

DIY Dad



When Mum went away for the weekend, Dad saw it as an opportunity to surprise her... big time! "This weekend, chaps, we are going to convert the box room into an en suite bathroom and fulfil your mother's dearest wish," he announced. I groaned quietly. Rose groaned loudly, but Dad can be unstoppable when he gets a notion in his head, and soon we found ourselves loading trolleys in the hardware superstore.

"A toilet, a sink, a basin, a shower unit, tiles, a lump hammer, copper piping, shower door... we are going to be very busy indeed this weekend, chaps," Dad told us, before slapping me hard on the back. "Shouldn't we hire a plumber?" I dared suggest. "Nonsense!" laughed Dad. "A waste of good money. I've read a book. There is very little I don't know about plumbing and nothing I can't find out!" Rose raised her eyes to heaven.

"It's all hands on deck," he declared as soon as we were home. "Firstly, we remove this dividing wall!" Even I knew that might not be such a good idea. However, Dad was adamant, so Rose and I set to work. Meanwhile, Dad intended re-routing some pipes, whatever that meant.

Knocking down the wall of the box room was heavy, but satisfying, work, and we were enjoying knocking out bricks with the lump hammer. Every now and again, the ceiling would creak, but Dad said it was nothing, so we carried on. He, himself, was busy locating pipes, whistling all the while the theme tune from the film *Titanic*. Things were going great. "To think what a plumber would have cost!" he told us. "And carpenters and builders and tilers. We are saving a small fortune – to say nothing of the job satisfaction you get from doing it yourself!"

The ceiling groaned again, and some plaster fell to the floor. Dad didn't seem to notice – he was too busy explaining the pipes to us. "Now this pipe here is the mains waterpipe. We run that directly into the cistern of the toilet. We just have to cut it here and join it there, and Bob's your uncle!" "Are you quite sure, Dad?" asked Rose anxiously. "Have you no faith in your old man?" he asked her, a little sadly, as he started cutting into the pipe with the hacksaw.

It was a minor detail but an important one – always turn off the water at the mains before cutting the pipe. Dad forgot to do that. Water can gush out very fast from a mains pipe! Rose, who was in the firing line, got soaked. In less than a minute, we were up to our ankles in water, and the tide was rising fast! Did Dad know what to do? "Get the book!" he yelled at me, but before I could take a step, the ceiling of the box room fell down.

So Dad was right after all. Mum was going to be surprised... big time!

A) Q1-8 + Think and Talk Q1-3

Question Time

A

1. What surprise did Dad plan for his wife?
2. What theme song was Dad whistling?
3. List the things that they had in their trolleys.
4. Why did Dad think that he did not need a plumber?
5. What pipe was Dad going to run directly into the cistern of the toilet?
6. What minor detail did Dad forget?
7. What tool did Dad use to cut the mains pipe?
8. What tool did the children use to knock down the dividing wall?

Think and Talk

1. How do you think Mum will react when she returns? Put yourself in her shoes, and talk about what she sees and says on her return.
2. Before Mum returns, Dad and the children try to work out a good explanation for the disaster. What explanation would you give?
3. Do you remember any DIY disasters that have happened to anyone you know? If you do, write about them. If you don't, make up a disaster.
4. Write a short passage entitled "The Surprise".

