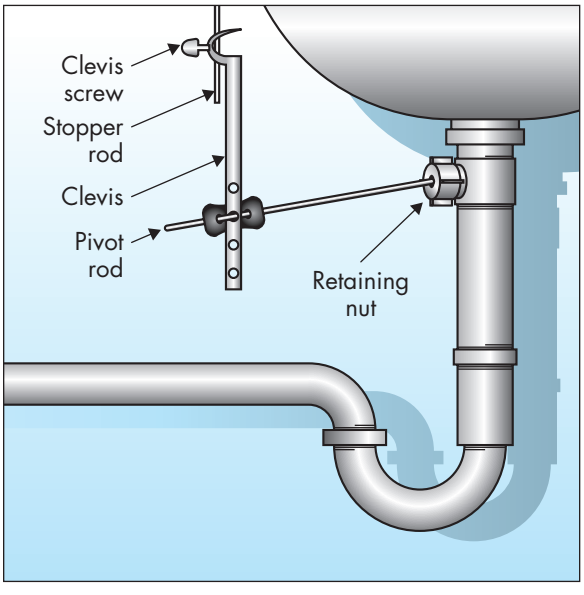
Sinks

Low water pressure? A faucet that jiggles? A dull sink finish? Give your sink all of the rejuvenating little repairs it so desperately needs.

Clean a Pop-up



Very often, all that stands between you and a well-draining sink is a clump of hair tangled around the bottom of your pop-up. It's hard to believe how much hair ends up accumulating there if you don't actually wash your hair in the sink, but trust me, it finds its way down the drain. Whether you're brushing your hair over the sink or rinsing your hands of hair gel, over time, hair strands build up and obstruct water from passing through the pipe.

The hair clog may also inhibit the pop-up from closing properly when you try to fill the sink with water—water slowly drains down because the hair prevents the stopper from creating a tight seal. For this reason, it's a good idea to clean your pop-up regularly to prevent slow drainage.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Tongue-and-groove pliers
Garbage bag
Flashlight**
Old pillow or blanket**
Gloves**

** Optional

CONSIDER THIS

Some pop-ups don't require any disassembly and can be pulled out from the top of the sink. If this is the type you have, simply pull out the pop-up and clean off the hair clog. Remember to have a garbage bag handy to discard the hair and muck. (Be prepared—it ain't pretty.)

PREP WORK

- Working under a sink is always cramped and awkward. To make more room for yourself, remove all your under-the-sink articles. (How do we accumulate so much stuff?)
- Put down an old pillow or blanket to lie on so that you can be more comfortable as you're working.
- Stand a lit flashlight inside the vanity for better visibility.

THE PROJECT

1 Locate the retaining nut under the sink.

2 With pliers, unscrew the retaining nut and pull it back onto the pivot rod. Do not run the water after you've loosened the retaining nut of the pop-up; it will leak from that opening.

3 Pull back the pivot rod until the pivot ball is visible; this will release the stopper.

4 Pull out the stopper from the top of the sink and clean off the hair and muck.

5 Reinsert the clean stopper and push the pivot rod back into its original position. You'll need to catch the hole at the bottom of the stopper with the tip of the pivot rod, which can be a little tricky. Slowly twist the stopper until the hole lines up with the pivot rod. You'll know you've got it when you tug on the stopper and it doesn't come out.

6 Tighten the retaining nut with the pliers.

7 To be sure the pop-up is screwed in properly, close the pop-up, fill the sink with water, release the pop-up, and see if water drips from the retaining nut. If it does, snug down the retaining nut a bit more.

Do you smell foul odors from your drain?

Have you ever noticed that when you first run water, a nasty odor wafts up from the drain? What you're smelling comes from a residue that builds up along the pipe between the drain and the *P-trap* (the U-shaped curve of pipe under the sink). The P-trap holds water that acts as a barrier to prevent sewer gases from backing up into the drain, yet, it can't stop odors from a "bio-film" that grows along the pipe between the P-trap and the sink. To remove this bio-film, simply remove the stopper or strainer and scrub with a disinfectant cleanser. Then scrub down the drain pipe with a bottle brush.

Faucet Aerator Maintenance

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Tongue-and-groove pliers
Masking tape
Old toothbrush
Penetrating oil*
* If applicable

Is the flow at your faucet down to a drizzle? It's probably a clogged aerator. The *aerator* is a small filtering device at the tip of your faucet. It contains a screen (or screens) that serves two functions—filtering out particles and creating a smooth, consistent flow of water.

Over time, the screen can get clogged and cause a reduction in water pressure as it flows out of the faucet. These particles may also cause the spout to sputter. Simply cleaning the screen will get that full flow going again.

CONSIDER THIS

Whenever you take something apart, be sure to remember what order the pieces go in. In this instance, place the aerator parts down one at a time and in order from left to right, as if you're creating an "exploded" view of the aerator and all its parts. Then work from the reverse when putting it back together.

PREP WORK

- Close the drain so that you don't lose any parts of the aerator.
- If the faucet is old or you can see built-up mineral deposits around the aerator, spray the aerator with penetrating oil and let it soak in for about 15 minutes to make the unscrewing easier.
- Wrap the plier jaws with masking tape to prevent damage to the faucet.

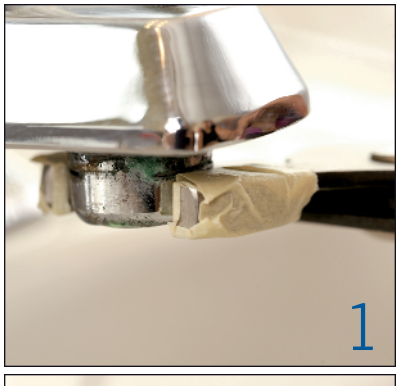
THE PROJECT

1 With the pliers, unscrew the aerator.

2 Brush out the screen. Depending on the aerator, there may be more than one screen with accompanying rings. Carefully pull them apart and brush out the particles. Also brush out any buildup around the outside of the aerator. Soaking it in vinegar may help, but do not let it sit for too long as the vinegar could mar the finish.

3 Run the water without the aerator in place to flush out mineral deposits—you may be surprised at what comes out. (See how the water goes chug-a-lug without the aerator in place?)

4 Reassemble the aerator and screw it back to the faucet. Snug it tight with the pliers.

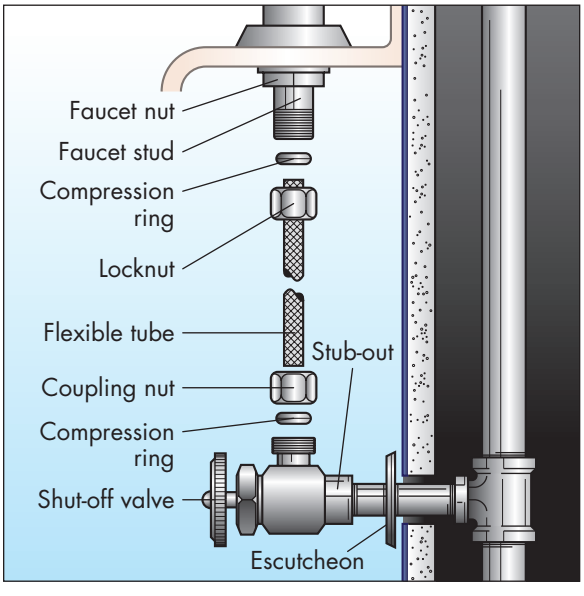

1


2

Restricted-Flow Washing Machine

This same type of aerator clog happens to your washer. If you notice that the water is flowing into your washer with very low pressure, follow the preceding steps, with a few modifications: First, shut off the water to the washer from the shut-off valves. Unscrew the hoses and brush out the screens—you'll be amazed at how much debris has built-up from your water!

Tighten a Loose Faucet



If your faucet is sliding around the top of the sink, here's the fix for you. The nuts of the faucet under the sink have loosened and are no longer securing the faucet snugly to the sink.

CONSIDER THIS

To prevent your faucet from loosening in the future, it's important not to jar or tug on the handles or spout—as when kids use the spout like a grab handle to hoist themselves up high enough to reach the sink. Aggressive wear and tear may lead to a more serious problem that won't be an easy fix.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Basin wrench or tongue-and-groove pliers

Rubber washers*

Penetrating oil*

Flashlight**

Old pillow or blanket**

* If applicable

** Optional

PREP WORK

- Working under a sink is always cramped and awkward. To make more room for yourself, remove all your under-the-sink articles.
- Put down an old pillow or blanket to lie on so that you can be more comfortable as you're working.
- Stand a lit flashlight inside the vanity for better visibility.
- If the nuts seem corroded and unmovable, spray them with penetrating oil and let them soak.

THE PROJECT

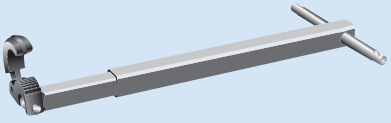
1 Examine the locknuts under your faucet and try to tighten them by hand.

2 If hand-tightening doesn't work, use your pliers or basin wrench to tighten the nuts under the faucet until they're snug. Do not force a plastic nut because you might crack it!

3 If the nuts have bottomed out, add a couple of rubber washers to the nut—this will add more depth to allow the nut to grab against the sink and pull down the faucet. To do so, first shut off the water at the shut-off valves, unscrew the supply lines with tongue-and-groove pliers, and then unscrew the nuts. Now you can add a couple of rubber washers inside the nuts.

4 Screw everything back into place, being careful not to over-tighten a plastic nut.

Basin Wrench



A *basin wrench* is a specialized plumbing tool that I highly recommend owning. It makes easy work of loosening and tightening fittings when there is limited space or access to reach a nut or hose coupling underneath a basin or lavatory. Without one, something as simple as loosening a faucet nut can be next to impossible to accomplish—certainly not without a lot of cursing and sweating!

Resurface a Sink Finish

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Most refinishing kits include several of the items listed below. After choosing your paint or kit, see which items you still need from this list.

Screwdriver
Razor scraper
Plastic scraper
Eye protection
Organic vapor mask
Fan (if there is no window)
Nonlatex gloves
Sponge, rag, and bucket
Sink cleanser (like Ajax)
Porcelain etching solution
220-grit wet/dry sandpaper
Masking tape
Tack cloth
Two-part epoxy paint
Stir stick
Roller tray
4 high-density foam rollers and 1 roller handle (4 inches)
2-inch polyester brush
Plastic bags
Lacquer thinner
Caulk
Caulking gun
Polyester putty (like Bondo; also called filler)
Alkyd-based primer for metal*

* If applicable

Is your sink old and dingy looking? Do you scrub and scrub, but it still seems dirty? If you're ready for a fresh-looking sink, but you aren't ready for the work or cost involved in installing a new one, this project is for you!

Sinks and tubs are actually resurfaced (or *reglazed*) with epoxy paint. Epoxy is most commonly known as a high-performance adhesive. In this application, epoxy adds an extremely durable adhesive property to paint, making it ideal for resurfacing sinks, tubs, and even tiles.

In the past, I would only have recommended that you hire a professional to refinish a sink or tub, but today there are kits on the market for DIYers that are user-friendly and nontoxic.

While I don't recommend resurfacing a kitchen sink or a tub that gets a lot of wear and tear, a bathroom sink gets just the right amount and type of use to keep the finish looking new. Just be sure not to pour nail polish remover down the sink, as it may cause the finish to blister.

CONSIDER THIS

This resurfacing project relates to porcelain and ceramic sinks. Be sure that the product you choose works on your sink's surface.

The resurfacing process is very time sensitive. The area must be allowed to dry for 24 hours before you paint. You'll need to wait several hours between coats. Most products don't cure completely for several days. This means that the sink must be off-limits during this time. Another time issue is work time—rollers can't sit for extended periods, and once paint parts are mixed together, the paint sometimes has to stand for close to an hour before it can be used.

Resurfacing products are temperature and humidity sensitive. Generally, they cannot be used at under 65°F or over 80 percent humidity.

Epoxy paints can be tinted to match your fixtures. Follow the manufacturer's tinting instructions. Otherwise, basic white and almond are readily available.

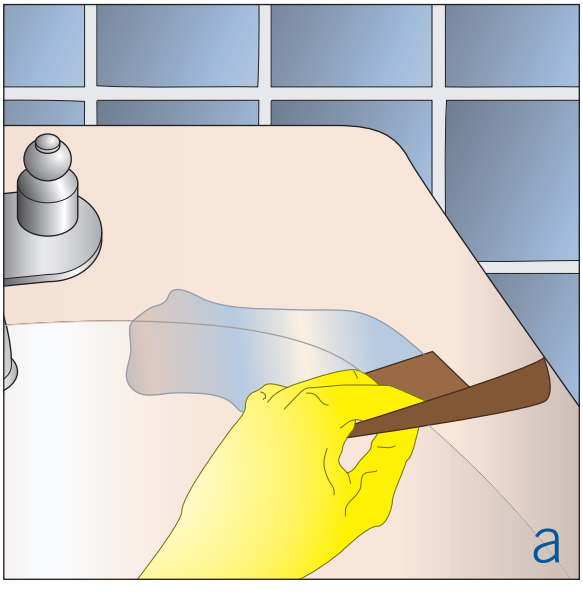
Use only an epoxy paint that is nontoxic and lead free when completely dry.

The products used in this project give off strong fumes, so be prepared to work in a ventilated environment; open a window or bring in a fan if necessary. Above all, strictly follow all the manufacturer's directions and safety precautions.

PREP WORK

Especially with this project, great results rely completely on thorough prep work. You must follow all steps stringently. Don't try to skip or rush through any steps—you'll end up with a poor finish. So have patience!

- Remove all caulking (see the Prep Work section on page 35 in Chapter 3).
- Remove detachable faucet parts (like handles and the stopper). If any exposed metal is worn, coat it with an alkyd primer to protect the finish. (Follow the manufacturer's instructions.) This product must dry completely before you continue.
- Sand any rust spots and scrape away any loose particles.
- Fill any cracks or chips with polyester filler. (Follow the manufacturer's instructions.) This product must dry completely before you continue.
- Wash down the entire surface with cleanser. Rinse thoroughly with water.
- Apply the porcelain etching solution. (Follow the manufacturer's instructions.) Rinse thoroughly with water, twice.
- Sand the sink surface with wet/dry sandpaper. Be sure to keep wetting the sandpaper as you work around the surface (a).
- Rinse completely until no grit is left. From this point forward, do not touch the sink surface with your bare hands—the oils from your skin will impede proper adhesion of the paint.
- Let the entire area dry for at least 24 hours.
- Tape off the edges, the drain, and the faucet with masking tape.



THE PROJECT

1 Wipe down the surface with tack cloth. Remove all the dust and lint—it's crucial to work in a dust-free environment.

2 Mix together the epoxy paint parts. (Follow the manufacturer's instructions.)

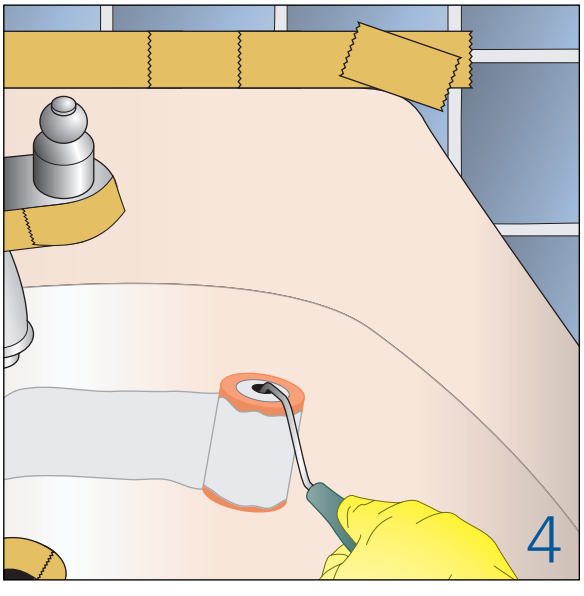
3 Pour about one-third of the mixed epoxy paint into the roller tray. Evenly coat the roller and begin rolling the sink.

4 Coat the entire surface with a thin layer of paint. Paint slowly and gently. To avoid runs, do not overload the roller with paint. Use the brush to get to areas the roller can't reach. Don't try to roll over areas that have begun to dry. It's normal if some of the original surface shows through the first coat.

5 Let dry according to the manufacturer's instructions, and then repeat with a second coat. Start with a fresh roller. You may need to apply a third coat.

6 Allow the sink to dry and cure as indicated. Keep the sink off-limits and dust free during this time.

7 Reapply caulking if needed.



Refinishing Plastic and Fiberglass Surfaces

You can refresh plastic and fiberglass sinks and tub surrounds with a refinishing kit designed especially for these surfaces. This product is typically a water-based formula, which means that it's easier to work with—it has shorter drying times and less fumes, and it cleans up with soap and water.