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Home Remodeling Secrets

How To Create A Beautiful Home... On A Shoestring Budget!

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Introduction

Getting a fixer-upper ready to sell. Increasing market value. Adding convenience. Making your home larger, more energy-efficient, or more comfortable. Everyone has different reasons for remodeling and improving houses. But whatever your reason for remodeling, you want to choose improvements that will give you the best return for your money. You never want to spend a huge amount of money on a property if you're planning on selling in the near future.

This book will help you choose remodeling and renovation projects that will help you achieve your goals quickly and without a lot of expense. It focuses on quick remodeling projects that return a lot for your investment – a fresh coat of paint inside and out, spruce-ups for the kitchen and bathroom, new window treatments, and easy landscaping ideas.

It also provides you with practical projects that can easily be undertaken and completed on the weekend by anyone with a basic level of “handy person” skills. However, when it comes to major work, it is strongly advisable to hire a qualified professional at all times. Whilst you may be tempted to “save a few bucks” doing it yourself, the end result could end up costing you more in terms of costs and headaches than you bargained for.

When renovating a home for investment purposes, I try and set a maximum renovation budget of no more than 10% of the property's market value. The reason for this is that by following this formula, you tend not to over capitalize, and generally the increase in value will exceed the renovation costs.

Unfortunately, not every property can be renovated within this 10% allowance.

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So what do you do if you think the needed renovations might outstrip your budget? The secret is to prioritize where you will spend your money. I suggest you follow these guidelines when setting renovation priorities:

1. First, check your cost estimates to see if all the renovation work you want to do can be completed within your budget. If they can – lucky you! If not, continue to step 2...
2. Replace items where you will get the highest returns such as paint, kitchens, bathrooms, and exterior curb appeal. Remember that “brand new” always outsells “refurbished.”
3. Refurbish the rest of the house up to your budget.
4. Remember that there is little advantage in completing a renovation 95%, only to have few items detract from the home’s appearance. So the Golden Rule here is,

If in doubt, throw it out!

To sum it all up, use your judgment when allocating funds, but always stick to your budget.

CHAPTER 1

A fresh coat of paint

Paint is by far the most cost-effective home improvement you can make. A fresh coat of paint makes your home look clean and fresh. This chapter will help you:

- Choose the right color of paint
- Choose the right kind of paint
- Determine how much paint you need
- Prepare your walls for painting
- Prepare the rest of the room for painting
- Paint!

At the end of the chapter are my quick tips for using paint to get your fixer-upper ready to sell.

Choose the right color of paint

Color is the least expensive way to add style and personality to your home. Paint colors can change the whole tone of a room, as well as affect your mood, attitude, and general outlook.

Neutral colors



When you are preparing your home to sell, you want to choose white and neutral paint colors. These colors make your rooms look bigger, brighter, and crisper.

Another reason for choosing neutral colors is that you want to appeal to the largest number of buyers and help them visualize themselves in your home. After all, while you may love green and

want it in every room, a potential buyer who hates green may never get past the color to look at all the wonderful features of your home.

Of course, even white comes in a surprising number of shades and tones: creamy beige, cool blue, warm pink, light gray. Keep in mind that a bright white makes all other colors look darker, so choose off-white instead. Also, for a unified and polished look, use the same shade of white in all your rooms.

Other colors

If you want to move beyond basic white, keep these tips in mind when choosing other colors:



- One accent wall painted a different color can enliven a room.
- Choose paint colors that enhance your furniture and furnishings. For example, match paint color to the shade of blue you love in your comforter or area rug.
- Choose cool, soft colors such as violet, blue, or green to create a quiet mood and make a room feel airy and larger.
- Choose hard, warm colors such as red, orange, and yellow to convey energy and cheerfulness and to encourage social interaction. However, keep in mind that some warm colors, such as bright yellow, can increase anxiety and raise some people's blood pressure. A soft yellow is a better choice.
- Choose earth-tone colors such as brown, beige, gray, and taupe to create an elegant and sophisticated look.
- Start with the most neutral shade of any color you choose (usually the middle of the color card). This will be the easiest color to coordinate with your furniture and furnishings.



Choose the right kind of paint

The color of your paint is only one of the choices you need to make. You also need to choose a type of paint. Do you want flat, semi-gloss or something in-between? It depends on your purpose and the room you are painting.

<i>Type of finish</i>	<i>Typical use</i>	<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
Flat or matte	Most common type of paint for interior walls and ceilings	Camouflages small bumps, cracks, or other imperfections	Gets dirty easily and is difficult to clean; scratches and marks may need to be covered up with a bit more paint
Eggshell	Interior walls	Camouflages small bumps, cracks, or other imperfections, slight hint of gloss makes this surface easier to clean than flat walls	
Satin	Doors and trims; walls that receive a lot of wear, as in a child's room	Endures cleaning and light scrubbing	
Semi-Gloss	Doors, trims, and cabinets; walls of kitchens and bathrooms	Stain-resistant, durable and washable	Highlights surface imperfections
High-gloss	Cabinets, trim, and furniture	The most stain-resistant, durable,	Magnifies surface imperfections, can

		and washable	be cold and uninviting
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Determine how much paint you need

In general, one gallon of paint covers approximately 350-400 square feet. It's better to choose a good quality of paint, as it will provide better coverage than a cheap brand of paint.

You can also have your primer tinted to make the top coat of paint cover better.

When you buy your paint, always figure on a little extra in case you spill some. Also, don't forget to include doors, closets, and the ceiling in your calculations.

Don't plan to thin down your paint. You will reduce the hiding and durability of the paint, which will mean you will probably have to do an extra coat (using more paint than if you hadn't diluted).

Prepare your walls for painting

The first step to a good paint job is preparing your walls. Taking the time to clean and prime your walls will make your paint job look better and last longer. In fact, it may take longer to prepare your walls than it does to actually paint them. Specific things you need to do include repairing dents and holes and cleaning and priming the walls.

Repair dents, scrapes, and gouges



To repair dents in your drywall:

1. Pack the dent with joint compound.
2. Use a trowel to smooth the surface.
3. If the damaged area is more than about 1/4 inch deep, the joint compound will shrink and/or crack as it dries. If this happens, apply a second coat.
4. Once the joint compound is dry, sand the surface very lightly.

Repair holes

The procedure you follow for repairing holes depends on the size of the hole.

Pinholes, nail holes, and other small holes

For small holes, you can use a putty knife or trowel to apply joint compound to the hole. Once the joint compound dries, sand it smooth.

Larger holes

For larger holes, follow these steps:

1. Cut a piece of pegboard or screen that will fit through the hole but is slightly larger. This will be the backing for your patch.
2. Tie a thin piece of wire to the center of the pegboard.
3. Smear joint compound on the same side of the pegboard as the wire twist.
4. Slip the pegboard into the wall so the wire and the joint compound face out.

PEGBOARD/SCREEN – JOINT COMPOUND – WALL

5. Twist the wire around a pencil.
6. Twist the pencil tight, pulling the pegboard tight against the wall. Leave it there until the joint compound dries. The pegboard will be firmly attached to the wall.
7. Cut the wire.
8. Fill the recess with two or three thin coats of joint compound. Take care to build up the surface slowly and let each coat dry before applying more joint compound.
9. Lightly sand the surface smooth.

You can also use paper or fiberglass tape to reinforce the hole, or buy a repair kit.

Clean the walls

Now that your walls are smooth, you need to dust and clean them. A clean surface will help the paint cling better and will keep stains from showing through. Be sure to especially dust around any patches where you have sanded. For normal cleaning, use a cloth or sponge dipped in a mild detergent and warm water. If there is a lot of grease and dirt build-up, you can use a stronger cleanser like TSP.

Also be sure to rinse off the walls to remove any detergent residue, and let the walls dry before you prime or paint.

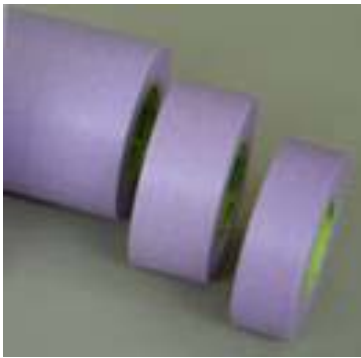
Depending on the wall surface and number of repairs, you need to prime the walls. Always prime all areas of new construction, stains you could not remove when cleaning the walls, and joint compound in areas you repaired.

If you made a lot of repairs, you might just want to prime the entire wall.

You also need to prime new wallboard or sheetrock with a wallboard-specific primer or a general purpose, stain-blocking interior primer.

Remember that you can have the primer tinted, which will improve the coverage of your topcoat.

Prepare the rest of the room for painting



Your final step before you begin painting is to prepare the overall room for painting:

- Remove as much furniture as you can from the room, or at least push it to the center of the room. Cover furniture with drop cloths.
- Remove switch plates, outlet covers, curtain

rods, etc.

- Put down drop cloths to protect the floor
- Use painter's tape to mask off any surfaces you don't want to paint

Paint!

The preparation is finally done and you are ready to begin painting! Follow these tips to get the most professional paint job possible:

If you use a brush,



1. Only dip half the length of the bristles into the paint.
2. Tap the brush gently against the side of the can, but do not wipe it across the lip.
3. Hold the brush's handle near the base, using enough pressure to make bristles flex slightly toward you as you begin the stroke.

If you use a roller,

1. Roll the roller back and forth slowly in the deep end of the tray until it is covered with paint.
2. Roll back onto the ridges in the upper portion of the tray, and lightly roll back and forth to remove any excess paint.
3. As you paint, avoid going too fast and spinning the roller.
4. Roll out the letter M or W, then cross-roll to spread the paint.
5. Finish with light roller strokes, going in one direction at a right angle to the cross roll.



Painting a ceiling

Start in a corner by cutting in a 2" strip of paint where the walls and ceiling meet. Begin at the narrowest portion of the ceiling and paint as wide a strip as possible.

Painting panel doors

1. Use masking tape to remove or cover the hinge, knob, and latch.

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2. Paint the top panels of the door, starting with the molding edges. Brush across, then up and down.
3. Once all the panels are done, paint the rest of the door, ending with the door edges.

Painting flush doors

Paint flush doors the same way you would a wall:

1. Paint the edges first.
2. Fill in the large area.
3. Complete the job by painting the frame and jamb.

Painting sash windows

1. Raise the inside sash and lower the outside sash.
2. Paint the inside sash, the crossbars, and the frame.

Do not paint the top edge of the inside sash. You need that surface dry so you can move the sash.

3. Raise the outside sash and lower the inside sash.
4. Paint the outside sash crossbars and frame.

Do not paint the bottom edge.

5. When the paint is dry, move both sashes down and paint the upper part of the checkrails.
6. When the paint on the checkrails is dry, raise both sashes and paint the lower checkrails.

Don't neglect the exterior

So far, we have been focusing on painting the interior of your home. But a fresh



coat of paint on the exterior makes your home look well maintained and will definitely improve your curb appeal. Follow these tips when painting the exterior of your home:

- Prepare your surface by
 - ✓ Sanding and scraping any old, peeling paint and by cleaning the walls, preferably with a power spray
 - ✓ Priming all bare areas
 - ✓ Covering all surfaces that will not be painted
 - ✓ Sanding glossy surfaces
 - ✓ Patching holes and cracks
 - ✓ Caulking seams and joints

- Choose colors:
 - ✓ Select a color suggested by your roof and masonry.
 - ✓ Harmonize interior and exterior color schemes
 - ✓ Choose colors that coordinate with the homes around you.
 - ✓ Choose light colors to make your house seem larger, or dark colors to draw attention to details.
 - ✓ Emphasize architectural details by outlining them with a contrasting accent color.
 - ✓ Use darker colors to emphasize shadows and lighter colors to show projections.
 - ✓ Avoid extreme contrasts. Choose colors that are related.

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- ✓ Study color samples outside, but not in direct sunlight.
- ✓ Photocopy a sketch or photograph of your house. Use watercolors or colored pencils to try color combinations.
- ✓ Before buying large quantities of paint, buy quarts of your selected colors and paint one area of your house.



Other painting tips

Here are more painting tips to make your paint job go more smoothly and last longer:

- If you aren't confident about your own painting skills, hire a professional to do your painting for you.
- Peel, soak, steam and scrape old wallpaper off before you paint walls. Once the walls are clean, apply a coat of primer.

If your wallpaper won't come off and you must paint over it, check for loose areas of paper and poorly adhering seams. Re-glue any problem areas. Then you are ready to prime and paint. Choose a flat paint to minimize the appearance of the wallpaper under the paint.

- To ensure color consistency, mix multiple containers of the same color.

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- Use lambs-wool rollers for walls and good-quality brushes for trim.
- Use easy-release painter's tape to mask off trim, windowpanes, crown molding, floors, and other areas you don't want to get paint on.
- Use old plastic tablecloths and shower curtains as drop cloths and furniture covers.
- If you use water-based paint, clean your tools with soap and warm water.
- If you use oil-based paint, clean your tools with mineral spirits.
- If you aren't done painting, wrap your brush or roller and your roller tray in a plastic bag and put them in the freezer. When you are ready to paint some more, just take your tools out of the freezer and let them thaw.
- Examine color chips in all lights.
- Buy quarts of paint and paint a section of wall before deciding on a color.
- Buy high-quality paint. With bargain brands, you typically end up applying more coats of paint.
- Buy good brushes and rollers.
- Use primer in most cases. Have the primer tinted to improve the coverage of the top coat.
- Apply a second coat of paint for rich, long-lasting color.
- Use a large sheet of poster board to record the colors in each room.
- Fill a small bottle with a sponge tip with paint, making sure to label the bottle with the paint color and room the paint is used in. You can use this paint for quick touch-ups.
- Store extra paint away from the furnace or other heat sources.
- Keep a notebook listing paint colors used in each room.



Sal's quick fixer-upper tips

Paint is your most cost-effective way to give a room a clean, fresh look.

Choose off-white paint or neutral paint for walls to appeal to the most people.

For the trim, choose semi-gloss or gloss paint in the same color as the walls. The color difference will be subtle but elegant.

Choose eggshell paint for walls and semi-gloss or gloss for trim.

Clean and prepare your surface for the best-looking, longest-lasting paint job.

Use lambs-wool rollers to paint the walls, and high-quality brushes to paint the trim.

Fill all dents and holes, even small pinholes.

Paint both the interior and exterior of your home.

You can save a lot of money by doing your own painting. However, if your painting skills aren't very good, hire a professional.

CHAPTER 2

How about wallpaper?

Wallpaper is not a great choice when you are getting a fixer-upper ready to sell. It is more expensive than paint and harder to put up. Plus, your potential buyer may hate the wallpaper you loved for the bathroom. Even so, there may be times you choose to use wallpaper, so this chapter gives you some quick tips.

Removing wallpaper



Before you hang new wallpaper, it is best to remove any old paper. There are several ways to remove wallpaper:

- Rent a steamer and steam off the paper
- Score the wallpaper and spray it with wallpaper remover or a mixture of one cup of vinegar to one gallon of water. Scrape the wet wallpaper off.

Once you have removed the wallpaper, sand and clean the walls so you have a smooth surface to work with. It is also a good idea to brush on a primer/sealer before installing the new wallpaper.

Measuring for wallpaper

When measuring for wallpaper, you need to measure all your wall space, including doorways and windows. The amount of wallpaper you need depends on the wallpaper itself. Wallpaper has a pattern repeat, so you may need more wallpaper than you would expect so you can match the repeat.

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The best way to make sure you have enough wallpaper is to take all your measurements to the wallpaper store. Show them the wallpaper you are interested in and ask them to figure out how many rolls you need.

Hanging borders

- The placement of your border changes the mood of your room. Hanging the border at the ceiling makes the ceiling seem higher, while hanging the border at chair rail height makes the room more inviting and comfortable.
- Start your border at the least conspicuous corner.
- Use a small paint roller to apply sizing before you hang your border. This will help the border adhere better.
- When you install a border around a door or window, run it clockwise.

Preparing pre-pasted wallpaper

With pre-pasted wallpaper, you need to activate the paste before you can hang the paper. This section covers the most common way to activate your paste. Be sure to read the information that came with your paper for specific instructions.

The most common activation method is outlined below:

1. Roll up your cut strips from the bottom, with the paste side out and the pattern side in.
2. Submerge the roll in a tray full of water for the length of time indicated in the instructions.
3. Hold the top of the paper and pull it out of the water, unrolling it as you pull.
4. [Book](#) the strip as specified by your instructions.

Some pre-pasted wallpaper can be activated by rolling a water-based mixture on the back of the paper. Again, check your instructions.

Pasting wallpaper

Most wallpaper is pre-pasted so you just need to soak your strips in water to activate the paste. If the paper is not pre-pasted, follow these instructions:

1. Create a pasting table by putting a piece of plywood on your kitchen or dining room table. Cover the plywood with newspaper.
2. Put your first strip of wallpaper on the table.
3. Use a wide paintbrush to brush paste down the middle of the strip.
4. Get more paste on your brush and brush the strip sideways from the middle to the edge.
5. [Book](#) the strip.

After you hang each strip, use a clean, wet sponge to wipe off the strip, removing all paste residue.

Booking your wallpaper

Some papers don't require booking; check your instructions to see if your paper does.

Booking your wallpaper after you activate or roll on paste is crucial for several reasons:

- It lets the paste penetrate the wallpaper
- It keeps the paste from drying out before you hang the strip
- It allows the strip to "relax"

To book your wallpaper,

1. Fold the ends of each strip back to the middle so the pasted sides are touching. Line up the edges carefully, but don't crease the folds.
2. Fold the strip in half again, lining up the ends.

3. Leave the strip for the length of time indicated in your instructions.
4. When the time has ended, roll the strip up from one end to the other.

Hanging wallpaper

To hang your wallpaper,

1. Start at a corner, preferably behind a door.
2. Use a level and a pencil to draw a plumb line 23 ½ inches from the corner (most wallpaper measures 24 inches wide; if yours doesn't, adjust this measurement.).
3. Cut a strip of paper the length of the wall plus a couple of inches extra.
4. Paste or activate the glue.
5. Align the strip along the plumb line you drew, allowing the paper to turn the corner by ½ an inch. If you don't get the paper aligned right the first time, pull it off and try again.
6. Use a wide smoothing brush to smooth the paper from the top down.
7. Use a broad knife to crease the paper where it meets the floor and ceiling. Use a sharp utility knife to cut the excess paper from the top and bottom of the strip, keeping the broad knife between the utility knife and the wall.
8. Cut your next strip, making sure you cut extra so you can match the repeat pattern.
9. Continue hanging each strip, butting the seams snugly and matching the pattern. Use a seam roller to press the seams firmly.
10. Wipe the wallpaper frequently with a clean, wet sponge to remove any paste that leaks out the seams.



Sal's quick fixer-upper tips

Wallpaper is not your best choice for quick and inexpensive fix-ups. Paint should be your first choice.

Remove old wallpaper before you put up new wallpaper. A water and vinegar mixture makes an inexpensive wallpaper remover.

Let the wallpaper store help you figure out how much wallpaper you need.

Before you begin, read the instructions that come with your wallpaper.

Wallpaper borders can add personality to a room, whether used at the ceiling, above a chair rail, or even above the floor trim.

Use removable wallpaper stickers to add easy personality to a room.

CHAPTER 3

Floor coverings

Now that your walls look great, it's time to tackle the floors. If you are lucky enough to have wood floors, don't cover them up! Wood floors are very popular with homebuyers and they are very durable. If necessary, sand and refinish the wood floors until they gleam, and then lay down area rugs to define seating areas and add color to the room.

Clean floor coverings



Since you don't want to put a lot of money into this remodeling project, your first step should be to thoroughly clean the floor you already have:

- Clean the carpets, especially high-traffic areas and spots. If there have been animals or smokers in the house, ask the carpet cleaners to use cleaning supplies that will reduce or eliminate odors.
- Polish wood floors.
- Scrub other floors, including the grout in tile floors.

Just cleaning the floors will make your home look and smell more appealing.

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Repair floor coverings

Once you have cleaned the floor covering, you will have a better idea of its condition and what repairs you need to make. You can easily repair many problems in floor coverings.

Burns or tears in carpet

If you have an extra piece of carpet, you can easily make a patch for damaged carpet:

1. Use a sharp utility knife to cut out the damaged carpet and a patch from the replacement carpet.
2. Vacuum up loose fibers.
3. Slip double-faced carpet tape halfway under the edge of the hole in your carpet.
4. Apply seam cement to the edges.
5. Press the patch into place and weight it overnight with a book or other heavy object.

Damage to sheet flooring

To repair small scratches in sheet flooring, fill them with floor wax. They will usually become less visible and even disappear over time. For deeper cuts, you can smooth the edges by dragging a worn coin along them.

If the flooring has torn all the way through,

1. Lift the edges of the tear and scrape away any old adhesive.
2. Apply fresh adhesive.
3. Stick the edges down again.

Damage to tile floors

If your tile floor has broken, chipped, or cracked pieces, you can remove and replace the broken pieces. The hardest part here may be matching your existing tile.

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If the floor grout is discolored or chipped away, you can clean it, color it, or replace it. Grout pens such as those from www.whiteknightpaints.com make recoloring grout lines easy.



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You can also paint the tile itself. www.whiteknightpaints.com sells paint specifically formulated for ceramic tile.

Scratched and damaged wood floors



Wood floors are very popular with homebuyers, and they are fortunately durable and easy to clean. If your wood floors are scratched and damaged, you may need to sand and refinish them so they will look their best.

Replace floor coverings – only if necessary

If your floor coverings are absolutely beyond repair, you may need to replace them. However, there are flooring options that are easy to install and relatively inexpensive:

- Self-stick vinyl tiles are the easiest and least expensive flooring option, costing about \$4 a square foot. Make sure the under floor is thoroughly clean so the vinyl tiles will stick. These tiles even come in a “plank” shape that resembles wood.

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- Vinyl also comes in sheets. You need a little more skill to install sheet vinyl yourself.
- Laminate floors snap into place and float over existing floors. They are easy to install and can resemble wood, stone, marble, etc. This flooring option costs around \$6-\$12 per square foot.



- Ceramic tile floors cost around \$6-\$10 per square foot. Choose large tiles in neutral colors for an easy, appealing floor. If you already have a tile floor but don't like the color, consider painting it.

- For small rooms, such as bathrooms, you can find cut-your-own carpet. These are rolls of carpet you cut yourself to the shape you want and lay in place. For a complicated room like a bathroom, you might want to make a paper template to use as your cutting guide.





Sal's quick fixer-upper tips

If you have wood flooring, don't cover it up! Wood floors are very popular with homebuyers, last a long time, and can be refinished a number of times.

Only replace flooring if absolutely necessary. Clean and repair your existing flooring first.

If your ceramic tile floor is in good shape but you don't like the color, consider painting it as an inexpensive alternative to laying a new floor.

If you need to replace your flooring, choose an inexpensive option you can install yourself, such as self-stick vinyl tiles or a laminate floating floor. Laminate floating floors can resemble wood, marble, or other popular flooring choices at a fraction of the price. They can also be installed by do-it-yourselfers right over the existing floor.

When you clean carpet, work on getting odor as well as stains out of the carpet.

CHAPTER 4

Lighten up!

Potential buyers are attracted to bright and cheery homes. You want to let as much natural light into your home as possible by opening drapes and blinds to let in sunlight. But when sunlight isn't enough, pay attention to how the artificial lighting in your home affects its appeal. Whether you want your home to be light and bright or warm and cozy, lighting helps to set the mood. There are many simple things you can do to improve the lighting in your home, but for larger jobs such as replacing light fixtures, consider hiring an electrician.

To improve the lighting in your home with minimal expense, follow these tips:

- Change burned-out light bulbs.
- Dust or wipe visible light bulbs. Always turn off lights before you wipe them with a wet cloth, or the bulb could shatter.
- Increase the wattage of your light bulbs up to the maximum allowed by your fixtures
- Clean glass globes
- Update the glass globes if they are outdated or don't match
- Clean and polish light fixtures
- Paint light fixtures that are too damaged to clean up
- In the kitchen, add under-cabinet light fixtures to offer task lighting
- When you are showing your home, keep several lights on at all times, especially in hallways, entryways, and small rooms.
- Make sure all closet lights work.

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- Install track lighting or canned recessed lights to a room to bring light to dark areas, improve lighting in a task area, highlight special objects, and brighten whole rooms.
- Re-arrange table and floor lamps so light is evenly distributed around the room.
- Since prospective buyers often drive by properties in the evening, make sure all outside lights are working, and keep several rooms inside lit, even if no one is in them.

If you need to replace a light fixture, consider increasing the number of lights: for example, switch from a three-light fixture to a five-light fixture. This can be especially useful in a bathroom.

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If your home is in an area with warm weather, consider installing ceiling fans with lights. Ceiling fans come in many materials, from wood to wicker to polished nickel. You can find one to match any décor.



For soft, cozy task lighting, add sconces and small table lamps. A pair of sconces set on either side of a mirror look nice and add extra lighting to a room. Try flea markets and garage sales to find inexpensive light fixtures, lamps, and sconces.



Sal's quick fixer-upper tips

Use lighting to set a mood and make your house appear lighter, brighter, and cleaner.

Work with the lighting you have – clean fixtures and globes and replace or dust bulbs.

Use the highest wattage bulbs your fixtures allow.

Use task lighting for such areas as a computer desk or reading corner.

Install inexpensive recessed lights or track lighting.

Buy lamps and sconces at garage sales and flea markets, then paint or polish them.

Attractive ceiling fans are an extra selling point if you live in an area with hot weather.

Hire a professional for any wiring improvements.

CHAPTER 5

Window treatments

“Window treatments” used to just be called curtains. But now you have so many other choices – shades, shutters, blinds, drapes, swags, valances, etc.

Your home may already have window treatments that just need a good cleaning, or you may need to create new, inexpensive window treatments.

Cleaning window treatments

Vinyl mini blinds and bamboo shades

If the mini-blinds or bamboo shades just need a dusting, you can vacuum them with a soft brush attachment or dust them with a feather duster or lamb’s-wool duster. For a more thorough cleaning, you need to:

1. Remove the blinds from the window.
If you must work inside, hang the blinds from the shower rod or lay them in the bathtub. If you can work outside, hang the blinds from a clothesline or lay them on the driveway.
2. Use a clean sponge to hose with sprayer attachment to wash each slat with warm soapy water or ammonia and water
3. Rinse with clear water.
4. Hang to dry

Vertical blinds

Vacuum with a brush attachment used for draperies, or clean with a lamb's-wool duster. If the blinds are fabric-covered, you can spot-clean them with plain water or a little vinegar. Don't use soap and water.

Wood blinds

Vacuum with a brush attachment used for draperies, or clean with a lamb's-wool duster. For deep cleaning, use a wood cleaner. Do not use soap and water.

Wood shutters

Vacuum with a brush attachment used for draperies, or clean with a lamb's-wool duster.

If the shutters are painted, you can wash them with a paintbrush dipped in detergent and water. Use clear water to rinse them and a cotton cloth to dry them.

Vinyl shades

1. Remove vinyl shade from the window.
2. Unroll the shade and lay it flat. Place a small weight on each corner to hold the shade in place
3. Use a sponge dipped in mild soap and water to clean one side of the shade.
4. Use a clean sponge to rinse the shade and then dry it with a cloth.
5. Turn the shade over and clean the other side the same way.

Curtains and drapes

Curtains and drapes can be washed or dry-cleaned, depending on the type of material. Check the label on the curtains. Many carpet cleaners will also clean drapes; this is convenient because you don't have to take the drapes down.

When you wash your curtains or drapes, follow these tips:

1. Remove all hooks, rings, and hardware.
2. Hand or machine wash on gentle cycle, using cool water and mild detergent.
3. Line-dry or use your dryer on the low air setting.
4. Check that trims are tightly attached. If necessary, sew some quick reinforcing stitches.
5. If necessary, iron on the reverse side.
6. If seams have puckered, spritz them lightly with plain water.
7. Gently pull the seams to stretch the curtain or drape back to size, but don't break the stitching.
8. Once the curtains or drapes are dry, reattach the metal hardware and rehang the window treatment.

Creating new window treatments

Your first step in creating new window treatments is deciding what you want:



Wood blinds come in lots of finishes, from lightly pickled to dark mahogany. A light to medium oak finish is appealing to the greatest number of people. You can also coordinate the color of the fabric tape with other colors in the room. You can even paint the blinds.

Vinyl blinds are less expensive than wood blinds but are not as appealing to homebuyers. If you choose vinyl blinds, make sure the cords are separate – an important safety feature for homebuyers with young children.

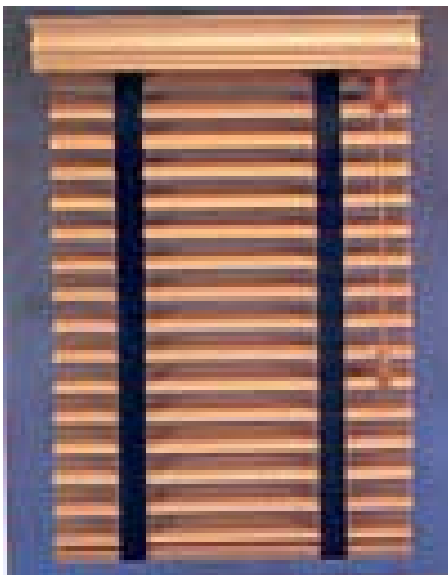


Wood shutters are a good choice for window treatments because they are attractive and offer a lot of privacy. Standard-size shutters are best for small rooms, especially if the room has a country décor. Wide plantation-style shutters look great in larger contemporary rooms.

Like blinds, wood shutters come in a variety of finishes or can be painted to match a room.

The only disadvantage of shutters is that if they need to be custom-made, they can be

expensive. Unless your windows are an unusual size, you should be able to find ready-made shutters that fit.



Composite wood blinds and shutters

Composite wood blinds and shutters let you get the appearance of wood blinds and shutters but without the expense of real wood. In addition, these window treatments won't crack, fade, sag, or warp. They can also be angled to fit arched windows.



Matchstick blinds are an inexpensive, casual look. It's best to hang these blinds inside the window frame for a custom fit.



Shades can be made out of fabric or vinyl. A simple vinyl shade can be very inexpensive, yet can be dressed up with fabric, stamps, stencils, or wallpaper stickers.

Vertical blinds are popular for sliding doors.

Curtains and swags offer a more traditional look. Custom-made curtains are expensive, but you can buy inexpensive curtains at any department store. Sheer curtains are a popular choice because they allow light in while still offering privacy. Choose a plain sheer in a neutral color. You can either let the sheer flow to a windowsill or the floor, or you can gather it at the top and bottom of a window frame.

When you choose curtains and swags, you also need to choose window treatment hardware. Match the hardware to the style of your draperies and your

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room. Choose sturdy, larger diameter rods for heavy draperies, and thin, light rods for sheer panels.

You can make a ceiling look higher by installing the hardware above the window frame, or even along the ceiling line.

Alternative window treatments

For inexpensive window treatments, try these ideas:

- Loop silk flower garlands around your curtain rod
- Wrap twig grapevines, either alone or embellished with silk flowers or raffia, around your curtain rod
- Be creative with fabric – turn tablecloths, cloth napkins, scarves, towels, or bandanas into no-sew window treatments
- String mini white lights around your curtain rod to add a festive touch

Wash the windows

The best, most expensive window treatment in the world will not sell your home if the windows are grimy and dirty. Wash them inside and out with a commercial cleaner or a simple mix of vinegar and water. Also clean the window tracks and rub them with soap or a candle so they will open easily.



Sal's quick fixer-upper tips

Clean the window treatments you have instead of replacing them.

If you must replace window treatments, be creative to find inexpensive choices.

Choose composite wood shutters or blinds for the beauty of wood without the expense.

Wash the windows and window tracks.

Wax the window tracks so the windows will slide open and close easily.

CHAPTER 6

Quick kitchen spruce-ups



The kitchen should be the first room you fix up in your home because it gives you the best return on your money. To spruce up your kitchen, you can –

Clean everything!

Your first step in a new kitchen is to clean everything – walls, windows, floorboards, countertops, floors, etc. Your goal is to remove all grease, grime, and smells. A mixture of hot water and white vinegar makes an inexpensive and effective cleaner that also kills odors.

Paint the walls

If you are sanding the walls as part of preparing them for painting, be sure to clean the walls first. Sanding will grind grease and grime into the walls.

Paint the walls and ceilings a neutral color like white, taupe, or sand. White reflects light and makes your kitchen look bigger. Taupe and sand will make the kitchen feel warmer and cozier.

Use semi-gloss paint or a paint specially formulated for kitchens.

Update the cabinets

You have several options for updating the cabinets. Of course, you can always replace the cabinets entirely, but that is a large expense. Instead, consider these options for refurbishing the cabinets you already have:



- Clean them thoroughly using a commercial cleaner meant for wood, then polish them.
- Replace the doors with glass panels.
- Bleach them to lighten the wood color. Commercial wood bleaches are available, or you can make your own by mixing one part laundry bleach to 10 parts water.
- Paint them with a high-gloss enamel paint. White is a good color choice.
- Sand and varnish them.
- Replace the doors.
- Replace the handles and drawer pulls.
- Install fresh shelf paper.

Update the countertop

A new laminate or tile countertop is a relatively inexpensive way to add color and life to a kitchen. The average do-it-yourselfer can put a new laminate cover or new tiles on an existing countertop.



Also redo the backsplash. New laminate or new tiles on the backsplash will help make the kitchen look and smell cleaner. If you choose tile, you can mix a few decorative tiles in with plain-color tiles for an extra decorative punch. Or check the self-stick murals and stickers from www.ideastix.com that you can apply to ceramic tiles.

Update the flooring

Another way to inexpensively update your kitchen is new flooring. Most homebuyers love wood floors, so if you are lucky enough to have decent wood floors, just refinish them. Other inexpensive options are vinyl sheet flooring and vinyl tiles. Both are easy to install. If you have more do-it-yourself skills, you could try a tile floor.

To dress up your new floor, buy some inexpensive throw rugs and scatter them where people stand a lot – for example, in front of the stove and sink.

Add some window treatments

Window treatments can bring color and personality to a kitchen:

If your blinds are in good shape, clean them. Otherwise get rid them and invest in new mini-blinds, valances, or shutters.

You can buy valances ready-made or sew your own. Or, you can create your own valances by draping colorful bandanas, place mats, cloth napkins, or hand towels over a pretty curtain rod.

Update the appliances

If your budget allows, you can buy new or good-quality used appliances for the kitchen. An updated, energy-efficient oven, stove, and dishwasher can be great selling points in a home, plus they make the kitchen look cleaner. Stainless-steel appliances are popular in kitchens.

If you can't update the appliances, clean them thoroughly, especially the refrigerator, the oven, and the stovetop. Take off the knobs and polish them, and replace the burner pans if they are discolored and stained.



If the appliance colors don't match or the finish looks beat-up, check with the manufacturer to see if you can replace the door. You can also buy some appliance paint and give the appliances a shiny new coat of paint.

Finishing touches

- Replace or repaint your sink.

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- Check that the sink drains well. If it drains slowly, pour some baking soda and vinegar down the drain. Let it sit for 10 minutes and then flush with boiling water.
- Repair any leaks under the sink.
- Scrub the sink.
- Shine the faucets. Better yet, replace them with modern, up-to-date fixtures.
- Clean or replace your lighting fixtures.
- Add under-cabinet lighting.
- Add crown molding to the walls or cabinets or a chair rail to the middle of the wall. If you aren't handy with a saw, skip the mitering by buying "miterless" molding.
- Buy pretty matching towels and a tablecloth.
- Remove clutter from the countertops and cabinets.
- Clean the filter from the vent hood.
- Put baking soda, orange peels, or lemon peels down the disposal to kill odors.
- Clean the microwave by running it for a few minutes with a bowl of water and lemon juice inside. Then just wipe the microwave down. Even if the microwave doesn't come with the house, a clean microwave shows the house has been well-maintained.
- Use a cotton swab dipped in bleach water to clean the rubber gasket around the refrigerator door.



Sal's quick fixer-upper tips

Use semi-gloss or kitchen paint in a light neutral color.

Clean your cabinets inside and out and lay down fresh shelf paper.

Paint or refinish the cabinet fronts and replace the cabinet hardware.

Put in a new tile or laminate countertop.

If you can't replace the appliances, clean them thoroughly and give them a fresh coat of appliance paint.

CHAPTER 7

Quick bathroom fix-ups



Bathrooms rank with kitchens as the room most frequently remodeled. Here are tips for updating your bathroom:

- Wash all floors and bathroom tiles.
- Clean the tile and grout. Run a grout pen over the grout lines to clean and recolor it.
- If the floor is ugly, cover it with a cut-to-fit bathroom rug or peel-and-stick tiles.
- If the tile is discolored or you don't like the color, paint it:
 1. Wash the tiles with a detergent and an abrasive non-metallic pad.

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2. Rinse and dry the tiles thoroughly.
 3. Sand the tiles with a fine aluminum oxide sand paper.
 4. Wipe off the residue with a damp rag.
 5. Paint the tiles with a high-adhesion interior latex bonding primer.
 6. After the primer dries, apply a finish coat of paint.
- Apply stick-on mini-murals to ceramic tiles. Go to www.ideastix.com for stick-on murals that will fit over a few tiles.

You could put these on lamps, mirrors, tubs, sinks, switch-plates, and accessories. You can even put them on walls to cover small holes.

- Replace leaking or worn-out faucets.
- Clean under the sinks and put down fresh contact paper.
- Paint the walls with a semi-gloss or bathroom paint in a white or neutral color.
- Use a 3:1 water-bleach mixture to clean away all mildew.
- Thoroughly clean the toilet. If you can't get rid of toilet stains, install a new toilet.
- Add more storage – extra towel bars, shelves on the wall or over the toilet, a medicine cabinet, etc.
- Add a storage cabinet into the wall between the wall studs.
- Add hooks behind the door, next to the shower, and near the sink. Add a hook under the sink to hold a blow-dryer.
- If you have a plain, large mirror on the wall over the sink, frame it with molding to give it a custom look.
- Add a new shower curtain and window topper. You could also replace your shower curtain with shower doors.
- Replace the knobs and pulls on your vanity drawers and cabinets.
- Add a lighted switch to make nighttime bathroom visits a little easier.

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- Add electric outlets – particularly in older houses where the only outlet may be connected to the lighting fixture.
- Replace or reglaze the sink.
- Replace caulking around the tub, shower, and sink.
- Refinish or repaint the vanity and replace the vanity countertop.
- To update an old tub that you can't afford to replace, reglaze it or apply a prefabricated tub surround to the existing wall.
- If you have shower doors, clean them thoroughly.
- Check that the sink and tub drain well. If they drain slowly, pour some baking soda and vinegar down the drain. Let it sit for 10 minutes and then flush with boiling water.
- Clean the bathroom thoroughly - fixtures, floor, vanity, windows, lighting fixtures, mirrors, etc.



Sal's quick fixer-upper tips

Clean the bathroom thoroughly.

Use semi-gloss or bathroom paint in white or a light color to brighten the walls.

Add storage everywhere you can with shelves, hooks, towel bars, etc.

Take advantage of "found space" by creating a recessed wall cabinet between the wall studs.

Shine everything that can be shined.

Replace the toilet if you can't get it looking clean.

Accessorize with pretty matching towels, a new shower curtain, and window treatments.

Add molding to dress up a plain mirror.

Set out bowls of potpourri to freshen the scent of the bathroom.

Add some potpourri in a pretty bowl to keep the bathroom smelling fresh and clean.

CHAPTER 8

Adding curb appeal

Getting your house beautiful on the inside won't make a bit of difference if buyers never make it past the front door. Most buyers make a mental "yes or no" buying decision within three minutes of seeing your home – before they even set foot in the front door. So you need to make the front of your house as attractive as possible by adding "curb appeal." Curb appeal gets potential buyers' attention and helps to make a great first impression. It involves all exterior areas of your property: the house, garden, driveway, and paths.

In addition to adding curb appeal, landscaping can increase the value of your home by at least 15%. This is one remodeling project where you usually get back 100% and even more of your investment.

To improve your home's curb appeal, follow the tips in this chapter.

Lawn and garden tips



- Keep your lawn well-watered so it is green and healthy-looking. Some fertilizer and weed-killer can also help.
- Keep your lawn cut and edged.
- Lay fresh sod or

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- spread grass seed in areas where the grass is worn away.
- Roll up garden hoses and put away gardening tools.
- Keep toys, bikes, and balls picked up and put away.
- If you have a pool or spa, keep it freshly maintained and cleaned.
- Clean any pet “residue” from the yard.
- Install decorative edging around flowerbeds and fill the beds with fresh mulch such as wood chips.

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- Add flowers in garden beds, along the fence or property line, around a lamppost or mailbox, next to a retaining wall, and around the front door.



Yellow flowers in planters around the front door look especially welcoming.



Blue flowers around a fence make a small yard appear larger.

Choose flowers with different blooming times for continuous color the entire growing season.

Choose one dominant color, planting about 70% of that color and 30% of one or two supporting colors.

- Plant sweet-smelling flowers along the path to your door.
- Trim the trees, shrubs, and hedges around your home, especially any bushes that conceal windows or the porch. Consider safety features: Are there bushes someone could hide behind near the front door of the house?
- Choose low-maintenance plants and flowers.
- Pick up any leaves, garbage, tree limbs, and debris from your yard.
- Choose front shrubbery that is interesting but easy to care for. Try varying the height, colors, and textures of the plantings. Even plants of different shades of green provide interest.
- Plant trees and shrubs at the corners of the house to hide the foundation.
- If the back yard doesn't have a fence, build one. Privacy fences offer – well, privacy – while chain-link fences are better for security since

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neighbors can see the back yard. If the back yard does have a fence, repair or replace any broken fence pickets. Paint the fence if it looks worn.

- Put a pretty fence around the front yard, especially if the house is on a busy street. A picket fence looks nice and adds a cozy, cottage-like feel to the house. Post and rail fences add a more rustic look and are relatively easy to install because they come pre-cut and pre-drilled - you just need to dig the post-holes.



House tips

- If trim, shutters, garage doors, or any other wood is rotting, replace it or use putty to make repairs.



- Power-wash the exterior of the house.
- Paint the exterior of the house, including trim, window casings, shutters, and doors.

Paint or stain the door a welcoming color, like a deep red. If the door doesn't need to be painted, wash it thoroughly. You can also add molding to a flat door to make it look more interesting.

For the walls and trim, white is always a popular color. You can also choose a bright color to make your house look

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bigger, or a warm color to make the house more cheerful and inviting.

Choose a color that fits in with the neighborhood.

- Add shutters to at least the windows in the front of the house.
- Replace any broken windowpanes and wash the windows until they sparkle.
- Clean out and repair the gutters, downspouts, and chimney. Make sure water drains away from the house.
- Paint or replace the mailbox.
- Check the roof, replacing any missing, peeling, or rippled shingles.
- If your garage faces the street, diminish its prominence by painting the garage door a darker color than the rest of your home.
- If the front door sticks or won't close easily, oil it and check the strike plate. Sometimes the strike plate needs to be tightened with a screwdriver.
- Add or replace storm or screen doors.
- Hang a fresh wreath or a polished brass doorknocker on the door
- Be sure the house numbers are clean and clearly visible from the street. If needed, hang new brass numbers. If the neighborhood also has numbers on the curb, give them a fresh coat of paint.
- Clean outdoor light fixtures. If there isn't enough outdoor lighting, add solar fixtures that will come on automatically from dusk to dawn. A large light above the garage door and near the front door provides security, while small lamps along a path or sidewalk makes the house warm and welcoming.
- Add window boxes full of pretty, colorful flowers to the windows.

Driveway, path, and porch/deck

- Repair cracks in your driveway and sidewalk.
- Pull weeds around the driveway and sidewalk and in any flowerbeds.

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- If the home doesn't have an outdoor sitting area, build a simple deck from wood or wood substitute, or a patio from brick, rock, or stamped concrete.
- If the home has a deck, refurbish it with cleaning or sealing. You can tell if the deck needs a fresh coat of sealant by sprinkling a few drops of water on it. If the deck absorbs the water, it needs fresh sealant. You can use a colored-sealant to add color to the deck at the same time.

If the water beads up, the sealing is okay and you can see if cleaning the deck improves its appearance enough. To clean the deck, spray it with a water-detergent mixture and then rinse.

If the deck still looks dingy after cleaning, apply a water-resistant stain to the wood.

Before sealing or cleaning your deck, be sure to cover any plants near the deck with protective plastic.

- Repair any cracks in concrete porches and patios. You can even paint the concrete for a fresh, colorful appearance.
- If the patio has been enclosed with screens, remove the screens to fully open the patio to the outdoors.
- Make sure playground equipment is in safe condition.
- Add a simple mister system to the patio or deck so it can be used throughout the hot summer months.
- Set up some outdoor furniture, like rockers or chaises on the porch and patio or deck. Add new cushions or cushion covers.
- Add a simple outdoor fireplace or bubble fountain to the patio or deck as a focal point. A fountain also adds the pleasant sound of flowing water to the yard.
- Put out a pretty welcome mat or cheerful rug on the porch.





Sal's quick fixer-upper tips

Clean up the yard, removing any clutter, debris, litter, toys, etc.

Mow and edge the lawn.

Clean and repair the gutters.

Wash and paint the house, including trim, shutters,
the front door, and the garage door.

Add shutters to the windows in the front of the house.

Put containers full of yellow flowers near the front door.

Repair dead spots in the lawn by spreading new grass seed or putting in patches
of sod.

Add a seating area in the front of the house to look welcoming.

Add a deck or patio to the back of the house.

Keep the water in spas and pools clean and sparkling.

Extend the living area to the backyard by adding a seating area,
fire pot, and bubble fountain to the deck or patio.

CHAPTER 9

Miscellaneous remodeling tips



This chapter includes some miscellaneous remodeling tips for getting a house ready to sell:

- Tour model homes to see what features appeal to homebuyers in your area and what colors are popular.
- Remove clutter around the house, yard, and garage. If necessary, rent a storage space to hold extra items.
- Fix squeaky floors and stairs.
- Replace switch plates and outlet covers.
- Hang a mirror in the entryway of the home to make it appear bigger and brighter.
- Improve storage by installing closet features such as extra hanging bars, shelves, and shoe racks in the closets.
- Remove personal items and collectibles from the house. You want the homebuyers to be able to see their own personalities in the home.
- Replace air filters frequently to keep dust down around the home.
- If you have cats, empty litter boxes daily and use baking soda to cut down odors. If you have dogs, keep them outside as much as possible. Also,

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sprinkle “pet odor” carpet freshener on the carpet and vacuum just before a showing.

- Place scented potpourri around the house.
- Just before a showing, cook bread, cinnamon rolls, or cookies to make your home smell nice.
- Wash all the windows.
- Add new crown moldings, chair rails, or baseboards.
- Replace the hot water heater if it is more than ten years old.
- Make sure smoke detectors are working.
- Install an electric or no-vent gas fireplace in the main living area and the master bedroom.
- Clean the garage floor and install shelves, cabinets, pegboards, and other storage helps. If the garage floor is badly stained, lay down a fresh layer of new concrete.
- Keep the temperature in the house comfortable, running the heat in the winter and the air conditioner in the summer.
- Add new throw pillows in cheery colors to sofas and beds.
- Arrange furniture to create conversation zones and to take advantage of focal points in the home, such as a fireplace or a beautiful view out the window.
- Place live plants and fresh flowers around the house. If necessary, you can rent larger plants from a nursery.
- Hang pictures and mirrors at eye level. Mirrors will brighten a room and make it seem bigger, especially if you angle them to capture nice views or interesting architectural elements.
- Prepare a “homebuyer’s notebook” for the house, listing such items as paint colors, warranty information for appliances, source for floor coverings and window treatments, companies that have worked on the home, and any other information that would be helpful to someone buying the home. You could also include information about the neighborhood,

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such as locations and phone numbers for schools, grocery stores,
libraries, etc.

CHAPTER 10

Resources

For more information about remodeling your home, check these resources:

www.fastfixerupperprofits.com

www.DIYonline.com

www.interiordec.about.com

www.mlsflatratelisting.com/gettingreadytosell.htm

www.realestatehow.com

www.realestate.com

www.moen.com

www.jorbins.com/home-improvement-decorating/

www.bhg.com

www.ivillage.com/home/howtoguide/repairandrenovate

www.thefamilycorner.com

www.interiordec.about.com

www.styleathome.com

www.bulb.com

www.dearbornhomes.com/sellerguide-preparing.htm

www.home-decorating-made-easy.com

About The Author

Sal Vannutini has successfully renovated real estate for personal and investment purposes for over 10 years.

His love of renovating has allowed him to secure financial freedom by the age of 40, and at the time of writing, he is retired from his “real job”, and spends his time renovating for fun and profit, as well as hanging out with his wife and children.

Sal's experience also comes as a result of 11 years in the real estate profession where he has witnessed what works, and what doesn't work when remodeling a home, and the effect this can have on the eventual selling price; as well as his “in the trenches” experiences as a full time renovator.

He is also an international author and highly respected speaker on the topic of investing in fixer-uppers. Sal's published works include: Renovate For Profit; Fixer-Upper Fortunes; and his #1 selling online home study course- “How To Make Big Profits Fixing Up Houses: Quickly”, and his exclusive foreclosure investment software “Foreclosure Wizard”.

To find out more about how you too can turn your real estate passion into a lucrative income stream and quit your job forever, visit www.fastfixerupperprofits.com and claim your free 6 part mini-course valued at \$47; and www.foreclosurewizard.com and claim your free foreclosure investing report.

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