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Household Repairing



Dollar Savers and Stretchers

**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE
EXTENSION SERVICE**

C. Larsen, Director
Brookings, S. D.

Reducing the Cost of Household Repairing

By Mary A. Covert

Extension Specialist in Home Management

"A stitch in time saves nine" is as applicable to household repairs as it is to the tear in Carl's trousers. Broken things are often neglected because of the inconvenience of taking them somewhere to be repaired. Responses to the question "what things about your home need repair" show that there is much furniture, chairs especially, which need repair. Money is saved by the family which does its own household repairing.

Mending Furniture With Glue

Stick glue is more satisfactory than liquid glue for repairing furniture. Only the amount needed at a time should be melted as glue loses strength with re-melting. Break the dry glue into small pieces. Cover with water and let stand over night. Heat in a water bath (to which salt has been added to raise the boiling point) until the glue is clear and ropy. Thin for use with strong vinegar or alcohol.

Scrape away every trace of old glue on the parts before attempting to re-glue. Wash the joint clean. Wipe it dry. Cover all the parts to be joined with hot glue. Press the parts firmly together and bind or clamp fast. Do not depend entirely on glue to hold parts which are under strain. Turn the mended article upside down and drive short brads diagonally from both sides. Sometimes a screw is needed to strengthen the joint. After glueing the parts together decide where the screw should be placed and make a fine gimlet hole deep enough that the screw head can be sunk a quarter of an inch below the surface. Put in the screw. Allow a week in a moderate temperature before removing the clamp or cords. Scrape off the surplus glue. Sand paper the joint and repair the finish.

Bracing Weak Furniture

There are inexpensive devices on the market to strengthen mended breaks, weak corners or joints. They are easily applied with screws.

A weak chair can be made firm by putting a brace under the seat. The brace does not show when the chair is in position. The brace illustrated in Figs. 1, 2 and cover page is the type which is fitted through holes bored in the legs. Another type screws into the legs. Double bracing wires are attached to the corner hooks. Other types use single wires or chains. The form of center piece which draws the bracing wires or chains together also varies with the different types of braces.

To brace a chair with the type illustrated, bore holes diagonally through the legs with gimlet bit and brace, about an inch below the outer edge of the seat. The holes should be far enough below to allow the hooks to be easily screwed on the corner rods of the brace and the ends of the bracing wires to be placed without difficulty over the hooks, but they should not be low enough for the brace to show when the chair is in position. See Fig. 1.

The corner rods are inserted through the holes and the hooks screwed on. (See cover page.) Next the ends of the bracing wires are fastened

over the hooks. The center piece is adjusted over the wires at the center and the wires are drawn taut by screwing up the nut on the center piece. See Fig. 2.



Fig. 1.—Holes are bored diagonally through the legs.

Repairing Wooden Chair Seats

Splintered chair seats do much damage to clothing. Small splinters can be removed by sand papering. Large ones will need to be glued down and the surface smoothed with sand paper and plastic wood. If it is impossible to repair the seat so that the surface is smooth, it should be padded and covered or a removable chair pad used.

Making an Upholstered Chair Pad

Materials needed: Paper for pattern; corrugated cardboard for foundation; soft materials for padding—old or new cotton, shredded burlap, or old rags; sugar sack for under cover; material for top and back outer coverings; cords or tape to tie corners to chair; needle, thread, scissors, and ruler.

1. Cut a paper pattern the exact size and shape of the chair seat. Pin the pattern to the corrugated cardboard and cut the foundation. Cut the under cover 3 inches larger all around than the pattern.

2. Fasten one side of the under cover to the back of the cardboard with the edge of the material extending in $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the edge on the under side. Pad the foundation to the depth of 2 inches. Draw the under cover over the padding tightly and sew securely to the back of the founda-

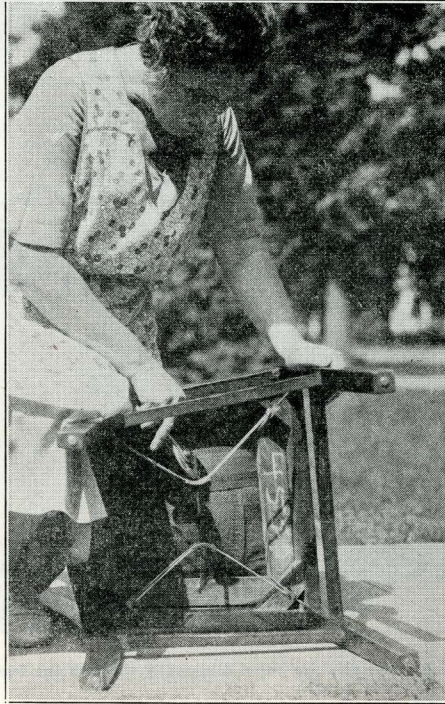


Fig. 2.—The bracing wires are drawn taut.

tion. Sew the padding to the foundation with long stitches (in rows from side to side) until the padding stands about an inch high.

3. Center a design of the outer cover material on the pad. Stretch the material in position and pin to the foundation at the edges. Cut, allowing one inch all around to turn over the edges and fasten. Fasten the outer cover by overcasting the edges to the under cover.

4. Cut the covering for the back the same size as the pattern. Turn edge under $\frac{1}{4}$ inch all around. Center the cover on the back, pin carefully and blind stitch to place. The outer covering may be made in removable slip-on style if preferred. Sew cords or tapes (long enough to tie around chair legs) to the corners. The pad may be tacked securely in place with large-headed upholstery tacks if preferred.

Reseating Chairs

Seats which have worn through may be upholstered using stitched strips of strong old overall material for the foundation. Cotton from old comforts or shredded soft cloth may be used for the stuffing. Suitable old material may be used for the covering. Wooden and fiber seats may be used if preferred. They can be obtained in a number of shapes and sizes. They are cheap and easily fastened to place with large flat or round-headed furniture tacks.

Hand Woven Fiber Seats

Fiber may be secured in a variety of colors in both the round and flat. One pound of 4-32 inch fiber is sufficient for the average size seat. If wider weaves are desired two or three of either the round or flat fibers may be woven as one.

Weaving the Square Seat (Fig. 3a)

Start the weaver at the left hand corner near you leaving three inches of the end free. Bring the weaver over and under the front rail of the seat at (a); over the free end of the weaver and over the left hand rail at (b); then under the rail and across to the opposite corner passing over and under the right hand rail at (c); over the weaver and front rail at (d); then under and across to the opposite corner at the back; over the back rail and under at (e) then over the weaver and right rail at (f); under and across to opposite back corner; over the left rail at (g); under the rail, over the weaver and back rail at (h); bringing weaver under the back rail and across to the starting point (a). The weaver then goes over and under the front rail over the weavers and left rail, etc., repeatedly following the directions until the entire seat is filled.

When completed the end of the weaver is tacked on the under side. At every sixth round, straighten all over-riding weavers and force the weavers tightly together by placing a block on each of the last weavers and tapping them with a small hammer. When the weaving material runs out of the bobbin tighten the weavers and tack the end to the under side of the rail. Refill the bobbin, and tack the end against the end just tacked down and continue.

For good tight results the seat must be packed. This is done from time to time as the work progresses by forcing shredded newspaper or corrugated paper between the top and bottom fibers with a smooth, blunt stick.

The fiber seat must be sized before it is varnished. Soak flake or stick glue in water over night and heat in a double boiler until

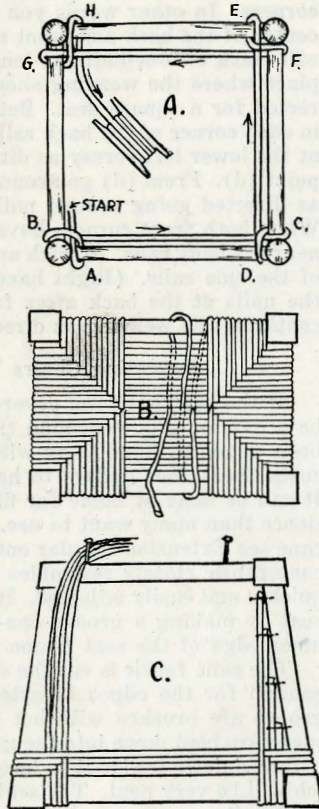


Fig. 3.—Fiber weaving

melted. Do not let it boil. Add hot water if too thick to spread well. Put the glue on the seat, brushing it as little as possible but taking care that the size gets into all crevices. Let dry thoroughly and apply varnish. Natural color fiber may be stained, but it must be dry before the sizing is applied.

Weaving the Rectangular Seat (Fig. 3b)

A rectangular seat is woven as directed for a square seat, until the ends are filled and the center section is reached. The weaver is then brought under the back rail and out between the horizontal weavers half way between the back and front rails. The weaver is then passed over and under the front half of the horizontal weavers and out again at the center. Then over and under the back half of the horizontal weavers and out at the center again. Continue until the center space is completely filled.

Weaving the Irregular Seat (Fig. 3c)

On an irregular seat where the front rail is wider than the back rail it is necessary to fill the two front corners before going around the two back corners. In other words you must square the seat. To do this mark the center of the back and front rails. On each side of the center of the front rail mark off one-half the length of the back rail. These points mark the place where the weaving should begin to go around the back posts as directed for a square seat. Before filling in the front corners, place a nail in each corner of the back rail tight enough not to pull out. Start weaving at the lower left corner as directed for square seat Fig. 3a and proceed to point (d). From (d) go around both nails and back to point (a). Continue as directed going around nails at back until the front corners are filled. When both front corners have been squared (Fig. 3c) cut the weavers off near the back rails. Stretch and fasten each securely in place on under side of the side rails. (Right hand side Fig. 3c.) Trim off the ends. Pull out the nails at the back after fastening the weavers on the other side and continue the weaving as directed for the square seat.

Reseating Chairs With Commercially Woven Cane

If the seat has been covered with commercially woven cane there will be a narrow groove around the inner edge of the frame. If the cane has been woven by hand there will be a row of holes instead of the groove. It costs about four dollars to have a chair reseat with hand woven cane. It can be done at home for fifty cents but it requires more time and patience than many want to use. If interested in reseating with hand woven cane see Extension circular entitled "Cane Weaving." Commercially woven cane fabric closely resembles the hand woven product. It is inexpensive, quickly and easily adjusted. It may be used to replace a worn hand woven seat by making a groove one-fourth inch deep over the holes around the inner edge of the seat frame.

The cane fabric is cut the shape of the opening to be covered and large enough for the edges to extend over into the groove. The sides of the groove are brushed with hot glue. The fabric is placed in position. The edges are bent down into the groove and the spline, a narrow strip of wood, is forced down beside it to keep it in place. With careful work the finished job will be very neat. The seat is dampened on the under side and dried to tighten it.

Repairing Upholstered Furniture

The method of cleaning and repairing upholstered furniture is discussed and illustrated in Extension Circular 301. The repair of surface blemishes and the making of a box cushion are also given. Worn or faded upholstered furniture may be restored to use with slip covers. Directions for making them is given in Extension Circular entitled "Slip Covers, Chair Cushions, and Pads."

Mending China, Pottery and Casts

Save all the pieces of the broken article and store where the edges will keep clean until the repair is made. If the edges become soiled they should be washed clean and allowed to dry. The edges may be sanded lightly if necessary to remove the soil. The worker should know where each piece belongs before the work is begun.

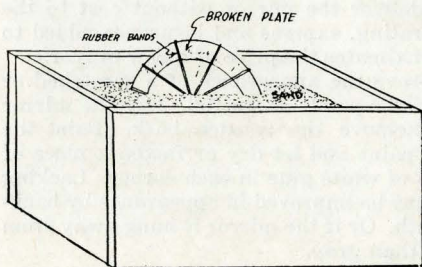


Fig. 4.—A sandbox is useful in mending china.

Small pieces should be cemented together previous to the main repair. A sand box is convenient to hold pieces upright while making the repair leaving both hands free for the work. It is made by putting 8 inches of clean sand in a convenient sized box. (Fig. 4.)

Have at hand the cement, rubber bands, a bowl of warm water, tissue and soft rags. One rag should be reserved for wiping

the fingers. Do not work with sticky fingers. Be accurate. If some part is not true after having been put together, soak until the cement is dissolved, wash the edges and begin over. Warm water will dissolve plaster or whitening cement and turpentine or alcohol will dissolve others.

The most durable cement is pure white lead ground in linseed oil, so thick that it will barely spread smooth with a knife. After drying thoroughly (about three months) it makes a seam which is practically indestructible but the mend is very conspicuous.

A less conspicuous cement is made of beaten egg white and sifted whitening or plaster of Paris. A small amount should be mixed at a time as it hardens quickly. In some cases it is just as satisfactory to brush the edges with beaten egg white and dust well with sifted plaster tied loosely in double mosquito netting. The pieces should be fitted together at once and held in place by rubber bands, (placed lengthwise, crosswise and diagonally) wrapped loosely in tissue paper and buried in a sand box. Care should be taken that the break lies so that the weight of the sand will hold it together. Leave it in the box at least 24 hours. After a week the superfluous plaster may be scraped away.

Sometimes the rubber bands will not hold the pieces true on a stemmed article, a vase or a jug. In this case string six bands of the same size and strength upon a piece of tape. Tie the tape around the neck or base of the article before beginning the gluing. After the parts are joined slip another tape through the bands and tie above the fracture. The bands pulling in unison will hold the break together. The pressure on all mended fractures should be great enough to force out the tiny air bubbles which otherwise reflect light making the seam conspicuous.

Broken casts can be mended with egg and plaster cement. Small missing parts can be built up with a stiff plaster mixture. When dry go over the cast with a mixture of plaster and water about as thick as cream. Badly soiled casts can be improved in appearance by washing in tepid suds followed by a coating of very thin plaster.

Repairing Mirrors

If a mirror is badly blurred, re-silvering is the only remedy. The process consists of precipitating metallic silver in a thin film on the back of the mirror glass by the reduction of some soluble mineral salts. The silver coating is then covered first with varnish and then with paint to protect it.

Re-silvering requires working conditions and materials not available to the average home. The local furniture dealer will tell where one can get the mirror re-silvered and will advise as to whether or not it will pay. As a rule it does not unless one can deliver the mirror without cost to the place of re-silvering. The cost of crating, express and insurance added to the re-silvering charge usually approximates the price of a new mirror.

Sometimes it is possible to improve the appearance of a scratched or worn mirror by using good grade silver paint, or tin foil. Lay the mirror on a flat surface, face down. Remove the wooden back. Paint the scratched or worn spot with silver paint and let dry or fasten a piece of tin foil over the scratch with a drop of white glue in each corner. Lacking both paint and foil, a worn mirror may be improved in appearance by backing the worn spot with dark gray cloth. Or if the mirror is hung away from the light, black cloth will be better than gray.

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