




Company!

<p>The strain of company interrupts the flow of our work project</p>	<p>I am embarrassed that we did not get everything done</p>		<p>I cant think of company right now!</p>	
		<p>We enjoy the fun, but are itching to get back to work</p>		<p>They just invited everyone over! And the place is a mess!</p>
	<p>My partner is nervous and reminds me of too many things</p>		<p>We don't want the kids to give up birthday parties</p>	
<p>They are rushing around like a chicken with its head cut off</p>			<p>I want the in-Laws to be impressed, but this mess sure won't</p>	

Company!

Company's Coming!! The words ring through the house.

An instant flush of panic, but you will see in amazement how company will react to your projects and your progress. I am always surprised that while I see the flaws, they see the potential. It is so encouraging and shocking because we tend to get short-sighted and lost in lists and sawdust. Do not be afraid to entertain while you are building.

I have come to enjoy guests showing up, especially on short notice, and love the show & tell. We end up having very interesting conversations during the tour, learning about our friends and their dreams and experiences along the way.

There is something about construction that inspires creative thinking, and people will talk about their desires and dreams, which is always fun to share among friends.

As we give our tour, we can also come across aesthetic choices that I like hearing additional opinions about. I can ask visitors about color schemes, proportion, placement, and all sorts of things. Many folks who are not into construction are happy to be “guinea pigs” for traffic-pattern feedback, for example, and are delighted that they have had input in the project. It is fun to find new talents in your friends – and they like it, too.

Where to Start, and how far not to go

Plan A: Putting things away

With any amount of time, use the first moments to organize where you would like things to land in this rush. It is just as easy to put things onto their shelves as cram them into a box, and the first is easier on you next week when you want that tool or material.

Let your organizer plan out the cleanup. Talk with them about your preferences. See if you can enlist extra help (such as the kids). Set reasonable goals and know that you may have some extras that won't go as planned. (See chapter on Schedules.)

In any case, you will probably cram the extra messes away somewhere. Beware that you don't do too much “stuff-&-shut,” or you will have some rooms that become impossible to walk through and overwhelming to tackle later. If you see this starting, switch to Plan B: limiting traffic.

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Plan B: Limiting Traffic

With company on its way, think over the traffic patterns and consider which areas will be off-limits. People expect this on a construction site, and you should use it to preserve the work already in progress. Don't be shy about it. Set up obstacles and plan for "No Guest Traffic" where you want it limited. My mother said the other day that she has not been upstairs in my house for years; it started with a traffic limit but then she didn't ask again to go up there. I was surprised, but we are happy, and the downstairs of the house is looking better and better all the time because I can focus on it without worrying about parts of the house that are not on my list yet.



Remember to keep guests' expectations modest so that you don't read embarrassment into the situation. People DO expect to see building materials and unfinished edges when they visit a construction zone. Actually most people are fascinated by this — in cities, they cut holes in the fence around building sites and many people make regular stops to view the 'dozers and structural work taking place. So, don't go hog-wild cleaning frantically when company comes, and don't undo major staging areas that will take you a lot of time to redo. Just neaten them up and clean up the sawdust.

Early on, my husband had a three-foot stack of Sheetrock in the

dining room and used it as a banquet table! One time, we lined the room with Sheetrock panels and my son's friends painted murals on the off-sides for his birthday party.

Company can motivate you to move along and you may enjoy the results!

If you notice you respond well to the company-coming trick, while you are preparing you will hear family members say, "Hey, we should have company more often, this is great! The house looks great!"

Then you may want to set company goals. Try planning for special company a certain amount of time in advance, to give you a chance to do a particular section of work. Try to be reasonable in your plan, not too

ambitious or too high-stakes. As you get used to this method, you will be able to know how far to stretch yourself.

Oh my! They are on their way!

The Alarm: Just three days till they arrive!

The thought can make you panic, but the reality is that if you have any sort of warning, and your mother raised you with a sense of pride, you will scurry before your guests arrive when you realize what a wreck the place is. This is fine – Really!

Why? You often spend so much time working on structural and functional aspects of the project that you may have difficulty with the finish. Company is a natural antidote that will focus your attention on finish details and cleanup. It is with company on the way that you make extra trips to the dump, finish some trim work, mop floors, put tools away, organize materials — up to a point. (See "Where to Start, and how far NOT to go," below.)

Nature has a way of getting us in line and company is nature's way of nudging us along to the finish. Don't panic when the company alarm rings, but notice its lovely ring as it sings through the project to urge you onward. Forward momentum is grand and we can gain so much by letting the movement profit us.

Even though there may be anxiety in the scurrying, it is positive and so value it for the gift it is.

Have you been saying I'll do it when I get "around to it"?

Well, the inward thrust you feel to do so many things before company arrives is the "round tu-it" you have been requesting for the last 3 months! Perhaps we can call the *Company!* alarm the "Round Tu-it" of home improvement.

Is having company while under construction for you?

If you don't like the pressure-for-company routine, and see it as nerve-racking and not encouraging, then steer away from it.

Instead, have close friends over who are used to the chaos, and if company comes to town, let them get a hotel. Treat them to dinner out and enjoy the finished walls of the restaurant. Let the restaurant folks clean up and you can just relax.



Well, your company is expected today – so what do you do?

Time to go over check lists and do a second run for toddler safety. You see many larger things that 'ought to be done right' yet they are shoved or stacked safely, even if not your way. Time to breathe. You won't, and shouldn't, re-do that pile. Just make a note of how you want to re-prepare it for the next project workday. Breathe again. Ok - so you have a few hours and you are all buttoned down. Now what?

Run the vacuum, but that won't take the whole time. So, use the time for rest, planning, small not-very-dirty jobs, and perspective. Maybe bake something. Engage in regular domestic life and enjoy the pieces of your home that are already functional. Take out samples of material you want some feedback on from your visitors. Play with the kids. Braid their hair. Read a book. You are taking a break today - so do it with an eye for your leisure preferences and be open to spontaneous suggestions from the family and friends who come.



Let your family share itself with others, even the new routines and spaces that are coming about. The interruption to routine will give you a chance to practice and solidify the many gains you are making as a **Home Team**. Have a pow-wow afterward and bring forward the many ways you are happy with how it went. Leave the negatives for private constructive moments that you and your partner use to make your plan for how to continue to improve your team.

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	Safety check list	
check off	<i>Look over the items below as your company comes and make assignments during your Communication and Planning time. Add your own items also to your list.</i>	Person assigned
	Make sure that materials are stacked in stable fashion and that they do not become an enticing danger.	
	Use signage and symbols to indicate danger .	
	Signs can also convey expectations and delineate traffic flow.	
	Cover tempting nuisances so they cannot be seen. Arrange Sheetrock, etc. to obscure the view of dangerous equipment.	
	Cover unattractive accumulations of materials with black plastic, drop cloths, or even decorative fabrics or throws.	
	Keep lights off in rooms where you do not want traffic. Children especially will ignore the unfamiliar dark places.	
	Stack any tools or sharp objects with the thought that someone will run into it. Put heavy things low, and sharp things pointed away or into a buffering bumper.	
	Keep all tools out of the traffic areas, especially if children are coming through.	
	If toddlers are coming, assign someone to the knee-high patrol: Beforehand, they get on their knees, roam around, and see what needs to be picked up or secured.	
	<i>Kids over 6 will love to do this and can also be deputized to oversee the toddler when they come. It is a great exercise in other-centered thinking; and the child's size often makes them successful. They will soak up the appreciation for having mastered a helpful task, and for contributing to the project.</i>	
	Review all of the sign types and signals with the younger visitors when they arrive. Explain that they are welcome but that construction can be dangerous, so, "We have some special rules at our house."	

Notes from Company!

Sorting out company ~

Time to sit at the Communication Table

Hear each other out

Do you both want the company?

Listen to each other's reasons

Give a little space to think about the other's point of view

Sit and Talk again

Time to share compromises

Negotiate if you need to

Steer away from using wild cards or vetoes - they drain a relationship

Well - some time Company may come - so let's get ready!

The Walk-around

Take some paper and walk through the project site

Can things be covered or barriers placed to divert traffic from the work site?

Are there any parts that must be removed or put away?

Think about the people coming - do they have special needs or ages that need special considerations? Older, younger, handicapped?

Get out the Safety list - review it and add items that appear important in your judgment for your situation

Say to each other - "They will understand. We are under construction."

Now, sip some tea, reward yourselves for facing and preparing

And then get into the preparations

Now - Enjoy the company and show off your new project!

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