices have dropped significantly on small recreational generators, making them popular with DIY’ers, RV enthusiasts and tailgaters alike. They’re great for running tools in remote locations, powering outdoor parties, tailgating, camping trips, and even some emergency power during a blackout.

## SIZES

### Compact Inverter Generators.

These small units produce 800 to 1,000 watts of power, which is just enough electricity to power one or two appliances simultaneously. For example, it could power a coffee pot alone (1,000 watts) or a toaster (700 watts) and crockpot (230 watts) simultaneously, because the

latter two items would total only 930 watts.

**Small Inverter Generators.** To run more appliances simultaneously, upgrade to a smaller unit that generates 1,600-2,000 watts of electricity.

**Medium Inverter Generators.** Sometimes, “roughing it” isn’t all it’s cracked up to be, and we want to enjoy the outdoors along with the comforts of home. This larger size inverter provides the power output to keep the television on when you run an electric fan.

Larger inverter generators are ideal for travel trailers and pop-up campers.

## PAIRING TWO INVERTER GENERATORS

Combining two inverter generators offers the ability to double power output while still maintaining clean, quiet power. If you don’t want to step up to a larger generator to get the power you need, you can invest

Device	Running Watts	Device	Running Watts
Air conditioner (12,000 BTU)	1700 (a,b)	Jet pump	800 (a)
Battery charger (20 Amp)	500	Lawn mower	1200
Belt sander (3")	1000	Light bulb (100 Watt)	100
Chain saw	1200	Microwave oven	700
Circular saw (6½")	2000 (a,b)	Milk cooler	1100 (a)
Coffee maker	1800 (a,b)	Oil burner on furnace	300
Compressor (1 HP)	1400 (a,b)	Oil-fired space heater (140,000 Btu)	400
Compressor (¾ HP)	1800 (a)	Oil-fired space heater (85,000 Btu)	225
Compressor (½ HP)	1400 (a)	Oil-fired space heater (30,000 Btu)	150
Curling iron	700	Oven	4500
Dishwasher	1200	Paint sprayer, Airless (1/3 HP)	600 (a)
Edge trimmer	500	Paint sprayer, Airless (handheld)	150
Electric nail gun	1200	Radio	200
Electric range (1 element)	1500	Refrigerator	600 (b)
Electric skillet	1250	Slow cooker	200

*The sum of the running and starting wattages of the devices being powered must not exceed the continuous output rating of the generator. Calculate the wattage requirements of the appliances you plan to use simultaneously to determine the size of generator you need. Note that devices without electric motors, such as light bulbs, radios and televisions, have the same running and starting wattage. However, devices with electric motors, such as refrigerators, compressors and hand tools will have a starting wattage significantly higher than the running wattage.*



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in another inverter generator and connect them together with a set of cables for twice the power. This also keeps your power supplies nice and portable, rather than having a single large, heavy generator that's difficult for one person to move.

**DECISION TIME**

So, which is right for you, a conventional generator or an inverter generator? Conventional generators are available in nearly any size you need, from 500 to

*Honda inverter generators are often considered the gold standard of today's technology, offering quiet operation in a lightweight, portable package. The EU2000i shown features a Realtree™ APG camo exterior.*

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50,000 watts and higher. Because inverter generators focus more on quiet operation and portability, their maximum power output is more limited with most models in 1000- to 4000-watt range.

Make your decision by weighing the pros and cons of your intended application. If you need a supply of electricity in a remote area where dollars matter more than decibels, a conventional unit may be the most economical choice. An inverter generator simply costs more than a conventional one

*Inverter generators in the 3,000-watt range come with wheels and a towing handle. The Energizer eZV3200 features a top-mounted handle with a comfortable cushioned grip.*





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*You can invest in two inverter generators and connect them together with a set of cables for twice the power. The Ryobi 2300W inverter generators feature Bluetooth technology that enables you to control the units with a smartphone app.*

with a similar power rating—that's the price of such benefits as compact portability, fuel-efficiency, lower noise level, etc. It's up to you whether the higher price tag is worth the extra features and benefits.

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**HONDA EU2000i INVERTER GENERATOR**

Among the units the EHT staff tested, Honda's EU2000i inverter generator holds the title for most

compact unit and quietest operation (53-58 decibels). Honda Generators are built with larger displacement motors coupled with inverter technology. The 98.5 cc Honda GX Commercial engine (which includes a three-year Commercial Warranty) powers the EU2000i versus smaller imported engines (less than 80 cc) with shorter commercial warranties. Although the smaller engines claim the same rating and maximum performance, the Honda engines outperform them in similar usage conditions. The unit we tested featured RealTree APG camo exterior, and could easily be toted under an arm—great for camping and tailgating. Visit [powerequipment.honda.com](http://powerequipment.honda.com).





## ENERGIZER EZV2000 AND EZV3200P INVERTER GENERATORS

The *EHT* staff tested two new impressive Energizer units. The eZV2000 is a new inverter generator designed to rival Honda's 2000i with lightweight pickup portability (44 lbs.) and low noise emission (50-59 decibels). At an electrical load of 1600 watts (100-percent capacity) the run time is 4.2 hours. EcoMode extends the run time at 25-percent capacity to 11.5 hours. In EcoMode the eZV2000P's inverter tightly controls the engine at all times, producing only the power



you need for what is connected. Plus, a newly designed single-outlet parallel port makes connecting two eZV-series generators easier than ever.

The Energizer eZV3200P inverter generator produces a continuous 2,800 watts of clean electricity at 3600rpm to quietly power common and sensitive electronics during camping trips, tailgating, hunting, traveling, and jobs around the house or workplace. The integrated twist lock outputs 23.3A at 120V, perfect for powering RVs, trailers, and your home in an emergency. The eZB3200P also includes some snazzy features that made it unique among our test group—namely an electric start plus a remote control to eliminate the need for pull-starting. The unit has a digital multi-function display, automatic throttle, automatic choke, integrated folding handle and wheel kit, threadless metal fuel cap, and covered outlets. Visit [energizergenerators.com](http://energizergenerators.com).

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*The Right Way to Fell a Tree with a Chainsaw*

# TAKE DOWN A TREE

**T**rees are an important part of the ecosystem but sometimes they need to be removed to prevent damage to surrounding areas. When it comes to felling a tree, the task is as much art as it is science. To exercise the proper amount of control to achieve the desired results without risking safety, the experts at Husqvarna offer the following basics on felling a tree.

Note that it is impossible to address all scenarios, circumstances and contingencies that can and will occur when felling, so this article is intended to give an understanding of basic principles.

## **SAFETY & PREPARATION**

Before firing up the chainsaw, you must have a plan in place. The very first step is to read (or reread)

the chainsaw's Operator Manual and follow all instructions, precautions and warnings prior to using the saw. It is imperative to know the answer to the question "what needs to be done if an emergency occurs" and develop a plan for specific situations. This will help identify potential hazards beforehand and create an organized response if an emergency occurs.

An on-site first aid kit, cell phone programmed to the nearest emergency care facility, directions and distance to that facility and local utility contact numbers are a few basic components to a good emergency plan. And, whether in the back yard or the back 40, never work alone.

While it is mandatory for professionals, anyone using a chainsaw should include personal protective





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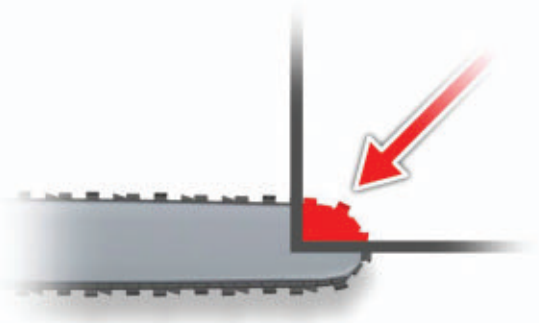
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# TAKE DOWN A TREE



When using a chainsaw, understand the three reactive forces of the saw—push, pull and kickback. Try to avoid kickback, which occurs when the tip of the bar contacts an object or gets pinched during operation. The reactive force causes the bar to “kick” back towards the operator, which can cause injury.

equipment (PPE) as part of their plan. A properly outfitted operator wears protective chaps or pants, eye and ear protection, appropriate footwear, work gloves and a helmet with visor. The proper equipment cannot eliminate the risk of injury completely but it can reduce the severity of an injury should an accident occur.

Before pulling the cord, it is important that users visually inspect the saw for any damage or leaks. Only use a chainsaw that’s been well maintained and is in proper working order. The chain’s cutting teeth need to be properly sharpened, and make sure the depth-gauge setting is correct.

## SAW OPERATION

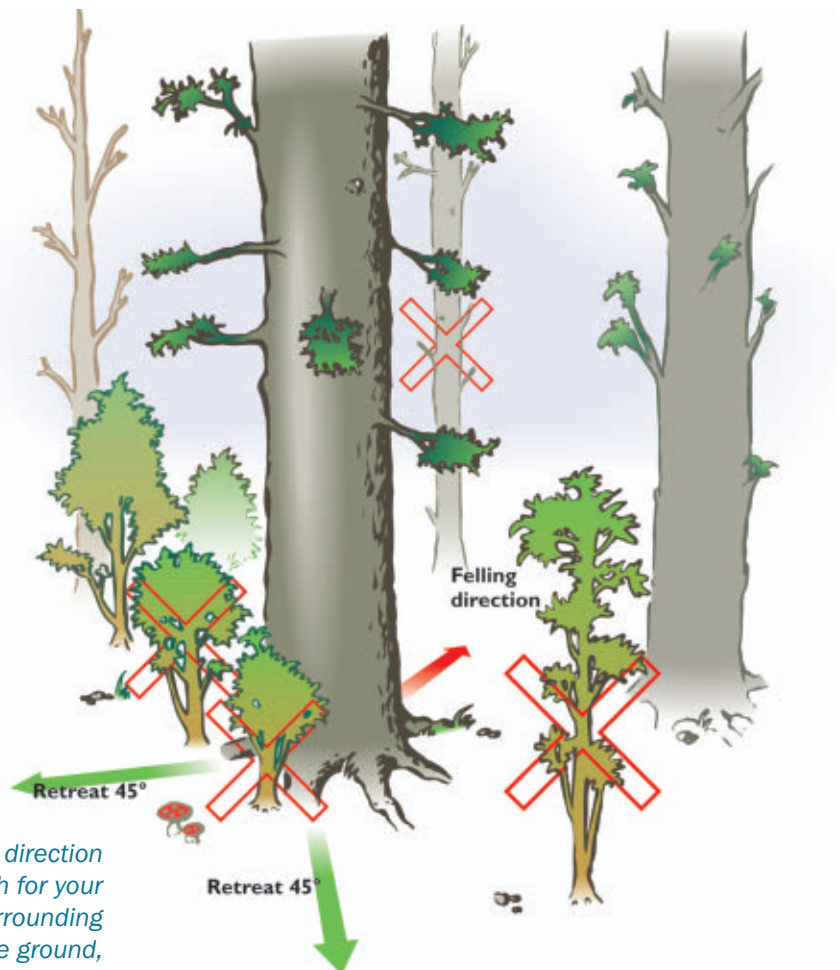
When using a chainsaw, understanding the three reactive forces of the saw—push, pull and kickback—will help prevent accidents.

Never cut with the upper half of the tip of the bar. Kickback occurs when the tip of the bar comes in contact with an object or gets pinched during operation, causing the bar to “kick” up and back towards the operator, which can result in a loss of control and possible injury.

That is why balance and stance are important to safe operation. The boxer’s stance, left foot slightly forward and both knees bent, is recommended to help maintain control of the saw and minimize fatigue when reactive forces are experienced.

## FELLING TECHNIQUES

Directional felling is the process of putting a tree in a preferred area and not necessarily where it wants to go. A “felling hinge” is the hallmark of directional felling. It is safe, efficient and steers the tree as it falls to the ground.



Before cutting, establish a plan for the direction of the tree to fall as well as a path for your escape route. When surveying the surrounding area, identify potential hazards on the ground, in the tree and where the tree will fall.



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# TAKE DOWN A TREE



To determine the lean of a tree, stand back 25 to 50' and frame the entire canopy with your hands. Imagine a plumb line running from the center of the frame down to the base of the tree trunk. The distance left or right of center will determine the amount of weighted side lean.

When surveying the tree and surrounding area, identify potential hazards on the ground, in the tree and where the tree will fall. Clear leaves, limbs and live saplings or anything that will impede a clean and controlled cut or complicate your escape route. Look for dead limbs and hanging branches that could possibly fall when cutting or as the tree falls. Also, examine the path and area where the tree will fall for hazards such as potential hang-ups or stumps.

It is exceptionally rare to find a tree that does not lean. To determine the lean, stand back 25 to 50 feet from the tree, frame the canopy of the tree using hands extended to match the farthest reaching limbs and imagine a plumb line running from the center of this distance directly down to the base of the tree trunk. The

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distance left or right of center will determine the amount of weighted side lean.

The side lean will show which side is the "good" side and the "bad" side. The side the tree leans toward is considered the bad side of the tree. The lean will also help determine aim when placing the tree. If a tree leans three feet to the right, it is necessary to aim 3 feet to the left, to have the tree fall in the right location.

Trees with severe lean can be dangerous to fell because the tree can move in the leaning direction too quickly, splitting at the base and creating what is known as a "barber chair" break in the tree. In such a case, the split wood can fly upwards, striking the operator with terrific force.

The next step is to map out your escape route. This is always



Many of today's chainsaws come with felling marks. Similar to the sight on a gun, these lines will help the operator align the cut in the direction the tree will be felled.

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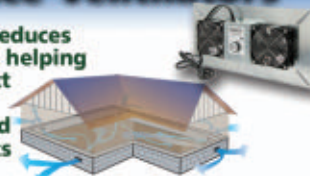
Room-to-Room

Level-to-Level



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For More Information



# TAKE DOWN A TREE



A 70-degree open face notch gives the cutter more control than a conventional 45-degree notch to make directional felling easier.

opposite the direction the tree will be falling and should be at a 45-degree angle from the tree. Remove any obstacles and make note of any potential hazards such as holes or tree stumps. When the tree begins its descent, don't run or turn your back on it.

Sounds like a lot of work? Abraham Lincoln is credited with saying, "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe." Preparation is central to success.

Next, you'll need to determine the hinge location. The hinge helps dictate how and where the tree will fall. Most industry experts will use a simple formula to calculate both the hinge length and thickness. To determine thickness, it is recommended to use 10 percent of the diameter of the tree at D.B.H (diameter at breast height) or 4-1/2 ft. from the ground.

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  - 13 Solid Color Options
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- Residential Aluminum 360 Series
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  - 14 Wood Grain Color Options
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# TAKE DOWN A TREE



*The open face notch enables you to make the back cut at the same height as the lower notch cut. This method allows more control since the hinge will not be broken until the tree is almost to the ground.*

A tree with a 20-in. diameter will have a 2-in. thick hinge. Hinge thickness is reduced for thicker trees and drier wood fiber.

The length is 80 percent of the tree's diameter at D.B.H. So, usually for a 20-in. diameter tree, the hinge length is 16 inches.

Historically, the 45-degree face notch dominated the industry, flat on the bottom and cut at a 45-degree angle downward to create the opening. While this will bring the tree down, there is more risk with the reduced amount of control in placing the tree. The tree can only fall 45-degrees before the notch closes and the hinge breaks.

Today, most people recommend using an open face notch, which is a 70-degree opening. This gives the cutter more control since the hinge will not be broken until the tree is almost to the ground. The open face notch allows the back cut to be made level with the

notch, whereas the 45-degree notch will need a stepped back cut where the cut will be above the apex of the hinge.

To cut the notch, start with the top cut moving downward to the point of the hinge. Many of today's chainsaws will come with felling marks. Similar to the sight on a gun, these lines will help the operator align the cut with the direction the tree will be felled.

Next, make the bottom cut of the notch, being careful not to create a bypass by cutting too far into the tree and over-shooting the top cut (since this will weaken the hinge and reduce control). If you're not sure of the progress while cutting, simply engage the chain brake and visually inspect the cut.

Once the notch is complete, you can perform the back cut. Two choices exist; the conventional back cut, where the cut is made from the back of the tree to the

front where the notch is located, or the bore cut.

The bore-cut method involves plunging the saw directly through the tree and working forward and back to maintain hinge integrity and to create a back strap that helps hold the tree in place until it is time to drop it.

The back cut can be used with either the conventional 45-degree notch or the 70-degree open face notch. When used in conjunction with the conventional 45-deg. notch, this method requires the cut to be above the apex of the notch to create a step. This will create some support for the hinge so not all of the force and weight of the tree is centered on the hinge.

With the wider open face notch, the back cut can be performed at or near the notch line. Opening up the notch affords you more control, since the pressure on the hinge is more evenly dispersed