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# HOUSE WISE

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*Bad Air Leak!*

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## Making Changes

*By Elizabeth Guinn*

Making green choices when you're building a new home is fairly easy. When the time comes to choose something like the HVAC system, the efficiency options are pretty self explanatory. And when you are under construction, it's easy to make all the right choices when it comes to windows, appliances or hot water heaters.

However, making changes to your existing house to make it more energy efficient is a little trickier. Which changes will help you save money on your energy bills, and which ones will make your house worth more if you decide to sell it? The answer is more difficult because every house is built different and has different challenges to overcome.

We just moved into an existing house and have experienced the same challenges. The first step I recommend (after determining a project budget) is to find the areas where your house is lacking the most. For us, one of the biggest

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## Dan's Desk – Tools for Dad

*By Dan Guinn*

I can't let Father's Day sneak up on you guys without offering my suggestions to alleviate the unwanted additions to the tie collection. I am out there searching for the most amazing tools just for you guys... well maybe there's something in it for me. After all, somebody has to try these things out and make sure they are as fun - I mean useful - as they look!

I love tools that do a lot of different things. Someone in my line of work can end up with an overwhelming number of tools (not that I'm complaining or anything) that do just one

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challenges is going to be warming up a cold, poorly insulated basement. Addressing the overall envelope of a structure is generally the best place to start. The exterior door in our basement is a source of trouble because it doesn't seal well. When the light is right, you can actually see daylight around the door streaming in. Since an air barrier helps insulate and protects the indoor conditioned air, our first choice in addressing this problem was to add a storm door.

There are lots of storm doors out there to choose from. Our favorites are the Pella and Larson. For this application, we decided to go with the Pella for their quality craftsmanship. Everything, from the hinges to the handles, is well made.

The second change that we made was a little more radical. The house came with a set of French doors from the living room onto the back deck. Both of the doors were operational, meaning they both were capable of being opened. French doors are problematic because, when shut, the seal does not seal as well as a standard door with only one moving door. This can be a source of drafty leaks throughout the cooler months.

Not only did the doors leak my precious conditioned air into the great outdoors, but the two large panes of glass without low-E coating also allowed a tremendous amount of heat to enter and warm the bamboo flooring. This may be fine throughout the winter, but with summer fast approaching, that much passive solar energy was not appealing. To solve both problems, Dan pulled out the existing doors, saving it to use on the new shed, and replaced it with a new sliding glass door. The sliding glass door has a much better seal to prevent air leakage, and it has only one door panel of glass operational. The glass also has low-E coating which helps prevent the sun's heat from penetrating it by reflecting the heated rays back to their source while allowing the light rays to penetrate the glass. The best part about the door is that it has blinds between the two panes of glass which can be opened or closed to either allow the sun in or not.

Another great feature about sliding glass doors is that they generally come with a screen door. So now on those warm days, I can postpone turning on the air conditioning just a little longer by opening the glass to both the storm door in the basement and the sliding door at the same time. This allows the cool air to enter through the lower level, cool in the basement, blow up through the stairwell and blow the hotter air out the screen door on the next level. Screen/storm doors are a great way to keep the conditioned air in as well as allow for more ventilation when you need it in the spring and fall.

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Contact Elizabeth and Dan Guinn at [info@danguinnhomes.com](mailto:info@danguinnhomes.com) for the free report, "Top Ten Best Ideas to Reduce Utility Bills and Spend the Savings on What You Really Want!" Just send me an email requesting a copy and I will speed one out to you!



task. Specialized tools are great when you have a specific task in mind. However, for everyday working around the house or out in the yard, you don't want to be lugging around a huge bucket of tools. I find it especially easy to lose track of them. When you're out running around, trying to get a lot of little things accomplished, like those honeydo lists, it's great to have one tool that does a lot. That's why my first recommendation is the Loggerhead Immix.

You can take a look at it at [www.loggerheadtools.com](http://www.loggerheadtools.com). It comes in a couple different sizes that have slightly different tool options. It also offers a great wrench as well as several different bits for the screwdriver. The best part is it fits in a pocket or glove compartment and is great to carry along in a camper for quick fixes. There is a dealer link on the website. I found a dealer in Kilmarnock, Eubank and Son, that carries Loggerhead tools. Check the website for a dealer near you. It will run you about \$75.

The next item is the Tool Bandit. This is good for the Dad that likes woodworking, working on his car, or anything in between. I hate having to go up and down a ladder getting all the tools I need to complete a job. To avoid the up and down trips while I'm working, I wear a big heavy tool belt to hold everything I'm going to need. I'm getting older and sometimes my old back just can't handle the extra weight. Here's a better way to take everything along with you. The Tool Bandit is a small magnetic armband that you strap on. The magnets hold nails, screws, wrenches, pliers, sockets, anything that can stick to the magnet. The magnets are strong and won't let your tools slip off, and they are right there ready and waiting for you. You can find it at [www.toolbandit.com](http://www.toolbandit.com), and this tool can be yours for only \$20!

For my final selection, I'm going with the super affordable retractable knife by RapidTools. If you have been reading my newsletter for any amount of time, you know that I love retractable blades. I buy them in bulk and give them out to people because I can't understand how people can even function without a good retractable blade. I have big ones, little ones, colored ones, but until now, I didn't have one that lit up. Yes, this blade has a small LED light that shines down directly onto the surface that needs to be cut. This thing is great for cutting carpet up against the wall with minimal light, working inside kitchen cabinets, you name it.



The other thing this knife has going for it is its cutting edge. The Rapid Edge knife has a serrated cutting edge which helps it hold its sharpness considerably longer than your plain, old straight blade. Even better, this baby will only put you back about \$8, and is easy to find at TruValue, Ace, or Northern Tool and Equipment. You can't beat this baby for usefulness, so embrace the curves.



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