

Your Possible Home

Building Meaningful, Enduring Family Bonds in the Age of AI


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When to Hire an Expert

A decision guide for the moment you're not sure whether to DIY

Some jobs are worth doing yourself. Some jobs are worth paying someone else to do. The difference isn't always obvious in the moment, especially when you're tired, busy, or stretched thin. This guide gives you a quick way to think it through before you commit one way or the other.

The five questions

Walk through them in order. If any one of them is a clear "hire it out," that's usually your answer.

1. What's the risk if it goes wrong?

- **Low** (the worst-case is a wasted afternoon or a small redo): DIY is fine.
- **Medium** (the worst-case is a few hundred dollars and some frustration): DIY if you have time and curiosity. Hire if not.
- **High** (the worst-case involves safety, water damage, electrical risk, or a major repair): Hire it out.

2. What's the learning curve?

- **Quick** (you can watch a video and get the gist in fifteen minutes): DIY.
- **Moderate** (you'd need to learn over a few weekends): DIY if it's a recurring need. Hire if it's one-time.
- **Steep** (you'd need real training to do it safely or well): Hire it out.

3. How much time will it actually take?

Be honest. Most DIY projects take twice as long as you think. If your time is genuinely scarce right now, that scarcity has a price.

- **Under two hours**: DIY almost always wins.
- **Half a day to a day**: Depends on energy and skill.

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- **Multiple days or weekends:** Hire it out unless you genuinely enjoy the project.

4. What's the emotional cost?

Some jobs drain you. Some jobs energize you. The same task can be either, depending on the person and the season.

- **It would feel like a satisfying project:** DIY.
- **It would feel like one more thing on a long list:** Hire it out, even if you technically could do it.

5. What about long-term maintenance?

If something breaks in three years, who's going to know how to fix it?

- **Something you'll be living with daily and want to understand:** Worth doing, or at least watching closely.
- **Something you want to install once and forget about:** Hire someone good and let them own it.

The shortcut

If three or more of those five answers point to "hire," hire. If three or more point to "DIY," do it yourself. Mixed signals usually mean you're tired, and tired-DIY is the most expensive kind.

A few categories where most families benefit from hiring

- Anything involving electricity beyond changing a light fixture
- Anything involving gas
- Anything involving water lines inside walls
- Roof work
- Tree work near the house
- Major tile or flooring jobs in primary spaces
- Anything where a mistake voids a warranty

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A few where DIY usually wins

- Painting (interior, anyway)
- Basic landscaping and yard work
- Furniture assembly
- Minor plumbing (toilets, faucets, simple drain cleaning)
- Cosmetic fixes (caulking, patching small holes, replacing hardware)
- Small electrical (changing fixtures, replacing outlets, with proper care)

One small reframe

Hiring isn't failing. Some of the most capable people I know hire out the things they could technically do themselves, because they've decided their time and energy belong somewhere else. That's not laziness. That's clarity about what you're building.