

Hanging things on walls

Moderate · 15–45 min per item · \$

Match the hardware to the weight and the wall. Adhesive strips are fine for light picture frames. Shelves, mirrors and TVs need screws, ideally into a stud. Dressers, bookcases and TVs should be anchored to a stud with a tip-over kit, never just a drywall anchor. Find studs with a stud finder (usually 16 inches apart, often next to outlets), go slowly near wiring, and patch holes with spackle before you move out.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ A tape measure, pencil and level
- ☐ A stud finder (a magnetic one for plaster walls)
- ☐ A drill and bits, or a screwdriver
- ☐ The right hardware: adhesive strips, nails or screws, or a furniture/TV anchoring kit
- ☐ Safety glasses

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **Know what's behind the wall.** Most homes built after the 1960s have drywall over wood studs.
- 2 **Light picture frame: adhesive strips can work.** In Consumer Reports' tests, a picture frame was the only thing worth mounting with strips.
- 3 **Find a stud for anything heavy.** Use a stud finder.
- 4 **Measure and mark.** Use the tape measure and a small level so the item hangs straight.
- 5 **Drill carefully.** Put on safety glasses, because screws, nails and drywall dust can fly.
- 6 **Anchor tall furniture and TVs.** The CPSC's Anchor It! campaign says to anchor all furniture with drawers, doors and shelves.
- 7 **Use the right screws.** Use a wood screw at least 2 inches long into the stud (buy your own if the kit's screws are shorter).
- 8 **Test it.** Tug on the straps to make sure everything is secure.

Watch out Never anchor furniture with a drywall anchor or toggle alone. A picture or mirror pulls straight down. A tipping dresser pulls straight out from the wall, so the best practice is to always attach to a stud. On average, more than 5,000 people in the U.S. are injured each year when dressers or other clothing storage tip over, and nearly three-quarters of them are children.

DAD NOTE Pictures pull down. Dressers pull out. Pull-out jobs go into a stud.

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/tools/hand-tools-and-quick-fixes/hanging-things-on-walls/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: Consumer Reports; U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission; American Academy of Ophthalmology; Electrical Safety Foundation International.