

CHILDPROOFING SHOULDN'T BE HARD

by Louie Delaware



Your infant is turning into a toddler and becoming more and more mobile and curious. But you know that sooner or later they are going to go exploring into places they shouldn't. What to do now? Childproof you say, but how do I go about doing it without going crazy?

There are a number of good reference books and information on the web, but unfortunately there is no one book or site that one could consider being the so-called "Bible" for childproofing. There are a very limited number of professional childproofers out there, and many are not easy to find.

The first bit of advice I can give you is to be ever vigilant with what your child is up to. It only takes a quick moment for them to get into trouble. They are faster than you think and are always grabbing things with their hands and putting things in their mouth. Before you know it, they have opened the refrigerator and are dropping glass containers on the floor with bare feet.

The next bit of advice – get down to your child's level. Look around as to all of the things that where can get into mischief or trouble. Electrical outlets, plugs, glass, knives, spices, fireplaces, pet food, trash cans, poisons, caustic materials, swallowing, entrapment and strangulation hazards, tablecloths, countertop appliances, sharp edges or corners, items that may fall or topple onto them, VCR openings, door stop end covers, stairways. The list goes on and on. For a more comprehensive summary of items that you should take into consideration can be found on our web site at www.ColoradoChildproofers.com.

Before setting out to the local home improvement center or hardware store, take a complete inventory of what you will need. How many cabinets, drawers, electrical outlets, etc. will you need to childproof? It makes the job easier if you have everything you need once you start.

The typical tools you will need include:

- Philips & standard screwdrivers (You may need a regular and small size of each of these. Also some people use driver bits that will fit into a power drill to set the screws, as this will make the job go easier),

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- A power drill with an assortment of drill bits, especially smaller ones,
- A means to ensure you don't go all the way through the panel you are drilling into (usually a piece of electrical tape wrapped around the bit at the depth needed to set the screw will help prevent this from happening),
- A vacuum cleaner (for all of those wood shavings you create), and
- A pencil (preferable) or pen for marking where holes are to be drilled

There are many good manufacturers of childproofing goods out there. Plastic latches will work well, we recommend the magnetic type of latches where they can be installed, as the child can't unlock these without the magnetic activation knob. Then again, if the parent leaves the knob available for them to use it, then all bets are off. What to use on higher or taller cabinet doors is up to you. Further, when purchasing latches, there is not a one-latch does it all option. In some homes, we actually end up putting in 4 different types of latches. And then we sometimes run into problems that we can latch a drawer or cabinet at all.

An area where some parents put their child in danger is gates at the top of stairs. The only type of gates we install here are the ones that physically mounted into the wall or the banister. We have heard horror stories of children pushing on the pressure activated gates at the top of the stairs only to have the gate and the child tumble down the stairs. I understand that once you remove the gate when they get older, you will be left with holes on wall and banister. But these are relatively easy to patch in comparison to taking a child to the emergency room because of an injury. Pressure activated gates are perfectly acceptable at the bottom of the stairs as the only thing that will happen to them is falling up the stairs, and you will probably hear them cause the gate to become dislodged.

Tall objects (e.g., book cases, dressers, torch lights, etc.) or heavy objects (e.g., ranges, televisions, etc.) are prone to toppling, especially on to the inquisitive child. Be sure that you tether these items securely into a stud in a wall, or into the floor. There have been many children that have been crushed by these objects, so a little attention to these types of items will help keep your child safe.

The last bit of advice - Childproofing does not mean that your job is done – far from it. Adult supervision coupled with continuous vigilance is the only way to go. As an example, the childproofing items you installed can change or break over time, or the child learns how to defeat these measures. Then there is that situation where an older child (or even an adult) accidentally leaves a cabinet door open with all sorts of harmful objects clearly available to the inquisitive child.

Good luck on your childproofing project. Please call us if you have any questions. We can be reached at (303) 726-6828 or info@ColoradoChildproofers.com, and at our web site www.ColoradoChildproofers.com.