

Home Experts

THE BEST
FOOD PROCESSORS

WINNER
KitchenAid 5KFP1335,
93/100; £250;
johnlewis.com

A great all-rounder that sped through challenges. Sturdy and well built, it has a 3.1-litre bowl, several attachments and a storage box. Great features include an adjustable slicing disc to tailor the cut thickness. Controls are responsive and it has two speeds, as well as the standard pulse button.

RUNNER-UP
Andrew James
AJ001326, 92/100;
£55; andrewjames
worldwide.com

A cheaper processor with brilliant performance. It grated, sliced, chopped, puréed, mixed, kneaded, whisked and blended with little waste. At this price, it's a multitasking marvel, with a 2-litre bowl, a blender and plenty of attachments. It's compact, so won't take up too much of your precious worktop.

goodhousekeeping.co.uk/
institute

READERS'
CLINIC

I DON'T LIKE MY NEW
MATTRESS. WHERE
CAN I BUY A USED
ONE AND GET RID OF
THE UNWANTED ONE?
L Bond, Essex

You may find a good secondhand one for nothing in a local Freecycle group (freecycle.org). You can advertise for a "want" or browse to see what's on offer. I gave away a good mattress that way. Some people even offer to deliver.
Jane, via email

See if a local hostel will take it for you.
Sally Hooker, via Twitter

Future questions

- How do I get a shower screen really clean? I can't get rid of stubborn water marks with cleaning spray.
- I have a grey filing cabinet in my sitting room. How can I make it look homelier?

Send your tips, tricks and questions to homehelp@sunday-times.co.uk. Advice is given without responsibility



HOME HELP

Worried about worktop scratches, or leaving houseplants on their own? Ask our experts

Q I have a few tiny chips on my granite worktops. Is there any way to repair them?
Bharti Shah, via email

A A solid metal pestle fell from a high cupboard onto my quartz worktop, causing a chip. How do I fill this in?
Harjeet Virdee, via email

A The cost of replacing quartz and granite worktops is high. If you have small chips or cracks caused by wear and tear, you can repair these yourself for a minimal cost, but for large areas of damage, it may be best to hire a professional.

If you choose the DIY route, look for a "stone and granite marble worktop repair kit" (E38; tilemaster.co.uk). It contains everything you need to sort out small chips, scratches, pits and pinholes on both granite and quartz. The process involves injecting an epoxy resin into the problem area, curing it with the supplied LED light, then polishing well to get the best finish. There are helpful video tutorials on the website.

If the damage is more considerable, contact a firm such as hometch-uk-ltd.co.uk, which can carry out all kinds of granite and stone repairs, and offers free quotes.

Wayne Perrey and Steph Bron, founders of the DIY Doers Club; thediydoers.com

Q We live in a beautiful period building (which is not listed) that retains the original doors, both in the communal areas and the individual flats. We have been informed by the company that manages the maintenance on our freehold that we have to fit fire doors and seals. We would like to keep our existing doors while conforming to the fire regulations. Can you advise us what to do?
AM, North Yorkshire

A Fire doors save lives – and compartmentalisation has come under renewed scrutiny since the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower. In apartment buildings, leases vary when it comes to determining who is

responsible for each flat's front door: it can be the freeholder or the leaseholder. The current law is outlined in the Building Regulations Approved Document B: Fire Safety, but the recent Dame Hackitt review described this as "not fit for purpose". I expect change to come soon.

A fire-risk assessment of the communal areas in your building should have been carried out by the building manager. This will identify areas of risk, and you can ask the managing agent for a copy. Best practice is to adopt modern fire-safety standards in existing buildings, as described in Approved Document B. Statutory time limits for implementation are unclear, but my advice would be to get the work done as soon as possible.

An important aspect of achieving the safety standards is the specification, quality of materials and workmanship. It is not possible to assess here whether your doors and frames can be upgraded to give the necessary fire and smoke resistance (usually 30 minutes

PROBLEM OF
THE WEEK
I WANT TO LEAVE MY
PARTNER, BUT HE
CAN'T BUY ME OUT

Q My partner and I own a property that we have shared for the past 30 years. It is held as "tenants in common". I wish to leave him, but he doesn't have the funds to pay me my 50% share. Can I force a sale?
MA, via email

A The short answer is yes, usually, I have assumed that you and your partner are not married or in a civil partnership. If you are, the property is likely to be dealt with as part of divorce proceedings.

A joint owner can apply to the court for an order to ensure that the home is sold and to determine what share of the proceeds each owner should receive if this is also in dispute.

You and your partner will each provide evidence. At least one court hearing will be required unless you come to an agreement during the process. The court will consider a number of things: your intentions when the property was purchased; what the home is used for; the welfare of any children who live there; and the circumstances of you and your partner. By far the most common outcome is

a sale, but it will depend on your circumstances. You say you hold the property as tenants in common. This may mean that you and your partner already have an agreement confirming who owns what percentage and how any sale proceeds should be divided. Check the deeds and any other relevant documentation that you have.

In some cases, particularly if there is no written agreement, one person might argue that the percentage should be different, perhaps because of contributions to the original purchase price or to the property subsequently. The key question for the court would be what you and your partner each intended in terms of how the property would be owned.

Finally, the court also has the power to make orders about other matters relating to the home, including who will deal with the sale of the property and who can live there prior to it being sold.

Overall, you can usually force a sale if your partner will not agree. But the proceedings can be lengthy, complicated and expensive. It is worth trying to negotiate or attending mediation to try to reach agreement. It is also essential that you seek specific legal advice at the outset: this could affect how your claim is approached and who pays legal costs.

Jemima Pollock, associate solicitor, Russell-Cooke LLP; russell-cooke.co.uk

Q Our houseplants are mainly from the cactus family. We are going away for four months; nobody can come to water them. How do we keep them alive while we are away?
Anastasia & David, via email

A Irrigation systems that water plants while you are away do exist (Aqua Globes, PlantPal), but none I know of will run for four months. The Claber Oasis system will cover 40 days (£59; garden4less.co.uk), or you could leave them with friends. If not, cacti should be OK for quite some time (months, or years for some species). To reduce water loss, move the plants out of sunlight to cool, shade spots and group them to maintain humidity.

Isabelle Palmer, founder, The Balcony Gardener; thebalconygardener.com

DO YOU NEED HELP FROM
ONE OF OUR EXPERTS?

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Andrew Kafkaris, founding partner, Bruton Street Management; brutonstreet.co.uk