

HOMEOWNER TIP SHEET



Basic Plumbing - 3 Things You Should Know

By Aaron Stickley, [Plumbing Expert](#)

Before starting a do it yourself (DIY) plumbing project there are some basic plumbing guides and safety guidelines you should know. These three guides can give you a good start towards a successful DIY plumbing project.

1. Where To Shut Off The Water

Whether you are trying to stop a leak or tackling a DIY plumbing project you'll need to start by shutting off the water supply. In most cases there are at least 2 or 3 places to shut off water to a plumbing fixture: behind the toilet or under the sink; if hot water line/leak involved, there is a shutoff valve above the hot water heater; the main shutoff to the house; or at the water meter itself. Know your options.

2. Where To Shut Off The Gas

If you suspect that you have a gas leak the safest thing to do is to turn off the gas right away and investigate later. Depending on where the leak is, natural gas can be turned off at the stove, the water heater or if not sure, go directly to the gas meter. **Note:** A gas leak is a serious safety hazard that should never be ignored. Learn where to shut off gas to your house if you suspect a leak – or better yet call the gas company and they will come out right away to inspect to make sure all is safe.

3. When To Call A Professional

Not all plumbing projects are ideal for the do it yourselfer. Sometimes the best thing you can do is to call a professional plumber. The guidelines below will help you determine when to call a professional plumber.

Many plumbing projects are ideal for the do it yourselfer, especially with all of the tutorials and guides online. There are times, however, when calling a professional plumber is the best option. Even some seemingly easy projects are best handled by a pro. Save yourself some time and trouble by calling a professional for the following types of plumbing projects.

Permits Are Required: Generally [things like bathroom remodels](#), moving existing plumbing, or adding new a new gas line for your BBQ will require a permit. A professional will know [when a permit is required](#) and the process and building codes to make sure the inspections go through.

Main Line Stoppage: Anytime the toilets are backing up into the tubs and showers the problem is most likely the main line. This usually requires special equipment that most homeowners don't typically have. While renting the equipment is possible, it is not advisable unless you have experience using it. A professional will have experience using the equipment and clearing out the main line.

Shower Valve Replacement: This can be complex and time consuming for the inexperienced do-it-yourselfer. An expert can help you pick out the [right valve](#) for your shower. The options are many and it can get confusing very quickly. There is also the possibility of damaging the shower walls in the

process. A professional will know how to change the valve with the least amount of damage (if any) to your walls.

Water Heaters: Depending on this situation it is not recommended to work on your own water heater without experience or proper guidance. There are a lot of things that can go wrong [during a water heater repair](#). An apparently simple adjustment may end up making a leak worse or causing more damage.

Tub Replacement: This type of project is a big job, even for the professional plumber. It may sound straight forward, but it is quite involved and I don't recommend it for even the handiest homeowner.

Even with small projects it can sometimes be worthwhile to call a professional. [Hiring a plumber](#) can sometimes save both time and money. Before you buy tools and invest your time, call around to find out what a pro will charge. Then you'll know just how much you can save yourself.