



Spring

HOME

IMPROVEMENT 2

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# Tips to make a living room a more comfortable, welcoming space

A kitchen is widely recognized as the most popular room in a home. Though it might be true that the hustle and bustle of home life runs through the kitchen, many a memory is made in the living room as well.

Living rooms tend to be go-to spaces for family movie nights, game watches with fellow fans and places to gather during holiday celebrations. That's a lot of quality time spent in the living room, and those moments can be more enjoyable if the space is as comfortable as possible. With that in mind, people can consider various ways to make living rooms more comfortable.

**Various shades of white, beige, tan, or even gray can help to establish a warm, comfortable vibe in a living room.**

- Prioritize comfort over aesthetics. In an era of Instagram, it's easy to fall head over heels with images when designing a living room. Aesthetic appeal certainly has its place in a living room, but it's important to remember how much living will be done in these rooms when designing them. Comfortable couches and furnishings like ottomans can make it easier to relax in the living room whether you're watching a movie, cheering on your favorite team or reading a book.

- Ensure there's ample seating. It can be hard to feel comfortable in cramped quarters whether you're welcoming friends and family into your home or simply lounging around on Sunday mornings. If comfort



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is your top priority, arrange the room so there's ample seating throughout and people don't feel like they're sitting on top of one another when spending time in the room.

- Consider neutral paint colors. Furnishings are not the only things that can affect how comfortable people feel in a living room. The home improvement experts at The Spruce note that neutral paint colors with warm undertones help to establish a cozy feel in a living room. Various shades of white, beige, tan, or even gray can help to establish a warm, comfortable vibe in a living room.

- Incorporate the outdoors into the room. The great outdoors can have a calming effect on anyone, so it makes sense that incorporating the outdoors into a living room can make the space feel more comfortable. Furnish the room with plants and look for items with earth-toned furnishings to create a calm and comfortable vibe in the space. In addition, new windows that allow for more natural light and offer views into a yard can help lift spirits and make the room feel more comfortable.

A comfortable living room is a space where people will want to spend their time. A few simple strategies can help create an inviting and comfortable vibe in any living room. HI254738

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# What to know about landscape lighting

Home improvement trends come and go, and one trend that has become wildly popular in recent years is recognizable in yards every night. Landscape lighting has transformed how people see and enjoy their properties at night, making it one of the more sought-after upgrades among modern homeowners.

Curb appeal is often seen through the lens of how homes appear during daylight hours, but landscape lighting can make homes look better and more modern, and potentially safer, after the sun goes down. With such potential, landscape lighting is worth exploring for homeowners looking to upgrade their properties.

## Are there different types of landscape lighting?

When considering landscape lighting, homeowners should know that there are various options to consider. According to the lighting experts at Lumens, spotlights project a concentrated and narrow beam of light that's usually around 45 degrees. Spotlights are often chosen to highlight specific features on a property, like a component of the landscaping. Individuals who want to cast light over wider, more general areas may consider floodlights, which Lumens notes spread light up to 120 degrees.

Inground lighting is among the more sophisticated landscape lighting options. Lumens notes that inground lighting illuminates the whole of a tree or structure, often creating a dramatic look. These circle-shaped lights also are great at illuminating walkways and driveways.

Post lights are another outdoor lighting option, and these are often used to light up long walkways and pathways so it's easier and safer to navigate dark areas at night.

## Is landscape lighting a job a DIYer can handle?

Many homeowners consider a do-it-yourself approach when pondering a



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potential home renovation, and a landscape lighting project is likely to inspire such curiosity as well. The home experts at HGTV note that the feasibility of DIY in regard to a landscape lighting project depends on the type of lighting homeowners want to install and where they want to install it. Replacing an existing electrical fixture may be well within the skill of a seasoned DIYer, but installing a new fixture is a job best left to the professionals. Homeowners whose homes currently have no or very little landscape lighting are almost certainly better off working with a professional. Solar lighting that does not require any electrical work can be installed quickly and easily by anyone, but such options may not provide the look homeowners are aiming for.

**How much lighting is necessary?**

The amount of lighting homeowners want to install is up to them. If the home currently has little or no landscape lighting, a consultation with a professional can help to determine how much lighting to install and where to install it. When discussing landscape lighting, homeowners may want to inquire about dimmers. Dimmers can increase or decrease lighting depending on the situation. For example, homeowners may want a little extra light during a party, but less when relaxing alone outside at night. Dimmers allow homeowners to adjust as necessary.

Landscape lighting is a popular home renovation trend. Homeowners considering adding landscape lighting to their property are urged to work with a skilled professional to devise and install a set-up that makes their homes more appealing at night. TF234813

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# Tips to renovate on a budget

Renovations around the house require an investment of time and often considerable amounts of money. Findings from the 2024 U.S. Houzz & Home Study show that home renovations are becoming more expensive. The median renovation spending for homeowners has gone up 60 percent since 2020. Angi, a home services website, reports the average renovation cost for homes between 1,250 and 1,600 square feet is \$51,772, but the final cost of home renovations depends on the scope of the project.

Homeowners who are conserving funds can rest assured that it is possible to make meaningful changes both inside and outside a home without breaking the bank. Here are some ways to renovate a home on a budget.

- **Create a budget and don't waver.** Figure out exactly what you can afford for a renovation and then make that your maximum dollars spent. Research comparable projects in your area and be honest about whether you can afford the renovation as-is or if you must adapt ideas to fit your price. Make sure to build in a cushion of around 15 to 20 percent for any unforeseen expenses that may arise once a renovation is underway.
- **Maximize an existing floor plan.** This Old House suggests looking for ways to maximize your current layout before you invest in major renovations like an expansion. Bring in a designer with an eye for utilizing space. For example, see how you might be able to replace shelves with pull-out drawers in the kitchen. Moving furniture around or rethinking floor plans also can help to lower costs.
- **Balance DIY with hiring contractors.** You can save money by tackling some projects yourself, but only if you are confident in your renovation skills. Rather than risk making costly mistakes and having to redo things, hire well-vetted professionals but ask if there's any DIY work you can do to cut costs.

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- **Check clearance and resale stores.** Shop discount stores for building materials to save money. For example, if a builder ordered too many cabinets they may offer them to Habitat for Humanity ReStores, which are nonprofit home improvement stores and donation centers. Checking the clearance and markdown sections of other stores may yield considerable savings on items needed for a renovation. Warehouse retailers like Costco or Sam's Club also can be great places to find certain home improvement materials and furnishings.
- **Take advantage of free services.** Certain stores may offer things like free consultations with designers who can show you what a renovation can look like. This is advantageous to the stores because once you see the potential you're more likely to buy the products, even if it's not mandatory.
- **Resurface instead of redo.** Certain items can be made to look new with minimal effort. Paint is a relatively inexpensive tool that can transform walls and more. A good hardwood flooring company can buff out a floor and put a new coating instead of an entirely new floor. Kitchen cabinets can be resurfaced instead of replaced as well. Finding ways to perform home renovations on a budget may require some creative thinking, but it's possible to get results at the right price point. EL255830

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# Soak up these luxurious bathroom features

Kitchens and bathrooms are two popular areas to address when renovating a home. Modernize Home Services says 26 percent of sellers make bathroom improvements to their homes before listing. Midscale bath remodels will net a return on investment of about 64 percent, while a luxury bathroom overhaul has an ROI of about 57 percent.

When considering bathroom renovations, homeowners may want to include some unique features that can add style and function, not to mention some much-deserved luxury. With that in mind, the following are some luxurious features to consider.

- **Heated floors:** There is something to be said for stepping out of the shower and being met with warmth underfoot. Heated floors are not just for people who live in cold climates, either. When the air conditioning is pumping on hot days, tile floors can feel chilly. Heated floors also are aesthetically appealing because homeowners don't have to factor in baseboard heaters or forced-air vents.
- **Steam showers:** There are many different steam showers on the market, and each can turn regular showers into steamy spa-like enclaves. A steam shower is similar to a sauna and utilizes a steam generator to produce steam in a single area, advises Badeloft® Luxury Bathrooms.
- **Soaking tub:** Although the majority of people shower as part of their daily hygiene routine, a deep soaking tub separate from the shower is ideal for those who enjoy a good bath.
- **Luxury mirror:** Upgrading the bathroom mirror to one that offers features like defoggers, integrated lighting and a dimmer setting can elevate the bathroom.



- **Floating vanity:** A floating vanity is mounted directly to the wall to leave space underneath. Better Homes & Gardens says a floating vanity can lend an airy feel to a bathroom.
- **Frameless shower:** A frameless (glass) shower door is not only luxurious but also functional for people who want to age in place. With no edge or lip to step over to enter the shower, anyone with mobility challenges can walk into a frameless shower safely.
- **Water closet:** If space allows, separating the toilet in a water closet from the rest of the bathroom space affords even more privacy. Plus, in couple's bathrooms, a water closet enables two to use the bathroom at the same time for different functions.
- **Walk-in-closet:** Relocating the bedroom closet to right off the owner's bathroom affords an immediate opportunity to dress comfortably, thus streamlining a morning routine.

Bathroom renovations are worthwhile investments. Choosing some unique upgrades can enhance the design and function of these important spaces. HI254747

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# Tech upgrades for your home entertainment space

Life in the twenty-first century can feel like it's moving at breakneck speed. Perhaps nowhere is that feeling more pronounced than within the technology sector, where new products are often upstaged by more advanced models, sometimes within a few weeks of an item's initial release.

The speed with which technology advances can make it difficult to keep up. However, it's important to note that software updates can bring devices up to speed in a matter of minutes, often at no cost to users. That can quiet concerns some may have about investing in entertainment room technology. For those ready to move forward with their entertainment room remodel, these tech upgrades can take such spaces to the next level.

- **New television:** Consumers who like to watch television but are not necessarily into what makes certain televisions more suitable to their viewing habits than others may find their heads spinning when they begin their search for a new device. Indeed, the alphabet soup of OLED, QLED, 4K, and other television styles can be difficult to navigate. If confusion reins over your television shopping trips, it might help to identify what you watch most often and then find the type of TV that most suits your viewing habits. Though opinions vary and consumers should always trust their own eyes, the United Kingdom-based Smart Home Sounds recommends OLED televisions for movie and television lovers as well as gamers who require fast response times. Sports fans may benefit by prioritizing refresh rate when shopping for a new television. Though refresh rate is not the only variable to consider, a faster refresh rate can ensure games don't look fuzzy when the action picks up.

- **Speaker system:** Surround sound can take any entertainment setup to the next level. Modern televisions are slim and that sleek design does not always translate to great built-in sound. Though some recent models

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feature dramatically improved built-in sound capabilities compared to their slim screen ancestors, a home theater system featuring superior sound is still a must. A home theater surround sound system with subwoofer and Bluetooth connectivity can



greatly improve the viewing experience no matter what's on-screen. For consumers working on a tight budget, a soundbar that can be upgraded with additional surround sound speakers down the road can be a great way to slowly build a theater-like sound system in your living room. When purchasing a surround sound system, consumers also can consider speaker stands that hold larger rear speakers in place.

• Lighting: Entertainment room lighting can be easy to overlook, particularly when consumers go down the television and sound system rabbit holes. But the right lighting can set the perfect tone in an entertainment room. The decision of which lighting to go with should include consideration of how the space will (or won't) be used when you aren't watching the latest blockbuster or big game. If the room is exclusively for movies or big games, then lighting that calls to mind a movie theater, complete with LED strip lights on the walls, is an option worth considering. If the entertaining space is your living room and a space where you're just as likely to read a book as enjoy a family movie night, then recessed lighting in the ceiling with dimmable bulbs allows you to pivot back and forth between lighting schemes depending on how the room is being used at any given moment.

It's easy to get lost when considering tech upgrades for an entertainment room. But pairing the right television with great sound and appropriate lighting can make for a consistently impressive viewing experience.

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## Why hiring a painter is the right choice

Few home improvements can change the look of a room faster and more affordably than a painting makeover. In fact, homeowners often turn to paint before they make any other renovations. Home Light, a real estate technology company, says painting a home's interior can net a return on investment as high as 107 percent.

Although painting is a project that can be tackled by do-it-yourselfers, there are various advantages to calling in a professional to handle painting projects. Here is a look at some of the benefits to working with a professional painter.

### Cut down on the job time

A professional painter can reduce the project timeline. Painters have the skill set and experience to complete a project in a timely manner. This means the job will be streamlined from preparation to clean-up.

### Pay attention to details

Professional painters are likely to do a job that is nearly flawless, especially after homeowners exercise their due diligence and vet painters carefully. Professionals will pay attention to the small details that less experienced painters wouldn't think about.

### Reduce your workload

Painting can be a time-consuming job, and most of it occurs even before you pick up a brush. It can take hours to prep walls, patch holes, remove moldings, and apply painter's tape. Homeowners who do not have much time are better off leaving trusting the project to a professional.

### Painters already have equipment

Do-it-yourselfers may need to buy new tools before beginning the job.



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This means brushes, rollers, tape, tarps, trays, and much more. Unless you plan to paint multiple times, this can make stocking up a considerable investment. Professionals already have all the right gear and tools of the trade.

**Lasting results**

Professional painters understand which products will produce the desired results, depending on the wear and tear of the space. Paints are not all created equal, and certain walls, floors and trim may require unique priming and preparation that novices are not familiar with. Professional painters can help ensure durability and save homeowners from having to do the job again in a few months or years.

**A safer experience**

Painting can be a challenging job when it involves painting hard-to-reach spaces and/or climbing and balancing on tall ladders. Homeowners are not at risk of injury when hiring a professional painter. In addition, professional painters should be licensed and insured. This means if an injury or incident occurs, the homeowner will not be on the hook for the cost. A fresh coat of paint can produce amazing results. Leaving the work to a professional can ensure a job is done correctly and beautifully and completed on time. HI254741



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