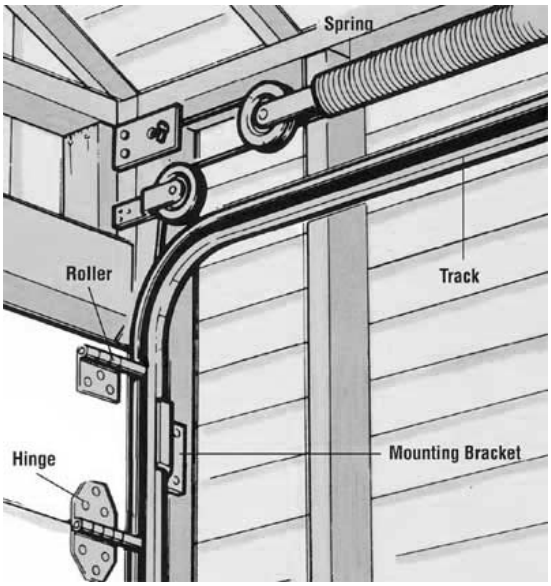
Home Repair Resource center

for do-self or contracted repairs

GARAGE DOOR REPAIR & REPLACEMENT

Over the years, your garage door takes a beating. Not only can the cables and springs break under the repeated stress of moving that heavy weight, the door panels themselves can deteriorate from moisture or suffer impact damage. (We've all seen the effects of a "slight miscalculation," when a car has been backed into a closed garage door.)

Faced with fixing or replacing your garage door, the first thing to consider is the type of damage that has occurred. If the door itself is solid, problems in the hardware that raises and lowers the door can usually be repaired at a relatively low cost. Most homeowners can replace screws that have come out of position and buy a tub of grease and slather it onto balky rollers and tracks. However, replacing the lift cable or connecting the springs are jobs usually best left to professionals – accidental release of a spring under tension can cause serious injury!



If the door itself is damaged, it may not be necessary to replace the entire assembly. Some suppliers will sell single panels. You may not be able to match all the trim details, but you can usually get basic single- or double-car door panels in wood or metal.

On the other hand, if it's time for a whole new door, spend some time considering your options before you select the replacement. The price will be determined by such things as size (single- or double-car), material (usually wood, wood composite, steel or fiberglass), whether or not the door is insulated, and the type of hardware you choose. You will also pay more for certain style details and to have windows included. Most installers will haul away your old door for an additional fee.

In addition to aesthetic considerations, your choice of door material will also determine the amount of maintenance that will be required. **Wood** or **wood composite** doors will need to be painted when first installed and will need regular painting. You will need to protect the bottom edge with a rubber bottom seal to prevent water from damaging the wood. **Steel** or **fiberglass** doors will generally need less maintenance, but are more easily dented. Insulation is also a consideration if you have an attached garage or if you use the garage as a workspace in colder weather. A core of polystyrene foam in the door panels and weather-stripping will keep the space warmer.

One of the most important choices will be the type of lifting spring you choose. Older doors will most likely have **extension springs** – springs attached on either side of the door, that stretch along the track next to each side of the door when the door is closed. The newer choice is to use **torsion springs**, which are usually placed just above the top section of the door and mounted to the header. This type of spring does not expand and contract when the

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door is moved, but instead uses a wound spring that resembles a corkscrew. Advocates of the torsion spring point to increased safety for the homeowner and smoother operation because it better balances the door.

Finally, consider any locks you may desire. If you will be using an electric door opener, you probably won't need a lock on the door for security, but you may want a release mechanism on the front of the door in case of power failure – especially if there is no other access ("man-door") to the garage.

Garage doors have become increasingly important to the "look" of a property, so – whether you are repairing or replacing your door – you will want to make decisions that will give you the best appearance, function and safety.