



EXPERT ADVICE

Picture this: a tool that takes the pain out of hanging art

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[STEVE MAXWELL](#)

SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Hanging pictures, tapestries and wall art isn't as easy as it looks. At least not if you want to hang them precisely on the first try.

By the time you centre the frame on a particular section of wall, then determine the ideal height, you've still got to measure up or down from the edge of the frame to find the spot for the nail. This is the tricky part.

It's more than easy to be off by enough to make the results look shabby. And things get more complex when you want to hang more than one frame side-by-side, all at the same height. It's for reasons like these that a surprising number of people claim incompetence when it comes to hanging pictures.

It's also why Liette Tousignant and Kelly Krake spent 10 years bringing a simple plastic tool called Hang & Level to market. For \$20, it may well be the cheapest relationship counselling you'll ever find at a Home Depot.

Liette and Kelly are a wife-and-husband team who operate Under the Roof Decorating, a Calgary-based company that helps people decorate their walls. Liette found that one of the most time-consuming parts of her work involved hanging art quickly and easily.

"As an interior decorator, my biggest frustration was hanging pictures or any other wall decoration," explains Liette. "Hanging `stuff' in the right place on the first try was definitely a hair-pulling experience. You know how frustrating it is to hang something on your own walls, so just imagine the pressure when you're paid to do it while a homeowner is looking over your shoulder."

The technical challenge of picture hanging has nothing to do with driving the screws or nails that hold things up. It has everything to do with finding the precise location for those nails and screws. Wires and hooks on the back of frames can vary in height quite a bit, even on matching sets of frames. This is where I'm impressed by the way Hang & Level helps. If you've got more than a few items to put up, it's definitely a lifesaver.

The tool includes a trio of hooks that temporarily holds the item you're hanging. Objects less than 10 pounds hang on the single hook; heavier items (up to 20 pounds) on the two side-by-side hooks. Raise or lower the picture as it sits on the Hang & Level until it looks just right, then lift the picture off the tool while it remains motionless against the wall.

Now's the moment when the genius of the Hang & Level becomes apparent. Without moving the tool as it sits on the wall, push in on the hook that the frame was hanging on. This hook is flexible, and the back face includes a metal point that marks the wall. Regardless of the kind of wire or hanger you have on the back of your frame, or its relative position compared with neighbouring frames, the mark is spot-on. It's exactly where you need to drive the anchor to support your picture at the desired height. When you're done, the Hang & Level includes an on-board bubble level that takes the guesswork out of adjusting the frame so it's truly horizontal.

With your wall properly marked, you've got a choice about what you drive into the wall to actually do the job. There are two options worth considering. Nail-and-hook hangers are best for lightweight objects, and metal "picture screws" are ideal for items up around 20 pounds. Simply drive them right into any drywall surface with a slot screwdriver and you're ready to hang. No plastic insert needed. The wedge-shaped threads grip firmly without help, even in the crumbly core of drywall.

Send homebuilding and renovation questions to www.stevemaxwell.ca. Although Steve Maxwell will do his best to answer all queries, letter volume sometimes prevents individual response

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STEVE MAXWELL PHOTOS

Picture screws are the easiest way to support objects up to 20 pounds on drywall. Simply drive one into the wall and you're done.

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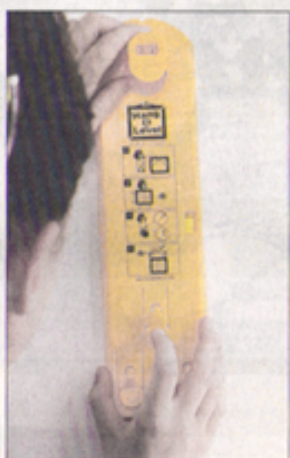
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The Hang & Level tool includes a push-button marker that automatically compensates for varying lengths of hanger wire on the back of frames.

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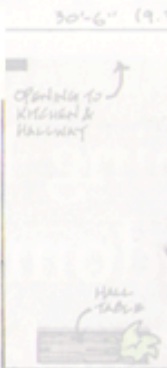
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As it exists, your room has very little space to accommodate any traditional furniture arrangement or, for that matter, any traditional



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furniture.

At just over a mere 1 metres wide, the room has large openings (to the kitchen/hallway and the living/dining area) and windows and, as you front door opens direct space along one of the walls.

Your current arrangement leaves little room for manoeuvring within the space. When dealing with a large sofa, the traffic flow is toward creating a aesthetically pleasing path through the room. There is a main path through the room to the kitchen and the long wall to the side. There are a few ways to deal with this situation like this.

If you really need a dining table, you could consider a round table to save space in the kitchen eating area.

You can do that by giving the room its own personality of its own. A contemporary-style dining chairs could work like this.

This would free up the front door to create a