

Language for ...

home repairs

1 Warmer

- Work in groups. Look at the photo below. In your notebook, write as many objects as you can find in one minute.
- When something in the house needs to be repaired, we often contact a professional. Discuss the question with your classmate:



In which circumstances would you need to contact each of the following professionals?

plumber | electrician | locksmith | painter | handyman or handywoman

- It isn't always necessary to have a professional do a job for you and many people prefer to do some DIY. From the activities below, decide which you would be able to do yourself:

change a lightbulb

hang a picture on the wall

put up a new shelf on the wall

put together new furniture (e.g. a bed, a table)

paint a room

repair a water pipe in your kitchen

install a new radiator or air-conditioning unit

Focus on phrasal verbs

- *to put up (transitive)* to fix a shelf or cupboard onto a wall

- *to put together (transitive)* to make something by joining all its parts

2 Text

- Dennis is a student and lives in a flat near his university. He has just discovered a problem in his kitchen. Read the conversations and mark the sentences True or False.

Conversation 1: Dennis phones the plumber.

Plumber: Hello, Smithfield Plumbing Services. How can I help you?

Dennis: Hi! Well, I've got a **leak** in my kitchen.

Plumber: Is that a water leak, sir? Or do you mean a gas leak?

Dennis: Oh, just a water leak. Every time I turn on the tap, it **floods** the kitchen floor.

Plumber: Right, and can you see where the leak is coming from exactly?

Dennis: Yeah, I think it's coming from the pipe under the sink. But I can't see it properly so I can't be certain.



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Plumber: Right, so a **burst pipe**. Well, I can **send a plumber around** to check if the pipe can be repaired directly or whether you might need to **replace** it. Can you tell me your address, please?

Dennis: Well, first I wanted to ask about the price.

Plumber: A standard **call-out** costs £80. The plumber will check the damage and then they'll give you a **quote** for the rest of the job.

Dennis: Right.

Plumber: I mean, if the pipe just needs a small **patch**, the plumber could do that in the initial call-out with no extra cost. But if you need to replace the pipe, that could come to another £100 or so ...

1. Dennis thinks that he knows the origin of the problem. True False
2. The total cost could be £100. True False

Conversation 2: Dennis can't decide what to do, so he phones his mum.

Mum: It's a bit expensive, isn't it? Surely you could try doing it yourself.

Dennis: Mum, I wouldn't know where to begin!

Mum: Oh, Dennis. I doubt you'd even know how to change a lightbulb! Look, I'll explain. First of all, make sure you turn off the water at **the mains**.

Dennis: The mains? Where's that?

Mum: It's the little blue **lever** just outside the kitchen window. So turn that off.

Dennis: Ok.

Mum: And then you'll need to take out the pipe so that you can see if it has a **crack** in it.

Dennis: But, wouldn't I need tools to do that?

Mum: You haven't even got tools?! Dennis, do me a favour: go to the **hardware shop** and buy yourself a simple **tool kit**.

Dennis: I don't know, mum. This all sounds a bit complicated.

Mum: Nonsense! Go to get the tool kit. I'll have a look on YouTube to find a **video tutorial** for how to take out the pipe. I'll phone you back in an hour.

3. Dennis's mum says to make sure that the tap is turned off. True False
4. Dennis's mum thinks it could be possible for Dennis to repair the pipe. True False

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- b. Look at the conversations again and focus on the eight words/phrases highlighted in grey. For each definition below, write the correct word/phrase.

| Definition | Word/Phrase from conversations |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. the approximate cost of a job, which an expert tells you before he/she begins the job | _____ |
| 2. an amount of liquid or gas that comes out of a hole in something | _____ |
| 3. a line on a surface where something is beginning to break | _____ |
| 4. where a building (home, office, etc.) connects to the supply from the street | _____ |
| 5. a set of tools or equipment for a particular purpose | _____ |
| 6. a long handle that you pull or push to operate a machine or to open/close the flow of water in a pipe | _____ |
| 7. a piece of material that you put over a hole so that the hole is repaired | _____ |
| 8. a visit to your home or office by someone providing a service, for example a plumber or a computer expert | _____ |

- c. Look again at the two conversations. Use the context to help you to define the words/phrases in bold.

to **flood** = _____

a **burst pipe** = _____

to **send** somebody **around** = _____

to **replace** something = _____

a **hardware shop** = _____

a **video tutorial** = _____

- d. Look at a list of the five most common jobs for home repair companies. Complete the definitions below with words from the list. Use the descriptions of the jobs and the words you have already learned to help you.

- 1 Repair curtains or blinds on a window.
- 2 Unblock a sink or a drain.
- 3 Repair a crack on the surface of the wall or ceiling.
- 4 Repair a draught that's coming in from a door or a window.
- 5 Change a fuse in the building's fuse box.

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| Definition | Word from list |
|--|----------------|
| 1. a window cover that you pull down from the top to the bottom (often plural) | _____ |
| 2. to remove something that is stopping the gas/water from moving through a pipe | _____ |
| 3. a pipe or passage that takes away water or waste | _____ |
| 4. the inside surface of a room that is above you | _____ |
| 5. cold air that blows into a room and makes you feel uncomfortable | _____ |
| 6. a part of an electrical system that makes it stop working when there is too much electricity going through it | _____ |
| 7. a box containing the fuses for the electrical system in a building | _____ |

- e. Now speak to your classmate. In your opinion, which of the jobs from the list are the most difficult? Discuss this in pairs and organise the jobs from the easiest to the most difficult.

| Easiest | → | → | → | Most difficult |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Job number = ____ | Job number = ____ | Job number = ____ | Job number = ____ | Job number = ____ |

3 Language in use

- a. Write one word to complete each gap. All the words are from earlier tasks in this lesson.

- I have very long hair. I need to clean the shower regularly to make sure my hair doesn't block the _____.
- There's a smell of gas in our kitchen. We phoned the gas company and they said they would _____ somebody _____ immediately to check it.
- I need some tools to repair the hole in the kitchen wall. I'm sure I can buy them in the _____ shop near my house.
- Oh! There's water coming down from the ceiling! There must be a _____ coming from the bathroom upstairs!
- The builder gave me a _____ of £400 to patch all the cracks in the wall in my kitchen. But in the end, it cost almost £600.
- Jake installed his new washing machine. But when he turned it on, he heard a "pop" noise from the _____ box. He decided it was time to phone the electrician ...

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b. Each sentence below has **one** mistake. Find it and correct it.

1. Oh no! I forgot my key and there's nobody at home this weekend! I need to phone a plumber to open the door for me.
2. Dinah bought a new bed but it came in separate boxes with a lot of pieces. Now she has to take it home and put it up before she can go to sleep!
3. Don't waste water! After you wash your hands, please remember to turn off the sink.
4. My washing machine is broken. But it's the weekend, so the plumber says that it costs an extra £40 for an emergency meeting! Maybe I should wait until Monday.
5. If you smell gas in your house, it's best to turn off the gas at the tap in case there's a leak. Then phone the gas company.
6. This library is so cold! It's a very old building and there's a cold air coming in under the door.

4 Communication

Work in pairs. Decide who is Student A and who is Student B. Now look at the corresponding roleplay cards at the end of this worksheet. Follow the instructions on each card and complete all four short roleplays.

5 Discuss

Discuss the questions with your classmate:

Can you describe a time when a plumber/electrician/locksmith needed to come to your home?

Can you describe a time when you repaired something or did some DIY?

At the moment, is there anything in your house which needs to be repaired?

If you could spend a lot of money on your home, what changes would you make?

A "handy" person is someone who is good at doing or making things with their hands. Are you a handy person? Explain.

When you were a child, were you good at handicrafts (making things, painting, etc.)?

Can you describe a video tutorial which you have watched?

Red Words

cooker* fridge* pipe (noun)** oven** drawer** cupboard** counter** sink (noun)**
 tap (noun)** plumber* painter** hang*** wall*** shelf (noun)** paint (verb)**
 repair (verb)** install** radiator* air conditioning* leak (noun)* flood (verb)** replace***
 quote (noun)* patch (noun)** crack (noun)** tool (noun)** hardware** kit (noun)**
 hole (noun)** drain (noun)* ceiling** draught* fuse (noun)* washing machine* handy*

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Role cards

Task 4: Home Repair Roleplay Cards – Student A

1. Student A: You have a problem in your house

- Your bathroom is flooded.
- Explain what you think the origin of the problem is.
- Try to find out how much it will cost to repair. - Confirm to the home repair company whether you want their services or not.

2. Student A: You work in a home repair company

- Answer the phone in a friendly way.
- Ask the caller to explain the problem (ask questions to get as much detail as possible).
- Explain your prices (today is a Sunday so there's an extra charge for an emergency call-out).

3. Student A: You have a problem in your house

- Your washing machine isn't working.
- Explain what you think the origin of the problem is (it might be a problem with the fuse box).
- Try to find out how much it will cost to repair (last year, a similar problem cost £150).
- Confirm to the home repair company whether you want their services or not.

4. Student A: You work in a home repair company

- Answer the phone in a friendly way.
- Ask the caller to explain the problem (ask questions to get as much detail as possible).
- Explain to the caller that this problem could be dangerous.
- Explain your prices (in reality, you could do the job for about £100, but try to convince the caller to pay more!)

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Role cards

Task 4: Home Repair Roleplay Cards – Student B

1. Student B: You work in a home repair company

- Answer the phone in a friendly way.
- Ask the caller to explain the problem (ask questions to get as much detail as possible).
- Explain your prices (if the caller wants you to come today or tomorrow, there's an extra £50 charge for an emergency call-out).

2. Student B: You have a problem in your house

- The drain in your kitchen sink is completely blocked. You have tried to fix it, but you can't.
- Explain what you think the origin of the problem is.
- Try to find out how much it will cost to repair.
- Confirm to the home repair company whether you want their services or not.

3. Student B: You work in a home repair company

- Answer the phone in a friendly way.
- Ask the caller to explain the problem (ask questions to get as much detail as possible).
- Tell the caller not to touch the fuse box as this could be dangerous.
- Explain your prices (it'll be at least £200).

4. Student B: You have a problem in your house

- There's a big crack in the ceiling of your bedroom.
- Explain what you think the origin of the problem is.
- Try to find out how much it will cost to repair (you expect to pay at least £200)
- Confirm to the home repair company whether you want their services or not.