

MASTERING MAINTENANCE

# Hot Water Heaters

Hot water heaters, when properly maintained, can last for 12 years or more.

Contrary to the seemingly negative old saying, "being in hot water," having plenty of it is actually ideal for today's homeowners--at least when it comes to taking showers, shaving, doing the dishes and washing clothes.

Fortunately, most water heaters suffer few mechanical failures, whether run by electricity, oil or gas. They do, however, succumb to rusting and scaling over time, which limits their efficiency and leads to leaks, that can cause considerable damage.

To check your water heater periodically, look at the base of the unit for any signs of corrosion or leakage. Rusting is usually the first telltale sign of deterioration. If you note signs of heavy rusting or any leakage, say the experts at HouseMaster, leaders in the home inspection industry, then the unit should be checked by a professional to determine if replacement is required.

To learn more about hot water heaters and other areas of home maintenance, visit [www.housemaster.com/homedefects](http://www.housemaster.com/homedefects).



DECORATING TRENDS

# Window Fashions Are Going Hybrid

A growing number of products are being created to respond to the demands of environmentally-conscious consumers, as well as those who like styles that blend the old and the new.

For example, hybrid--a term often used to describe a type of car designed to appeal to consumers concerned about energy savings--is now being used to describe a new type of interior window shutter.

The leader in window fashions--Hunter Douglas--has introduced what's said to be the first-ever hybrid shutter to appeal to trend-conscious consumers of all ages.

Combining the style of finely painted wood with the strength and straightness of advanced materials, the shutters evoke quality at an economical price.

Based on age-old craftsmanship techniques and infused with forward-thinking design, NewStyle™ hybrid shutters boast Truemill™ dovetail construction. Dovetail construction has long been considered by many to be the

best method on the market for joining wood.

The shutters also have a micro-smooth sophisticated satin finish called Finetech™ that simulates the look of a finely painted wood shutter. They are available in various louver sizes--2 1/2 inches, 3 1/2 inches and 4 1/2 inches--to cover small traditional windows as well as large modern ones.

The award-winning, exclusive TruView™ rear tilt operating system, originally created for HeritageÆ hardwood shutters also from Hunter Douglas, is offered on the NewStyle collection as well. With TruView, the operating system is barely visible from the front and blends in perfectly on the back side of the shutter for a sleek, contemporary design and more expansive views.

NewStyle shutters come in a choice of eight frame styles

and more than 250

configuration options, including bay and corner windows, French doors and perfect and imperfect specialty shapes.

What's more, the shutters are available in six colors that follow the latest trends, from Pure White, to the golden yellow Buttercup, to Gentle Taupe. In addition, there is a choice of hinge finishes.

Ideal for those consumers who need a custom product quickly at an economical price, Express NewStyle™ hybrid shutters come in three of the NewStyle colors and three frame types and can accommodate openings as large as 8-foot wide and 8-foot high.

"Inspired design, choices to suit any taste, a price point with



wide appeal--that's NewStyle hybrid shutters in a nutshell," said Jim Klawiter, Business Unit Manager of the Hunter Douglas Custom Shutter Division.

For more information about Hunter Douglas--a sponsor of Habitat for Humanity--or the hybrid shutters, call 1-800-274-2985 or visit the Web site at [www.hunterdouglas.com](http://www.hunterdouglas.com).

New hybrid shutters pictured above blend new technology with traditional style.

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DO IT YOURSELF

# Professional Painters Share Tips And Secrets

If you are planning a home painting project, you have a lot of company.

Experts say painting is now the number-one home-improvement project tackled by Americans. So how do you ensure professional results? "A painter is only as good as the tools he or she uses to complete a project," said professional painting

contractor, Nick Stolarski.

To make things roll along more smoothly, you may want to brush up on equipment and supplies that can make the job easier and provide a more professional result.

- Seal any cracks and gaps around windows and baseboards with a water-based, paintable

caulk, such as PolyseamsealÆ All-Purpose Adhesive Caulk. Water-based sealants are low odor and clean up easily with soap and water, while the fast-drying formula helps minimize preparation time.

- Sand over walls and baseboards to create a smooth surface to ensure paint will adhere effectively and evenly. A durable aluminum oxide, A-weight paper with 100- to 150-grit is suitable for most general-purpose sanding jobs.
- Use painter's-grade masking tape to protect any areas not to be painted. Using a dispenser such as the Duck brand Turbo Masker™ masking-tape dispenser allows for quick, easy and accurate application of painting tapes so you can spend less time taping and increase the efficiency of painting projects.

When covering delicate surfaces such as wallpaper, treated woodwork and drywall, be sure to use a low-tack adhesive masking tape, such as DuckÆ brand Perfect Release PlusÆ Painter's Tape, to ensure that delicate surfaces will not be damaged when removing the tape.

- Protecting floors is necessary on any job. While cloth drops are more expensive, they work best, especially over carpets. There are also plastic drop cloths that feature a pre-taped top edge of professional-grade masking tape to make installation easier and help keep them in place.

- A quality brush makes it easier to apply paint evenly. A one- to two-inch, high-quality, nylon/polyester, angled brush can be used with all coatings, will hold paint better and provide better brush control.

- For most indoor applications, latex interior paints can be useful since they are designed for durability and stain resistance, splatter resistance and easy touch-up.

With the proper products, homeowners can get a head start on achieving a great-looking paint job without professional costs.

To learn more, visit [www.duckproducts.com](http://www.duckproducts.com) and [www.polyseamseal.com](http://www.polyseamseal.com).

Using products, such as painting tapes, can be a great way to ensure quick and accurate results.

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