

# Renovation Psychology® Advice for the Home Team Toolbox



*Dear Dr. Debi,  
My partner picks up a new  
tool and just goes to work  
with it. But I study the  
instructions. We won't work  
together because we each  
think the other is dead  
wrong.*

*Who is right? ~ Signed,  
Right & Wrong (I'm right)*

Dear Right & Wrong,

We need to realize that learning has many flavors, and we all have very different brains. Some people have an internal diagram of how things fit together and work, while others need to read words to understand the situation.

This relates to the two sides of the brain. One side (on the Right) of the brain is very good at puzzles, maps, and seeing how things fit together. The other side (on the Left) involves the world of language. People can have different emphasis in their abilities and comfort with each of these brain areas.

So, how does this relate to renovating? Well some folks are naturals at using their Right brains so see their project in their mind, to turn it around inside their head, and to just about carry out the whole project in their mind before they do it. They may do all this thinking just with their mind's eye and never use words the whole time. In fact, some folks who are geniuses at this, may not be able to use words well at all. But, their word ability may never impede their achievement in making wonderful buildings for all of us to enjoy.

The Word-oriented person may have the reverse situation. They may need to hear the story of the situation in order to gain understanding. They are more ready to explain things they are doing and even to describe why they believe what they do. This comfort in the Left-brain abilities makes them more likely to read instructions and to rely upon this for safety and to understand a tool's capabilities.

This is a fascinating aspect of our brains and how they relate to our building projects. It helps us understand why some folks see written directions as useless, but can pick up the important pieces from a diagram instead, while others must read all about it before ever touching the materials. Which kind of brain do you have?

We usually find a good variety of folks at home, and somehow must get ourselves ready for teamwork.

How can you use these diverse players on your Home Team? Probably quite well. If you were getting ready for a baseball season, you would not want 9 catchers. You would look for variety for your team; the same for your Home Team. From what you say, it sounds like you already have a diverse team. That is a great asset. So you just need to adapt your approaches to reflect your Team lineup.

Now, go ahead and read the instructions as you normally would so that you become comfortable, but then ask your partner to spend just a moment with you as you look at the tool together and you talk out loud as you go over the tool. Ask them to demonstrate how it is used, and mention any special bits you learned in the instructions that are not obviously apparent from their demo. Things like a hidden switch lock, and load limits may be very good to mention while you address the tool together.

You will notice that your partner looks at the tool carefully and studies how it will be used. They will try some practice runs and examine where it works as predicted and where it presents surprises. They will experiment and observe results. They will try tricks they learned from other tools, to see if that provides smooth operation. They have a standard approach to safety, and may want you to stand back as they concentrate.

You might not be comfortable, but generations of people have skipped reading the instructions because the written instructions just don't speak to the world of 3 dimensional actions. (Despite endless lawsuits that require instructions to tell us not to put our dog in the microwave.) I am not recommending skipping the instructions, but we all know it happens – a lot.

Your contribution to the Team at that moment may be to join in. Just be polite and positive as you join the players on the field: explore the situation together; kindly offer your small education gleaned from the instructions; and also respectfully give space, listening to the approach of your partner as they explore the tool in their own way.

The strengths of each of your brain-styles will be an asset for your Home Team. So, don't combat them – just ADD them together for a great renovating season!

Enjoy the sides together!

*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](http://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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