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4 smart ideas for decorating your home on a budget



With a bit of imagination and resourcefulness, decorating your home can be affordable and fun.

Most people dream about creating a welcoming, tidy and attractive home. However, creating a magazine-worthy space can be pricey. Fortunately, there are several inexpensive ways to make a stylish residence. Here are four smart ideas.

1. Display your fashion accessories
Use nails, hooks, shelves or pegboard to artistically display your most beautiful, eccentric or elegant accessories like hats, evening bags, stilettos, watches and ties.

2. Create a bold accent wall
Transform the end of a hallway or large wall into a statement piece. For example, you can use a contrasting paint color or apply a uniquely patterned wallpaper. Using recycled paint or liquidation wallpaper is even better.

3. Multiply the plants
Walking into a room full of plants instantly makes you feel good. Fortunately, you can find beautiful, affordable and easy to care for plants at local stores. If your friends have green thumbs, ask them for a few cuttings.

4. Choose used accessories
With some research, you can find one of a kind décor in classified ads, thrift stores, second-hand stores and garage sales. For example, you can pick up mirrors, knick-knacks, frames, lamps and vases in good condition at ridiculously low prices.

— Beautify your HOME —

Interior door handles: how to make the best choice

Investing in a stylish handle can instantly elevate the look of your interior doors. Here's a short guide to help you make the best choice.

Materials
Door handles are typically made of durable metals like steel, aluminum, brass, wrought iron and chrome. You can also find handles made of wood, plastic and porcelain. However, the internal mechanisms are always made of metal.

Types
Here's an overview of the three main types of handles:

- *Lever handles* can either have a lock or no lock. They're activated by raising or lowering the lever. In addition, you can find curved levers that are suitable for people with limited dexterity.
- *Knob handles* are usually round and have a locking mechanism. You can also purchase fixed knob handles that don't need to be rotated or turned to open or close the door.
- *Pull handles* are fixed and can only be locked by purchasing a separate accessory.

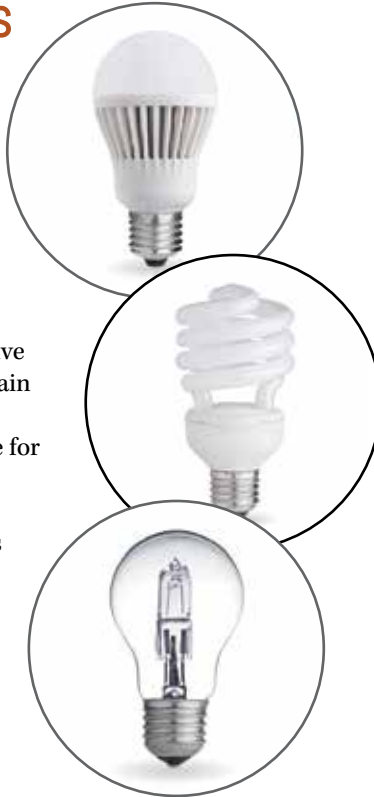


3 types of light bulbs

Lighting is a crucial element of home décor, and it can be challenging to know what type of bulb is best. Here are three types of light bulbs and their uses.

1. Light-emitting diode (LED). LED bulbs are energy efficient. In fact, they consume 75 percent less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs. They give off a bright light, emit no heat and contain no mercury. They can last up to 50,000 hours, making them an excellent choice for hard-to-reach sockets.
2. Compact Fluorescent (CFL). CFL bulbs are almost as energy efficient as LEDs but require time to get bright. They're excellent for illuminating large spaces like garages. They last between 8,000 and 10,000 hours and come in various colors. CFL bulbs contain mercury, so handle them carefully and dispose of them properly.
3. Halogen. These lights emit an intense directional light and are perfect for illuminating under kitchen cabinets and pendant or recessed lighting. You can use halogen bulbs with a dimmer. However, halogen bulbs burn hot, so keep them away from flammable objects. Handle them with gloves because the oil from your fingers can make them explode if they get too hot.

Visit a local home improvement store or lighting center to see their lighting selections.



Trend: outdoor pizza ovens

Does the smell of pizza cooking make your mouth water? You may be interested in an outdoor pizza oven if you enjoy using your barbecue all four seasons. Here's a closer look at this popular cooking appliance.

Available in various sizes, pizza ovens are typically fuelled by wood or propane. You can also purchase hybrid models that use both. You can expect to pay anywhere from \$300 to \$5,000 for a portable or stationary pizza oven. They come in sturdy and attractive materials like stainless steel, copper, and stone.

How to protect it
Pizza ovens are designed for outdoor use. However, protecting yours from ice, snow and sleet is essential. If you have a portable model, store it in an enclosed space like a shed. If you have a stationary oven or one that's very heavy, cover it with a durable waterproof cover. Additionally, promptly remove fallen snow with a brush or broom.

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Tiling: how to choose and apply grout



Find all the materials you need to complete your project at your local home improvement store. If you want flawless results, hire a professional tiler.

Do you have a tiling project in mind? Here's how to choose a suitable grout and correctly apply it.

Choose a grout

Sanded grout is most suitable for installations with grout lines wider than three millimeters. This type of grout is resistant to cracking and shrinkage. However, don't use it if you're laying tiles with a glossy finish, as it could scratch them.

On the other hand, grout without sand is best for narrow grout lines down to 1.5 millimeters. It's also easy to apply to vertical surfaces. If you're tiling a bathroom or kitchen, use a waterproof grout.

Moreover, some grouts are cement-based while others aren't. Cementitious grouts come in powder form, and you must mix them with water. However, epoxy grouts, for example, come ready to use.

Apply the grout

First, protect the area around your tiling project. For example, cover walls and countertops with plastic sheeting. Then, clean the area to prevent dust and dirt from sticking to the grout.

If you're using cementitious grout, start by mixing it. Next, wet the tiles and apply the grout from the bottom up in small sections. Tilt the applicator to distribute the grout evenly and fill in the joints.

Remove excess grout and wait about 20 minutes before cleaning the tiles and smoothing the grout with a damp sponge. Scrub as little as possible and rinse your sponge regularly. Wipe down the tile one last time once the grout has thoroughly dried. Then, apply a sealant.

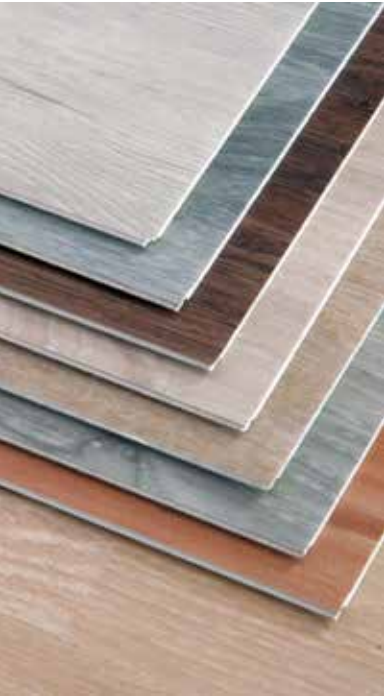
The benefits of vinyl flooring

Are you renovating your home or building a new abode? When it comes to flooring, keep in mind the undeniable advantages of vinyl.

Multiple qualities

This versatile material has been gaining popularity in the world of interior design. Modern vinyl flooring has the following benefits.

- It's cost-effective compared to other floor coverings
- It's easy to maintain
- It's scratch and scuff resistant, making it suitable for high-traffic areas
- It's waterproof, making it practical for bathrooms and kitchens
- It can be made to look like natural stone and wood
- It's warmer underfoot than other types of flooring materials like tile
- It's available in several formats, including rolls, tiles and strips



Visit a flooring retailer near you to discover the versatility of vinyl flooring.

How to maintain wood flooring

Here are a few tips for caring for your wood flooring to keep it looking its best for years to come.

- Regularly dust with a microfiber cloth or soft broom instead of a vacuum cleaner. The aggressive brushes and wheels can damage the wood.
- Avoid using citrus, oil, vinegar and wax-based cleaning products. These substances can degrade the finish.
- Use products specifically designed for wood floors. These products keep the floor shiny without making it slippery.

• Promptly clean up spills. Standing liquids can cause your wood flooring to buckle and fade. High humidity levels can do the same.

• Use liquid repair products for stains and scratches. Make sure you strictly follow the application instructions.

Has your wood flooring seen better days, but you want to refinish it rather than replace it? Contact a professional to make it look great again.

2023 trend: arches



Keep an eye out for arches when planning home design and decorating projects for 2023. Their smooth lines, evocative of eastern ideals of space organization, promote inner balance and elevate your mood. Here are some ways to incorporate arches into your space.

Large scale remodel

If you're planning a major renovation, consider including arches in the structure of your home. Turn boring thresholds into elegant arched entryways or install half-moon windows.

For added drama, install curved wooden ceiling beams.

Small design features

Update the focal points in your rooms. For example, give your fire-place mantle a new look with an arch-shaped art piece. You could also create a curved headboard with backlighting to evoke the feeling of a romantic sunset.

Little touches

You don't have to invest in an extensive remodel to bring arches into your décor. Use curved moulding to create a DIY wall feature. Explore yard sales and second-hand shops for vintage mirrors and furniture with arch details. You could also experiment with an eye-catching paint color by adding a geometric arch shape on an accent wall.

Talk to a design adviser at your local home improvement store for more ideas.



5 ways to add a tropical twist to your décor



Does the cold winter make you dream of a sunny getaway? These five decorating tips will make you want to throw on a bathing suit, sandals and sarong despite the sub-zero temperatures.

1. Choose evocative materials and textiles. Transport yourself to a picturesque fishing town on the coast by decorating your space with furniture and rugs made of materials like rattan, driftwood, linen and bamboo.

2. Dress your walls and windows in summer colors. Purchase artwork and window coverings in tropical colors like pure white, azure blue, bright yellow, fuchsia pink, emerald green and turquoise.

3. Use outdoor furniture in your home. Turn your home into a beach-side resort with outdoor lounge chairs, picnic tables and hammocks. You can also use your prettiest beach towels as throws.

4. Accessorize your space. Utilize ocean-inspired accent pieces like buoys, fins, surfboards, anchors, lobster cages and seashells to create a vacation-like atmosphere.

5. Arrange a variety of plants. Create a beachy vibe with natural or artificial tropical plants and flowers like palms, cacti and hibiscus. Arrange a basket of exotic fruits as a centerpiece. Visit your local stores to find summer vacation décor.



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Comfort food

Classic recipes
to cook, share
and enjoy



Cinnamon buns

For brunch, dessert or simply to treat yourself, there's never a bad time to indulge in a cinnamon bun. All the better if they're homemade!

Start to finish: 3 hours (30 minutes active) • **Servings:** 12



INGREDIENTS

Buns

- 2-3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 packet instant yeast (or 2-1/4 teaspoons)
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1/4 cup water
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 egg

Filling

- 2/3 cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, room temperature

Icing

- 1 cup icing sugar
- 2 tablespoons whole milk
- 1/2 tablespoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, mix the flour, sugar, salt and yeast. Set aside.
2. In a heat-resistant bowl, mix the milk, water and butter. Using a water bath, double boiler or microwave, heat the mixture until the butter melts and the ingredients are incorporated. Pour over the dry ingredients, then add the egg. Mix with a whisk or an electric beater until the batter has a smooth texture.
3. On a lightly floured surface, knead the dough for about 3 minutes. Place it in a clean, greased bowl, and cover it with a damp cloth. Let sit for about 30 minutes.
4. In the meantime, mix the brown sugar and cinnamon in a small bowl. Set aside.
5. After the 30 minutes are up, place the dough on a flat surface and roll it out into a rectangle (about 8 by 14 inches). Using a rubber spatula, spread the butter evenly over the dough, leaving 1 centimeter uncovered around the edge. Use your fin-

gers to sprinkle the buttered dough with the filling mixture.

6. Roll up the dough to create a tube. Use a knife to cut 12 even rounds. Place each round face up in a greased cake pan. Cover the pan with plastic wrap, and let sit for about 90 minutes.

7. In the meantime, preheat the oven to 375 F. In a bowl, add the icing sugar then mix in the milk 1 tablespoon at a time. Once the icing is smooth and creamy, add the vanilla extract and mix well. Set aside.

8. After the 90 minutes are up, the buns should have doubled in size. Bake them in the oven for about 25 minutes, or until the edges are golden brown. Let the buns cool completely, then ice them using a spoon or piping bag.

Minestrone soup

This hearty soup is classic comfort food. Feel free to eat it from a bowl, drink it from a cup or sip it from a Thermos if you're on the go.

Start to finish: 40 minutes (20 minutes active) • **Servings:** 6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 celery sticks, diced
- 1 small turnip, diced
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 can diced tomatoes (28 ounces)
- 1 can green beans (14 ounces)
- 1 zucchini, diced
- 1 teaspoon basil
- 1 teaspoon parsley
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- A few fresh basil leaves

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large pot, pour the oil and melt the butter over medium-high heat. Add the onion, carrots, celery and turnip, and cook for about 5 minutes. Add the garlic, and cook for another minute. Salt and pepper to taste.
2. Pour in the broth and tomatoes, then bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and let simmer for about 15 minutes or until the carrots are tender.
3. Add the green beans, zucchini, dried herbs and Parmesan cheese. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes. Add seasoning as needed.
4. Garnish with fresh basil to serve.



Creamy veal stew

On a cold day when you're running low on energy and have no idea what to make for supper, turn to this creamy veal stew. This flavorful dish is sure to take the chill off.

Start to finish:

1 hour 45 minutes (20 minutes active)

Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds veal shoulder, cubed
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, minced
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 3 cups chicken broth
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tray white mushrooms (8 ounces), quartered
- 3 carrots, peeled and cut into rounds

DIRECTIONS

1. Lightly flour all sides of the veal cubes. In a large pot, melt the butter, then sear the veal cubes for about 1 minute to evenly brown them. Remove the meat and set aside.
2. In the same pot, cook the onion and garlic until the onion is translucent. Deglaze with white wine. Add the thyme and rosemary. Lower the heat and let simmer until the wine is reduced by half.
3. Return the meat to the pot, then pour in the broth. Salt and pepper to taste. Cover and let simmer over low heat for about an hour.
4. Mix the cornstarch and cream, then pour into the pot. Add the vegetables, and adjust seasoning as needed. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook uncovered for about 25 minutes or until the meat and vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally.



Slow-cooked vegetarian curry

One of the best parts about using a slow cooker is the tantalizing aroma that fills your home as food simmers. Sit back and let the anticipation build — this mouthwatering dish is well worth the wait.

Start to finish: 4 hours 20 minutes (20 minutes active)

Servings: 8

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons ginger, grated
- 2 tablespoons ground coriander
- 2 teaspoons ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon yellow curry powder
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 cans chickpeas (19 ounces), rinsed and drained
- 1 butternut squash, peeled, seeded and diced
- 1 can coconut milk
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- Juice of 1 lemon
- A few fresh mint leaves

DIRECTIONS

1. In a pan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion, and cook until it's translucent. Add the garlic and spices, then cook for another 2 minutes. Salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.
2. In a slow cooker, add the chickpeas, squash, coconut milk, broth and the onion mixture. Mix carefully.
3. Set the slow cooker to low heat for 4 hours. Add the lemon juice, and adjust seasoning as needed.
4. Serve alone or with rice, and garnish with fresh mint.



Classic vichyssoise

If you've yet to try vichyssoise, know that you've been deprived from an essential culinary experience for far too long. With its creamy texture and rich flavor, every spoonful of this soup tastes like heaven.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 3 leeks (white and pale green parts only), chopped
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 3 large potatoes, peeled and diced
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup heavy cream

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large pot, pour the oil and melt the butter over medium-high heat. Add the leeks and cook until they're translucent. Salt and pepper to taste. Add the potatoes. Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring constantly.
2. Pour in the broth and bring the mixture to a boil. Lower the heat and let simmer for about 20 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender.
3. Using a hand blender, purée the soup until it has a smooth texture. Add the cream and mix well. Add seasoning as needed.

Start to finish:
35 minutes (15 minutes active)
Servings: 6



This delicious creamy soup is traditionally served cold, so be sure to save yourself a few bowls worth for the next power outage.

Gnocchi with tomato sauce

When it comes to Italian cuisine, there's no shortage of dishes to warm your belly and lift your spirits on a dreary day. These pillowy gnocchi are no exception.

Start to finish: 2 hours 30 minutes (1 hour 30 minutes active) • **Servings:** 6

INGREDIENTS

Gnocchi

- 4 russet potatoes, washed but not peeled
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 egg, lightly beaten

Garnish

- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese
- A few fresh basil leaves

Sauce

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 can San Marzano tomatoes (28 ounces)
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 4 sprigs Italian parsley
- 4 sprigs fresh oregano
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 4 sprigs fresh basil
- 1 onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- Salt and pepper, to taste



DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Poke potatoes several times with a fork. Bake directly on the rack for an hour.
2. In the meantime, pour the oil into a deep pan and heat over medium-high heat. Add the fresh herbs to the pan, and fry lightly for about 5 minutes. Remove the herbs and discard them. Lower the heat. Add the onions and cook without browning. Add the garlic, and cook for another minute. Salt and pepper to taste. Add the tomatoes and red pepper flakes. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and let simmer for about 45 minutes.
3. Remove the potatoes from the oven and peel them immediately (wear oven mitts to avoid burning yourself). Place the potatoes in a large bowl and purée with a potato masher. Sprinkle with salt and let cool to room temperature.
4. Add the flour and egg to the bowl. Mix with your hands until the dough has a smooth texture, but don't overwork it. Place the dough on a floured work surface and divide it into 6 equal pieces. Use your hands to roll out each piece into a long rope (about half an inch thick). Use a knife to cut the ropes into half-inch pieces.
5. Pour the cream into the sauce and mix well. Use a wooden spoon to break up any remaining chunks of tomato. Add seasoning as needed.
6. Cook the gnocchi in two batches in a large pot of salted water. Once they float to the surface, wait another 2 minutes before removing the gnocchi from the water and placing them in the sauce.
7. Mix the gnocchi and sauce well, then pour into a baking dish. Sprinkle the mixture with Parmesan cheese and set the oven to broil until the cheese is golden brown. Garnish with fresh basil.

— Beautify your HOME —

5 ideas for a themed home bar

Are you thinking of setting up an at-home bar? Here are some themes to inspire you.

1. A tiki bar with palm trees and shells
2. A western bar with horseshoes and cow skulls
3. A sports bar with a giant flatscreen and team jerseys on display
4. An Irish bar with shamrocks and vintage metal plates
5. A roaring twenties bar with crystal chandeliers and feathers



Contact a general contractor or interior designer in your area to help you create the bar of your dreams.



3 man cave ideas

A man cave is a place to escape the stresses of the day. You can turn an unfinished basement, attic or underutilized garage space into a place where you can indulge in hobbies or spend time with friends. Here are some ideas for your man cave.

1. Gamers

Whether you love poker, role-playing games or chess, make a games table the hub of your man cave. Add a foosball table for variety. If you're a video-game fanatic, invest in a big-screen television, ergonomic gaming chair and headphones.

2. Beer lovers

Build a bar to serve your friends the latest craft beers. Kegerators allow you to serve cold draft beer on tap. Add stools and neon beer signs for a pub-like atmosphere.

3. Sports fans

Watch the big game with your buddies in a sports-themed man cave decorated with hockey, baseball and football memorabilia. Choose paint colors that match your favourite team.

No matter your theme, every man cave should have a beer fridge, good speakers and a comfy chair or couch.

3 decorating tips for styling a room without windows

Whether you have a guest room, powder room or interior bathroom without a window, here are a few decorating tips to make it feel bright and inviting.

1. Paint the room a light color. Painting the walls and ceiling white, grey or beige can help add airiness to a dark room.
2. Hang a mirror. Windowless rooms can often feel small and cramped. Adding a large mirror or wall of mirrors deceives the eye into thinking the room is larger than it is and helps reflect light throughout the space.
3. Install plenty of lights. It's essential to install layered lighting in a windowless room. For example, you can combine overhead fixtures with lamps and accent lights. Placing lights underneath cabinets or inside exposed shelving to brighten dark surfaces is also a great idea.



Finally, pick neutral and minimalistic furniture. For example, a white couch with slim legs will allow you to see more of the floor, making the room feel open and bright.



Visit your local home improvement store for more ideas, and start building your man cave today.

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How to choose an at-home sauna

Saunas offer health benefits beyond just helping you relax. Here's what to consider if you want one for your home.

Size

Saunas come in various sizes. Do you plan on using it exclusively with your significant other, or do you want to enjoy it with family and friends? Some models fit two or three people, while others have bench seats that accommodate up to 12.

Heat source

Infrared heaters provide instant heat that warms your body from the inside out. However, they typically only reach 120 to 150 F.

Alternatively, electric heaters can be used indoors and outdoors but take about 10 to 15 minutes to raise the air temperature. The upside is that they can reach 150 to 185 F. Many electric heaters also come with

stones you can cover with water to create soothing steam. Wood-fired heaters have the same benefits as electric ones but can be used only with outdoor saunas.

Indoor or outdoor

Indoor saunas are great if you have a small yard and want to utilize unused space in your basement or bathroom. They add a touch of luxury to your home and are easily accessible in any weather. Additionally, if you choose a free-standing sauna, you can take it with you if you move.

Outdoor saunas are ideal if you have a large yard or want to be close to nature. Moreover, they offer more variety in shape and design than indoor versions. For example, many outdoor models can be fitted with glass windows and exterior seating.

Visit a local sauna retailer to discuss which model is suitable for you.



— Beautify your HOME —

Best bathroom safety equipment

For the elderly or people with limited mobility, bathrooms are one of the more likely places for a slip-and-fall injury. These falls can result in broken bones and can even be fatal. Consider making your bathroom safer by incorporating some of these features.

- Accessible toilet. An elevated toilet seat can make sitting down much more manageable. Elevated toilet seats are easy to install and sit right on top of your existing one. A comfort-level or right-height toilet that sits slightly higher than a standard toilet is another alternative.

- Shower seat. This specially designed chair makes showering much safer. It has a back support, and the holes in the material allow water to drain. Look for a model with suction cups on the legs for stability.
- Grab bars. Installing grab bars in the shower and beside the bathtub and toilet improve accessibility and safety, especially for people who use wheelchairs.
- No-slip bathmats. These mats provide grip on the shower and tub floors and can help prevent falls. You can also use safety treads, which stick onto the floor for added traction.



Most slip-and-fall accidents occur in the home, so visit your local home improvement store to ensure your loved ones are as safe as possible.

How to turn your bathroom into a spa-like sanctuary



Do you want to transform your bathroom into a relaxing oasis? If so, here are a few easy and inexpensive ways you can convert this room in your house.

- Swap your fixtures and hardware. Add high-end gold fixtures and hardware to your bathroom for a luxurious look. You can also spray-paint your existing pieces for a budget-friendly fix.
- Upgrade your showerhead. Invest in a waterfall showerhead or one with massage capabilities. Not only will it upgrade the look of your bathroom, but it will make your time in the shower more enjoyable.

- Add storage. Sufficient storage can help you declutter and organize your bathroom so that it's more peaceful. Hang some shelves, mount a towel rack or add some baskets for extra storage.
 - Choose calming colors. Paint is an easy way to transform your bathroom. Choose pale neutrals like white, beige or taupe to create a serene environment.
 - Install a light dimmer. Dimmer switches allow you to adjust the lighting in your bathroom to create the perfect ambiance.
- Don't forget to incorporate soothing accessories and calming scents. Add plants, candles, artwork and soft towels for a truly spa-like experience.

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— Beautify your HOME —



If you're designing a new kitchen, talk to an expert at your local home improvement store for more space-saving ideas.

Design ideas for small kitchens

Small kitchens can be difficult to use. However, a few design hacks can make a small space more maneuverable. Consider these layouts and design ideas.

Small kitchen layouts

Your kitchen layout can have a significant impact on efficiency and comfort. Try these styles in your home:

- *Galley.* A galley kitchen utilizes a middle aisle flanked with cabinets and appliances on one or both sides. Ensure there's enough room

for your kitchen cabinet doors to swing open all the way.

- *U-shaped.* This horseshoe-shaped layout features cabinets and appliances on three sides. You can place an island in the middle for extra workspace if you have room.
- *L-shaped.* This layout efficiently utilizes a corner of the room with cabinets and appliances on two sides. It gives you a triangle-shaped workspace with everything you need within easy reach.

Space-saving ideas

Incorporate these space savers into your kitchen design to maximize efficiency.

- *Small appliances.* Standard-sized appliances can take up a lot of room. Choose a smaller dishwasher, refrigerator and stove to free up space.
- *Accessories.* Under-cabinet storage containers and slide-out pot organizers can increase the functionality of your kitchen and keep it organized.

6 ways to optimize your kitchen storage



Are you looking for ways to tidy up and declutter your kitchen? Here are six ideas to inspire you.

1. Shelves increase storage possibilities and come in various materials to match your décor.
2. Stackable containers maximize useable space and look good on shelves and inside cabinets.
3. Dividers are perfect for drawers and cabinets because they keep

things like spices, utensils and snacks in place.

4. Stacking trays are ideal for deep drawers because they save space and keep each item accessible.
5. Swivel trays are easy to install and prevent you from awkwardly twisting and turning to reach rarely used items.
6. Door storage units have many uses, and you can hide them.

How to replace your kitchen countertop in 3 steps



With the right tools, the average homeowner can install a new countertop over the weekend. Here's how to do it in three easy steps.

1. Remove. Shut off your home's water supply and disconnect the sink. Then, remove the old countertop.
2. Cut. Determine the dimensions of the new countertop. Allow an extra inch for islands and overhangs. Use a scribe to cut the sides that touch an uneven wall surface.

3. Install. Depending on the material of your countertop, you may need to apply a protective sealant and use special adhesives or screws. Ensure the countertop is secure and stable before re-connecting the plumbing and replacing the sink.

Look for a professional in your area if you'd rather leave this task to an expert.



If you have a smart speaker in your home, you may already benefit from hands-free technology while you cook. You can use voice commands to set a timer or listen to an online recipe. Today, there are plenty of touch-free appliances that promise to optimize hygiene while increasing efficiency in the kitchen.

Sensor lights

Indoor motion detector lighting offers the same convenience and security as the lights you install on your home's exterior. In the kitchen, you have the added benefit of keeping messy hands off of light switches. The automatic shut-off feature saves energy, too.

Faucets

Touchless faucets are available in various styles, finishes and price points. Some even have voice control to let you adjust water volume and temperature.

Dishwashers

Hands-free dishwashers come with doors that you knock to open. They include safety features to prevent accidental activation when a person or pet bumps into it.

Refrigerators

Handleless refrigerators open with the touch of a knee or elbow. Since current models are built-ins, you must hire a professional to install them.

Cabinets

The classic touch-latch cabinet door is a simple hands-free solution you can install yourself. Get a professional to build a sophisticated electronic cabinet closure system for a more high-tech approach.

Get in touch with a local contractor to ensure your new appliances are installed and working correctly.

What to consider when replacing your kitchen cabinets



Replacing the cabinets is a sure way to make your kitchen look great and increase the value of your home. Visit your local kitchen design store for more ideas.

Choose a style & material

Consult an interior designer to help you choose new cabinets that complement your home. They'll create mock-ups using 3D design software to show you various cabinets that fit your space, style and budget.

Cabinet materials include medium density fiberboard (MDF), hardwood, melamine and acrylic. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. Browse several samples to find your preference. On top of how the material looks, consider how easy it is to clean and maintain.

Once you know which cabinets you want to buy, place your order and determine when you can have

them installed, whether you're hiring a professional or doing it yourself.

Remove the old cabinets

First, empty your old cabinets and remove them from the walls. To avoid injuring yourself, entrust this task to a professional. They'll also dispose of unusable materials correctly.

Install the new cabinets

Before installing your new kitchen cabinets, prepare the room. For example, clear and protect the floor, remove your appliances and disconnect the plumbing. Depending on the project's complexity, you may need to find an alternative space to prepare your meals.

GREEN IDEAS

Are solar-powered homes cost-effective?



Are you concerned about your carbon footprint and considering solar panels to power your property? Are you wondering if this environmentally friendly solution is cost-effective? Here are some things to consider.

Payback period

In recent years, photovoltaic panels have become increasingly affordable. However, depending on how much you spend upfront, it can take 15, 20 or even 30 years of reduced energy bills to make back your initial investment.

Profitability

The profitability of your solar panel set-up depends on several factors, including

where they're installed and how they're positioned. Solar panels can turn one kilowatt of power into approximately 1,200 kilowatt-hours of electricity in ideal conditions. You can use an online calculator to estimate how long it would take you to get your money's worth.

Additional benefits

On top of saving money over several years, using solar panels helps offset the demand for energy during the winter months. It also ensures you have power even if there's an outage.

If you want to find out if solar panels are right for you, contact an engineer or solar energy supplier in your area.

6 things to consider for a successful painting project

Do you want to paint (or repaint) a room, staircase or piece of furniture? Here are six things to remember to ensure your painting project is successful.

- 1. Choose high-quality products. For the best results, invest in high-quality products. For example, spend the extra money on good paint, brushes and rollers.
- 2. Select the right color and finish. Compare several samples to select a paint color you love. Make sure to choose the right finish for your desired look.
- 3. Think about maintenance. Kitchens, bathrooms and entryways are more likely to collect dirt and dust. Therefore, choose a finish that's easy to clean and can withstand heavy traffic.
- 4. Consider the surface type. When choosing the right paint for your project, it's essential to consider the surface type. For instance, concrete, wood and metal require different types of paint and surface preparation.
- 5. Evaluate your experience level. If you've done several painting projects in the past, you may have enough experience to take on the task yourself. If not, call a professional for beautiful, smudge-free results.
- 6. Buy enough paint. Depending on your project, you may need to apply a primer and account for one, two or even three coats of paint. Ensure you buy the correct amount of paint, especially if it's a custom blend.



Visit your local paint retailer for personalized advice.

How to remodel successfully despite supply chain issues

Are you considering renovations but reluctant to risk supply chain delays? A successful remodel isn't out of the question if you take a proactive strategy. Here are some tips to keep your reno budget — and patience — under control.

- Phased approach. Divide your project into a series of mini projects. You'll get a sense of satisfaction from small gains and keep the reno mess under control.
- Flexible timeline. Plan your project timeline before you start. First, identify stages that depend on the arrival of crucial materials and supplies. Then, build extra time into those stages to give yourself a buffer.
- Temporary storage. Clear away space on your property or rent a storage unit. This will give you a place to



- keep materials while you wait for the rest to arrive.
 - Contingency budget. Build extra room in your budget for the unexpected. With transport costs in flux, you may suddenly find that materials prices have increased. You may also need to factor in added labor costs.
- Talk to a local designer or contractor. They'll have the inside track on building supply chains and can suggest creative substitutions and workarounds.

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3 tips for reducing renovation costs

If you're planning a renovation project, here are three tips to help keep costs to a minimum.

- 1. Pick the right time of year. Fall and winter are typically less busy for most contractors. During these times, you may be able to negotiate a lower price.
- 2. Get several quotes. Contacting several contractors will give you a good idea of the average price to complete the project. Shopping around may also help you get a better rate.
- 3. Be specific. Clearly explain what you want upfront to avoid unnecessarily driving up the bill.



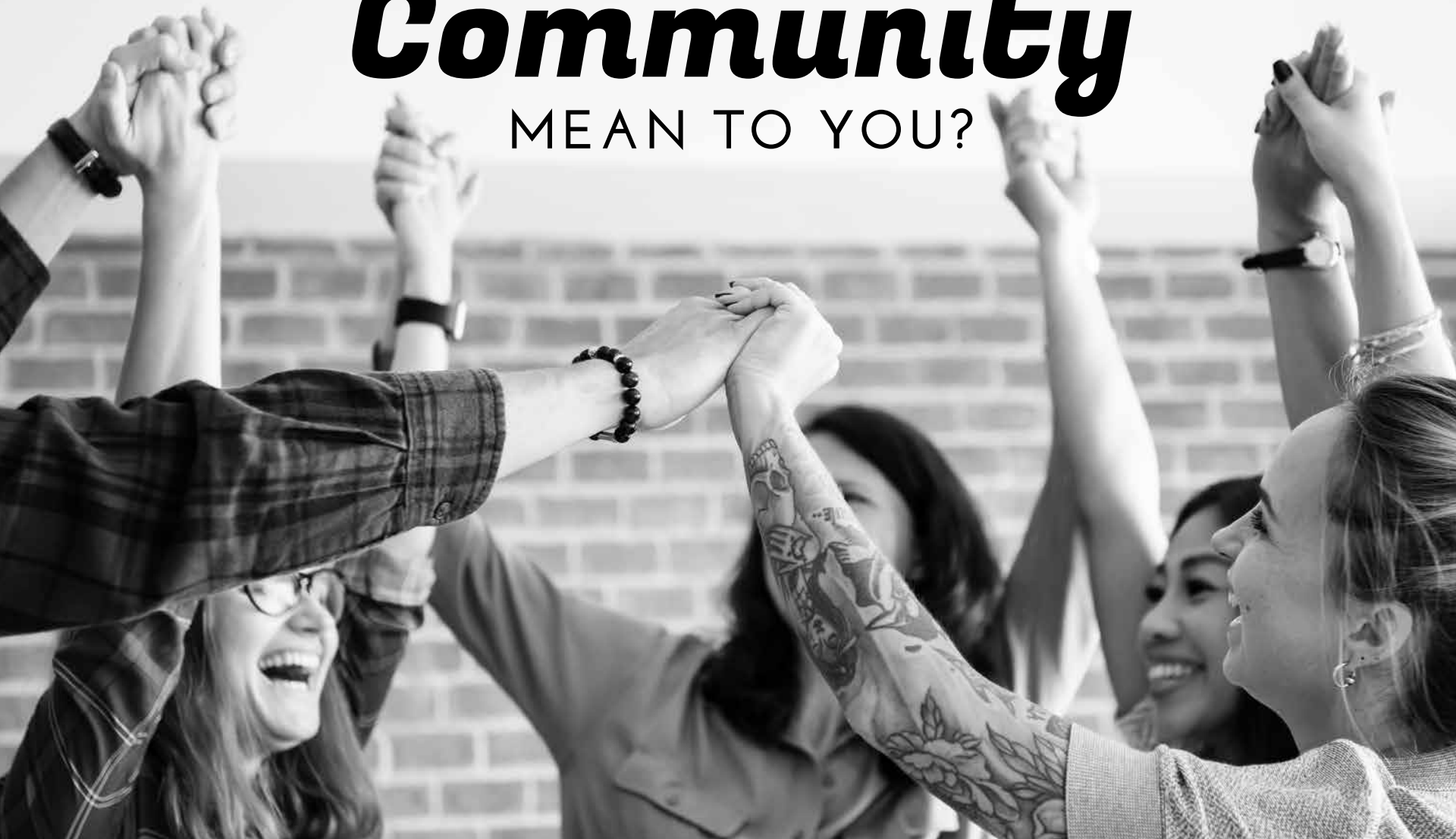
Always ensure the contractor you choose has the required experience and certifications.



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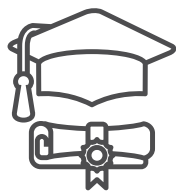


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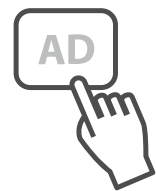
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