

Renovation Psychology® Advice for the Home Team Toolbox



*Dear Dr. Debi,
We are about to start our
new bathroom project and
one of us wants to use Pex
plastic water supply lines
and the other wants to use
copper pipe. We are in a
stalemate. What do we do?
Signed, Supply & Demand*

Dear Supply & Demand,

It can be very efficient to use the new materials available for home renovation projects. The Pex lines are very nice in that they are uniform, require less work, and you can skip over the soldering; they also junction through a manifold that can keep a steady balance of pressure on all lines. This is great in an old house that otherwise provides scalding showers when someone flushes the toilet. But on the other hand, the copper pipes are tried and true, and their lifespan in the walls is a known factor. The key to copper success is to practice up on your soldering joints so that you feel confident and can produce uniform seals. Now, although this does not tell you which to do, this is an important vantage point to take when you find your Home Team in a clear disagreement.

What is this vantage point? We just took a view from the balance angle. You can do this too; it is like getting out a balance scale (the kind that acts like a teeter-totter), and placing each method's plusses and minuses on either side. Next, you need to let go of the 'scale' so that it is no longer about you and getting your way. Like coiled kinks in tubing, the knots in the stalemate line will come out when you let go of your grip on this decision. Easier said than done? Right, but with some practice, your Home Team can learn how to step back from such controversies and start to become objective. The strength of this skill will be applied to making even larger decisions in which you forget whose idea it was to start. You will also know you are moving along in this skill when you find yourself saying, "I see," and, "You know, I think you have a good point – lets look at it from that angle."

The point of this process is for your Home Team to learn how to make the best decisions together, decisions that reflect the earnest input and wise

experience from each of its members. Now, about the water supply lines – since there are just two main options, I suggest that you get out some information about each method and place them next to each other. Copper has been around a long time. There should be information about its virtues and skill demands in many DIY books. The Pex water supply systems will have brochures that extol its many advantages and descriptions of the accessories & costs that accompany its use. Then, place a piece of paper beside each pile of information. Fold each paper in half lengthwise and put "+" on one side and "-" on the other. Each of you scan through the materials and fish out your plusses & minuses – jotting them down. Aside from the items I listed already, which you can put on the lists, one of you might add "difficulty making consistent seals," or, "don't have the time or desire to tackle this frustration." Another might write, "seems faster and either of us could do it." For any item, long as the words aren't blaming, it will be ok to add to the list.

This is done on the run, here & there, as you have a chance. The process can take a few days. No hurry, and no emotions either, since it is done casually and without confrontation. Just be sure to use polite words as you make these lists. No insults, just some facts. Be sure to reward yourselves for adding to the lists. As you see this take shape on paper, you can see the development of some wisdom in your Home Team. A balanced view will help you put emotions and pride aside and pick an alternative that will work for your home in the long run. You will be surprised at how the balance will seem to tilt in a particular direction toward a decision.

If the quandary remains even after you have both taken the time to do this, you can then take a highlighter and each of you mark your top three reasons. If that doesn't bring a clear answer yet, you probably have a coin toss or an opportunity to graciously give the gift of deciding to the other. Like the right-of-way while driving, this is an action you can only give away, but never take or keep. This last skill will also add depth to your Home Team's adaptability.

Enjoy this fine at-home training in your Home Team's skill-building and decision making.

Dr. Debi

*Dr. Debi Warner is the Founder of Renovation Psychology® and author of **Putting the Home Team to Work**, available now online at RenovationPsychology.com. Dr. Debi provides advice for greater domestic harmony to folks who are renovating their home – for True Home Improvement. This column is offered for enjoyment and enhancement and is not intended to replace your personal medical care. Dr. Debi has a consultation practice, visiting home sites all over New England from her studio in Littleton, NH at the Tannery Marketplace. Photo by Bob Jenks, St. Johnsbury, Vt.
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