Sagging doors and loose lids are frequent ailments for new and old furniture alike. Straightening and/or tightening a wayward hinge may not seem like a big deal, but if the problem has been dealt with a few times before (or if someone was heavy handed with a power driver), you might have a bigger project on your hands. But don’t let a few stripped, broken, or loose screws drive you nuts. With a few specialty tools and a little know-how, you can eradicate the problem and make a lasting repair.

When a screw head is too stripped to grip, step up to a screw and bolt remover. To use one, first switch your drill into reverse, and then use the drill end of this little helper to create a starter hole in the fastener. Next, flip the bit and drive its opposite end into the recess you just drilled (Photo A) to twist out the offending metal.

When a fastener has lost its head, a screw extractor can keep you from losing yours. Used with a drill press or a portable power drill and guide block, this hollow, sawtooth-edged tube bores a clean hole around the broken screw without damaging the surrounding surface.

When you need to provide fresh wood for new screws to bite into, don’t settle for matchsticks, golf tees, or commercial dowels. These end grain options don’t provide much long-term holding power. Instead, make your own long-grain plugs at the drill press using a plug cutter (Photo C). To drill a hole to accept the plug, use a standard twist drill instead of a brad point, as the former will self-center in the screw hole. Glue the plug in place, and then trim the ends flush.

To start new screws on the right foot, use a Vix bit to ensure that the pilot holes are perfectly centered on the hinge holes. (Be sure that the bit matches the size of the screw.)

A reverse-threaded bit can bite into the mangled fastener’s head and back it out of its hole.

Use an extractor to cut out fasteners that are too soft or damaged to grab.

Orient the cutter toward the edge of the board. This allows the chips to clear and makes it easier to pop off the plugs.
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