

Room service: How to improve a room in two days

Interior designers provide a number of services, from kitchen and bath design to assisting with new construction and remodels to window coverings to furniture and re-upholstery.

One of the lesser known services we provide is the "home makeover." My bi-weekly column is about helping my readers' live better lives in their homes, and in a bit I will tell you how you can give your home a new and much improved appearance.



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The concept started, to my best knowledge, with a woman named Lauri Ward, who wrote a book called "Use What You Have Decorating." Her book had before and after photos that showed strikingly beautiful improve-

ments using just the furniture and accessories the client already had. I'm not a big fan of angling conversation areas within rooms like she is, but still, her overall makeovers were quite good.

The makeover concept is beneficial for two reasons. The first and most obvious is that it makes your house look and feel better immediately. The second, hidden benefit is that when it's done, you can actually see for your-

self what your home is missing, which pieces need to be replaced, and which, if any, need to be discarded. This in turn saves money, frustration, and regrets on poorly chosen purchases. A quality makeover even helps you plan for future purchases.

What you will be doing: Placing furniture in warm and inviting conversation areas; hanging artwork; placing

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ambient lighting (table and floor lamps); editing out unnecessary or unattractive items; moving in new items from other, less-used rooms; and arranging accessories in the most beautiful and natural ways.

The steps

Step one is to identify and schedule one to two people to help you do the heavy lifting. Explain to them that you will be moving furniture around to identify the best floor plan, otherwise they will think that you're changing your mind and potentially become aggravated.

Let them know in advance this is an art, not a science!

Step two is to identify a service area, also called a staging area, such as a nearby spare bedroom or hall, and set up a

table for all the extra accessories you will be choosing from.

Step three is to bring out any and all old accessories including artwork from your cupboards and storage. Even include the things you don't really care for. You can use them as visual aids, and later replace them with more attractive versions.

Step four is to go to the spare rooms and bathrooms and bring out any favorite items that have been underappreciated for too long.

Step five is to gather your tools. You'll need a pencil, picture hangers in three sizes, a tape measure, a hammer, glass cleaner and paper towels, and a rag. Yes, part of a makeover may include cleaning.

Step six is to completely undecorated your rooms. Set everything aside in a safe spot, preferably the staging area, where you can easily access it and begin moving furniture. Please be careful

not to trip, it's a hazard of this type of project.

Function and comfort is top priority when placing furniture. Observe the natural pathways. Always have a clear path from door to door ideally with a minimum of 36 inches of clearance. You can have a turn or two but if getting from door to door means zigzagging or stepping over something, then it's not functional.

Begin with the living room and entry simultaneously. Choose a piece of furniture for the entry that best defines the space. For a recent client, I took a small buffet out of the breakfast area and re-purposed it to the entry. I topped it with a lamp, a large artwork for the wall above, two candlesticks, some hard bound books, and a few nicely framed family photos. Just being brave enough to take a piece of furniture that was initially purchased for the breakfast room and repurpose it to the entry made a huge difference. As well, it vastly improved the first impression of the home which previously looked neglected.

Week after next, we move on to the actual makeovers room by room. We'll talk a little about mixing styles, the best place to put the sofa, focal points, how to accessorize, and the most common elements to look for when your home is obviously missing something.

I would be happy to provide a link to one of my recent online articles featuring pictures and a report of a recent home makeover. Send your request to me at the email address below. No email addresses will be kept or used for any other purpose.

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