

# Don's Home News

Brought to you by: Don Zahnle

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## Five Easy Ways to Cut Energy Costs

Are you looking for easy ways to cut energy costs without the headache, hassle or feeling of deprivation? Following are five ways to dramatically reduce your energy costs without increasing inconvenience.

**Time Out:** One simple solution is to set the thermostat, water heater and other appliances on a timer. Schedule each to power on at least 30 minutes prior to your arrival or use and then automatically power down when done.

**Fan-tastic:** Ceiling fans, room fans and even whole house attic fans are a fantastic way to save money without scrimping. Use an attic fan to eliminate heat from the attic before turning on the air, and then combine with a ceiling fan to reduce thermostat settings.

**Light Up Your Life:** New energy-efficient LED lights are beginning to come down in price. They are cool to the touch and don't heat up the house like standard bulbs, resulting in even more energy efficiency.

**Hang Out More:** Summer fun in the sun makes it easy to save money simply by hanging out. Hang out the laundry to cut energy costs by 10% or more. For those who prefer to cut costs without the chores, just hang out with friends over a great barbecue and keep the house cool.

**Bite Back:** Vampire appliances beware. Consumers are now armed with the means to bite back against constant streams of energy expenditures, thanks to a host of new technology. From basic plug-ins to elaborate breaker-box surge protection and energy-expenditure meters, there is something for every budget.

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## Thinking of Buying a Home? Get My Free Guide

Buying a home is a complex process with many factors to consider.

Make sure you are prepared for the decisions you'll need to make during the process by requesting my free guide, "10 Easy Steps to Buying a Home."

Just call me at 404-939-1309 or email me at

[donzahnle@gmail.com](mailto:donzahnle@gmail.com) and I'll send it right out to you.

## How Porcelain Tile Can Raise the Value of Your Home

Installing quality tile flooring can increase the potential resale value of your home.

Porcelain tile is a great way to add thousands of dollars in value.

Porcelain is a high-quality building material and one of the most versatile and durable tiles on the market.

It makes a terrific selling point, even more so than regular ceramic tile, wood flooring or marble tile.

For a number of years, porcelain tile was mainly available for commercial-type installation.

Today, though, it is fast becoming a popular residential flooring material.

New glazing technology has opened up porcelain to a wider range of applications, including mimicking and replacing costlier and less durable materials such as wood and marble.

With the recent developments in digital printing on porcelain as well, the faux wood and marble look like the real thing without the big price tag.

Porcelain is a highly dense, practically scratch-resistant material. It is even harder than granite tile. And because it outperforms many flooring materials, it will hold up to the test of time. Porcelain absorbs very little moisture, is easy to clean and isn't prone to staining.

Easy installation and a less expensive price tag than the alternatives make it very appealing to homeowners or those who are looking to buy.

# Multivitamins: Do They Really Keep You Healthy?

Millions of people take multivitamin supplements. But are they really worth the extra money? Do they help keep you healthy? And most important, can they be harmful?

## Cost Versus Benefit

Isolated supplements tend to be costly and require a considerable investment of time and energy to ensure they're taken in a coordinated fashion. A multivitamin ensures proper coordination of all nutritional needs in an easy-to-use form.

## Unique Needs

When it comes to multivitamins, one size doesn't fit all, which is one reason that vitamin manufacturers produce different formulas targeting different genders and ages. Variations on

nutritional intake may differ depending upon age and gender.

## Special Situations

There are special situations that may warrant the inclusion of a multivitamin, as things like surgery, chronic illness or digestive problems hinder the ability of the body to absorb nutrition. However, even then it is important to understand what is included in a multivitamin. For example, iron deficiency is a commonly encountered health condition easily resolved by the addition of iron in a daily supplement. But for people with hemochromatosis, or iron overload, iron can worsen an already serious medical disorder. Other vitamins included in a multivitamin may interfere with medications or even cause allergic symptoms.

## The Best on the Web This Month

Following are some useful links from the web that are sure to provide you with some interesting information and ways to entertain yourself:

### Make Money in Your Spare Time Doing Simple Online Tasks

by *Melanie Pinola* for *Lifehacker.com*

It could have been titled "Make Money in Your Pajamas," but perhaps it was too suggestive. The point is that's really what it's about. Blogger Melanie Pinola offers six legitimate suggestions for earning extra money while lazing around.

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/4vd5yyv>

### Get Organized Using Everyday Items

by *contributors to Real Simple online*

We all should be so organized. Just how do contributors like Andrew McCaul and Ellen Silverman think of these things? Confused by a chain full of similar keys? Ellen advises you paint a thick coat of different-colored nail polish on each so you can figure out which is which.

**More:** <http://tinyurl.com/cjln96>

### Forget the Treadmill. Get a Dog

by *Tara Parker-Pope* in *The New York Times*

And you might as well get rid of your human walking partner while you're at it. Studies have proven that not only are dog walkers getting the amount of exercise recommended by experts, but they're fitter than those who walk with human companions. An added bonus: all that stooping and scooping is probably very good for the glutes as well. **More:** <http://tinyurl.com/5ts6w26>

## Quick Quiz

Each month I'll give you a new question.

Just email me at [donzahnle@gmail.com](mailto:donzahnle@gmail.com) for the answer.

What is the most common element found in the universe?

## Why Not Pass Me to a Friend?

If you've enjoyed this newsletter and found its information useful, please pass it to a neighbor, friend or co-worker.

And if you have any comments about it, don't forget to give me a call or send me an email!

## Wondering How Much Your Home Is Worth?

How has the price of your home changed in today's market? How much are other homes in your neighborhood selling for?

If you're wondering what's happening to prices in your area, or you're thinking about selling your house, I'll be able to help.

Just give my office a call for a no-fuss, professional evaluation.

I won't try to push you into listing with me or waste your time.

I'll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value.

And maybe I'll also give you the "inside scoop" on what's happening in the housing market near where you live!

Just email me at [donzahnle@gmail.com](mailto:donzahnle@gmail.com) to set a time to get together.

# Don't Make This Mistake with Your Renovation

So, you're planning a renovation. Congratulations. But while you're checking the Yellow Pages for architects and thinking about digging out the basement, don't forget about your neighbors.

After all, they're the ones you'll be competing with when it comes time to sell.

Look at it this way. If a major renovation will make yours the most expensive house on the block, you may never recoup your costs when you sell.

But if your house is the neighborhood embarrassment and you want to bring it in line with its fellows, then a major renovation is the way to go.

You might want to scope out the

neighborhood before beginning the work.

You should also talk about the kinds of changes happening in the area and visit open houses.

Even better, take the dog for a long walk and check what other people are doing to their houses.

Have recently purchased properties been razed to make way for monster houses?

Are your neighbors making tasteful additions that expand their living space? Follow their lead.

That goes for fixtures as well.

Homeowners are often dismayed to learn that the fixtures, hardwood floors

and soaring ceilings are just too rich for their neighborhood.

When it comes time to sell, you won't recover the cost of granite countertops and maple floors, because the buyers who want this quality won't be looking in your neighborhood.

A wise man once suggested that if you buy a poor house on a good street, you're making a great investment. But if you buy a great house in a poor neighborhood, well, not so much.

Keep the neighbors in mind when you're planning your renovation and you'll make the right decision not only for now, but also for the future.

## Cooking Monthly: Will It Work for You?

Imagine how much time you could save by cooking just once a month.

With today's hectic lifestyle, more people than ever are searching for shortcuts to help them cope with the pace of modern-day life.

But is the trend toward doing less really as desirable as it sounds?

The advantages are clear. It is less time-consuming and less costly. By cooking once a month it's possible to plan an entire month's worth of meals all at once. Buying in bulk, combined with fewer trips to the market, further increases the time saved and can be a major boost to those on a strict diet.

The disadvantages are also clear. You have to buy and prepare a large amount of food. Worse, the inability to shop for sales throughout the month may reduce some of the savings gained by buying in bulk. Perhaps the biggest single obstacle is the sheer boredom of having to stick to a predefined diet.

The choice is yours. If you're interested, though, you can learn more about cooking monthly at <http://tinyurl.com/3hsatk7>.

## Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

**What tips do you have for hiring a moving company?**

You don't want just any moving company, so ask friends who have moved recently for recommendations. Following are some other tips:

- Let your fingers do the walking. Interview two or three moving companies over the phone to get a feel for the company.
- Arrange for each firm to do a walk-through of your home and provide an estimate of the required cost, time, manpower and size of truck.
- Ask about additional costs. Some companies may charge extra for moving large objects or carrying items down several flights of stairs.
- Ask about insurance and how they'll protect special pieces.
- Finally, go with your gut instinct, not the lowest quote.

## New Tool Helps Cut Through Website Junk

Tired of all the blinking ads and extras on today's web pages? Well, there's a simple browser tool that enables you to eliminate web page ads, change the font or type, separate content from design and read happily ever after.

Readability ([www.readability.com](http://www.readability.com)) is a bookmark-based tool that reformats a web page and makes reading the text simple. You can also tailor Readability to suit your own reading comfort level.

The tool is available as a free browser add-on. The \$5 monthly subscription fee offers a great reading platform and saves pages for reading online or offline. The feature also works on all mobile phones.

Some 70% of the subscription fee goes to support content creators. Every time you use Readability to read a particular article, the writer and publisher are compensated.

# NEWS YOU CAN USE

Don  
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**Sudoku instructions:** Complete the 9x9 grid so that each row, each column and each of the nine 3x3 boxes contains the digits 1 through 9. Contact me for the solution!

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## Recipe: Thai Chicken in Lettuce Cups

Serves 4

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 4 shallots, thinly sliced
- 1-inch piece of ginger, finely grated
- 2-3 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, minced in food processor
- 3 tablespoons fish sauce
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- Red pepper flakes to taste, optional
- Iceberg lettuce cups

### Directions

Heat oil in a large skillet and add shallots and ginger until softened and fragrant - about two minutes.

Add chicken to skillet and stir until cooked through, breaking up any clumps that form.

Add remaining ingredients and lower heat.

Simmer for five minutes and remove from heat.

Serve chicken, warm or chilled, in lettuce cups with extra lemon wedges and a hot sauce such as Sriracha.