

Insider Hints for Design on a Budget

Don't have a big budget but want to make some big design changes to your home? Well-designed rooms don't always have to come with a huge price tag; in fact, designing on a budget may be easier than you think.

Many times, by changing small elements, you can give a room an entirely new personality. Sometimes adding a few colorful pillows or picking up a paintbrush is all you need to do to make your room look like something out of the pages of a magazine.

The Power of Paint

One of the most common fixes for a boring room is color. "Color is easy to do and inexpensive," says Kathy Browning, owner of Design Consultants, a design firm in Virginia Beach, Va.

Updating the color of just one wall in any room will give it an entirely new feel. Painting, when approached correctly, can be an enjoyable experience with instant rewards. Lauren Warnock, an interior designer based in Chicago, reminds home owners that warmer colors can make a room feel cozier and more inviting.

Cooler colors like grey or "stark white," on the other hand, may give a room a more industrial feeling. "Light airy colors open up a space, while deep, darker colors can make a room appear smaller," Warnock says.

Connie Edwards, director of design for Shenandoah Cabinetry, has her own advice when it comes to color, particularly if you are looking at the kitchen. "You can never go wrong with neutrals, but color is hot now," Edwards says. "Not necessarily vibrant colors — although for the right space, they can be fabulous — but think along the lines of buttery yellows, soft sage greens and nearly neutral blues."

Accessories Pack a Punch

Adding accents to pieces you already own can also make a large difference. For instance, if your couch is not as exciting as it once was, try throwing a few fun accent pillows on it. Remember, throws and cushions, when selected as accents, can really bring new life to a tired piece of furniture.

"The use of pillows, throws and draperies in living spaces enhances a room in many ways," Warnock says. Fabrics also can add beautiful softness to a room and allow additional patterns and textures to be brought into a room.

Rethink Your Artwork

Another budget-friendly change is to rotate the artwork in a room. Using the same frames but changing the images can easily create a new theme or mood, and combining several different frames in different finishes and sizes can achieve different looks.

Love Your Lighting

Often overlooked but strikingly effective, updated lighting can work wonders. "Lighting will dramatically change the mood of a room," Warnock says. Try installing a new fixture or simply swapping out the shades on current fixtures. Installing dimmer switches is another simple change that can transform any room.