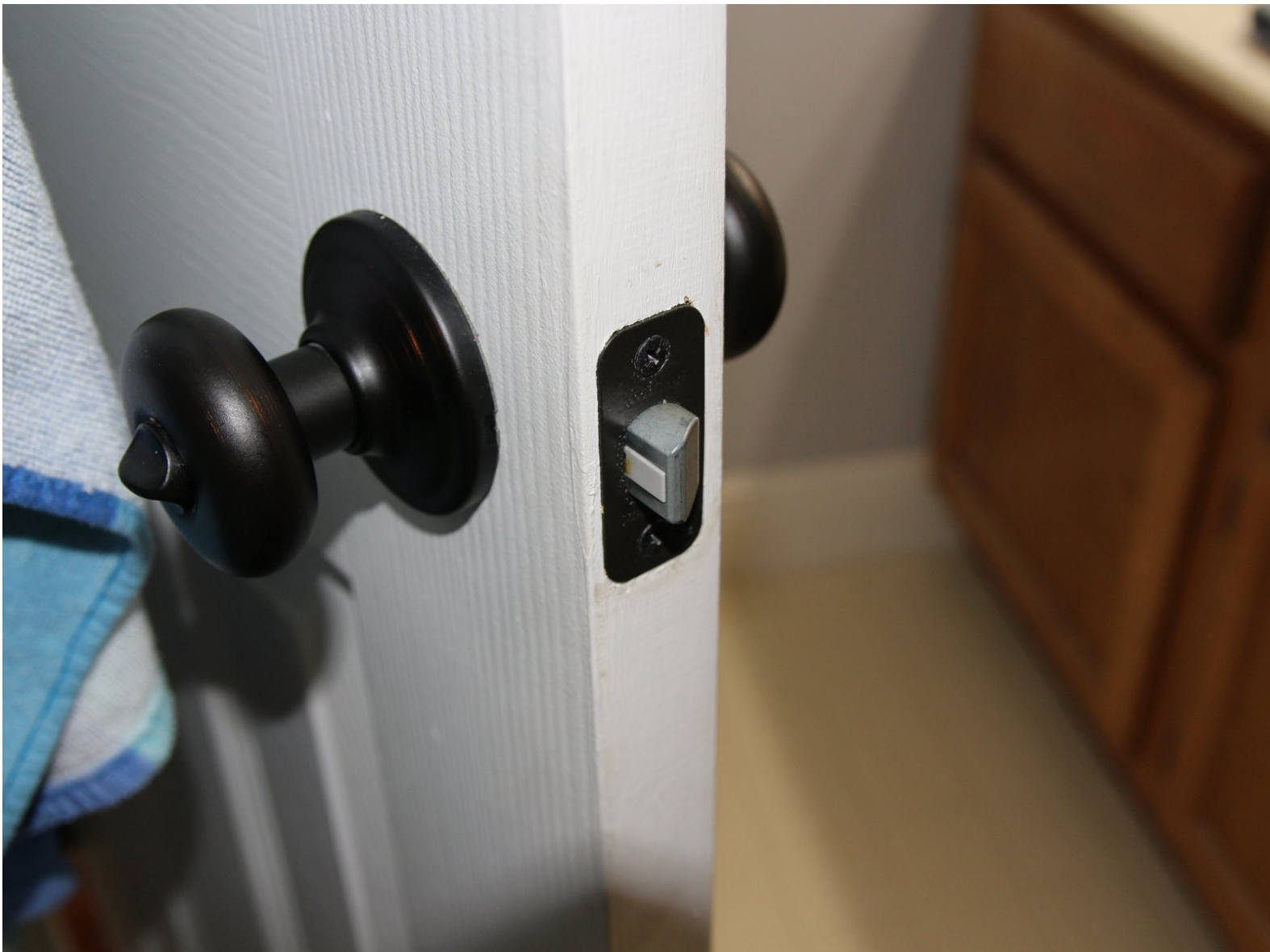




How to fix a door that won't latch

How to repair a door that won't latch because it won't completely engage the striker plate.

Written By: Benjamin Morris



INTRODUCTION

Having a door that won't latch completely can be a great annoyance if it is an interior door (such as a bedroom or bathroom door) and can lead to a lack of privacy. If it's an exterior door it presents the problem of security as well, because if a door doesn't "click" shut it obviously can't be locked. An exterior door that won't latch can also drive up energy costs for heating or cooling due to the weather stripping on the door not being able to form a tight seal with the door.

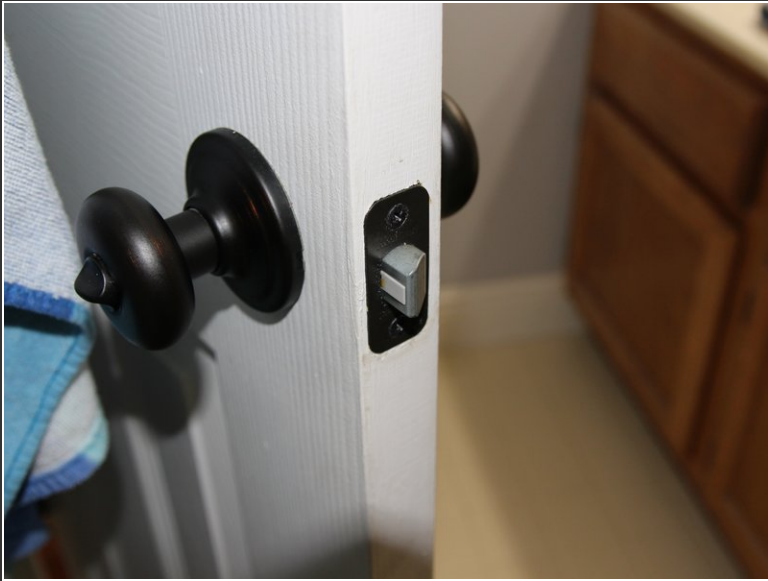
In this guide, you will learn how to fix a door that won't latch in just a few minutes using relatively inexpensive tools.



TOOLS:

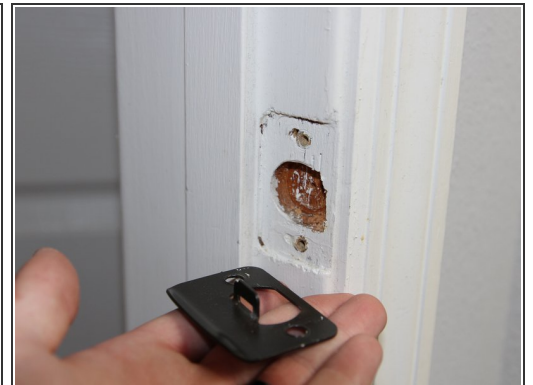
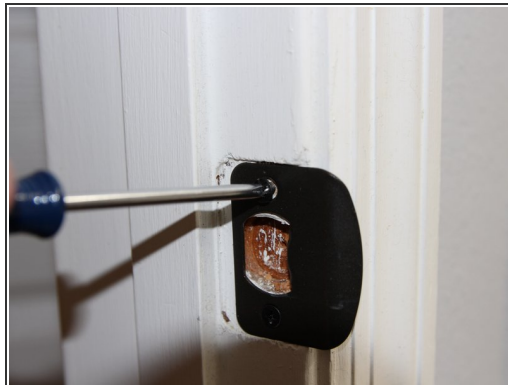
- [Phillips #2 Screwdriver](#) (1)
 - [Chisel](#) (1)
 - [Cordless Drill](#) (1)
 - [Hammer](#) (1)
 - [1 16" or 3 32" Drill bit](#) (1)
-

Step 1 — How to fix a door that won't latch



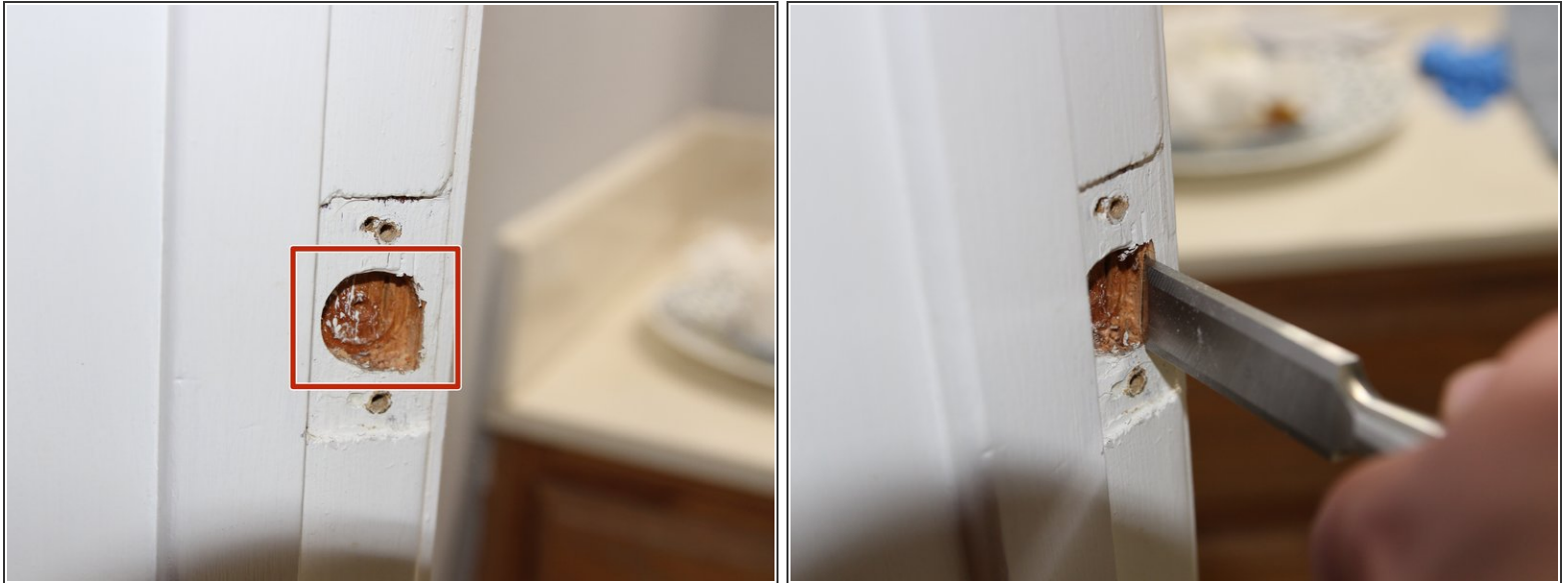
- Identify the door that is having trouble closing.
 - The cause of the problem in this instance is the towel hanger preventing the door from fully latching. However, this fix will help any causes of a door not having sufficient clearance to latch.

Step 2



- Using a Phillips #2 screwdriver, loosen and remove the two screws holding the striker plate in place.
- Remove the striker plate.

Step 3



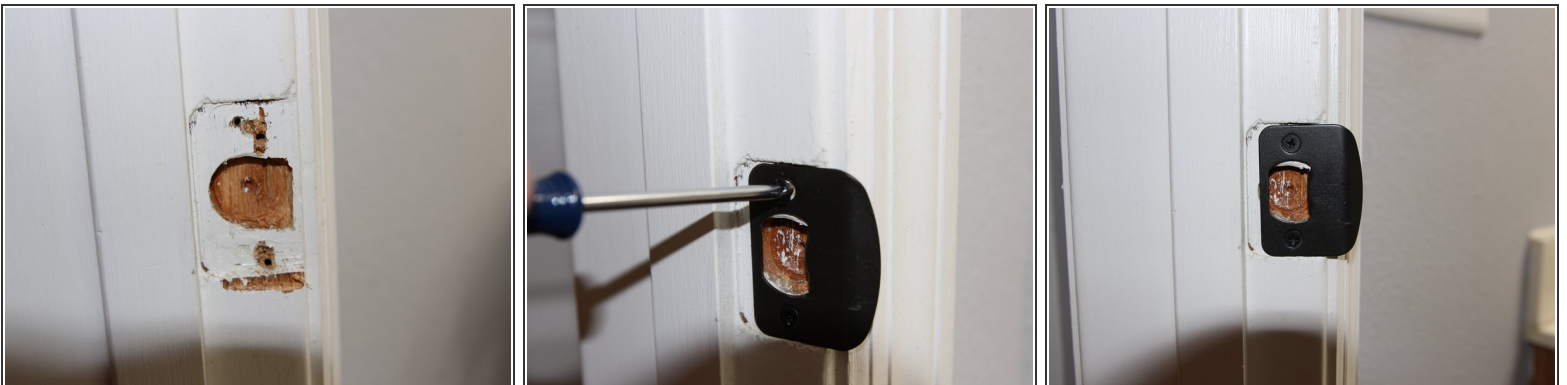
- ⓘ Once the striker plate has been removed, the area where the door latch fits into the door frame (known as the **mortise**) needs to be enlarged.
 - Using the wood chisel, scrape away small parts of the door frame to create enough space for the door to latch.
 - ⓘ Scrape away from the flat side of the mortise, or the edge that would stop the door from moving to an open position.
 - ⓘ You don't want to remove more wood than necessary, so try closing the door periodically to see if there's enough room for the latch to engage.
 - After there's enough room for the door to click shut, make a few more light passes with the chisel, since the striker plate (once it's installed) will occupy some of the space of the mortise.
- ⚠ Wood chisels are very sharp. When using the chisel to enlarge the mortise, be sure to position the chisel so that if it slips it won't injure you or anybody working with you.
- ⓘ If your chisel is dull, you might find it difficult to remove the wood from the door frame. Tapping the back of the chisel gently with a hammer can help make this easier.

Step 4



- Now line the strike plate up so that the the hole is lined up with the expanded mortise and draw a dot inside the two screw holes to mark where you'll be drilling.
- Using a drill bit slightly smaller than the outer diameter of the screw, drill new screw holes in the door frame.
- ⓘ Most door frames are made out of soft pine, which means that the new holes will be very easy to drill. This also means that the surface tends to splinter when you first start drilling the new hole, which can make the new hole look ugly. Don't worry though - this will get covered by the striker plate once it's installed.

Step 5



- Finally, reattach the strike plate using the newly made holes.

Step 6



- Once the striker plate has been reinstalled, shut the door and verify that it latches properly.
- Once the fix has been verified and the door shuts properly, clean up the wood shavings on the floor.

Once the fix has been verified and the door shuts correctly, you're all set! Over time this problem might pop up again if the door hinges continue to sag, and if that continues to happen then the only correct solution is to rehang the door. Failure to do this will eventually lead to a door that scrapes across the floor when it is opened or closed.