

## Finishing Touches Increase the Value of Your Home

You can improve the resale value of your home through some inexpensive projects. This will help at the time you put your house on the market.

### Details

You may not be able to convince sellers to shell out money to professionally stage their home, but getting it sparkling and clutter-free requires little more than elbow grease. After clearing away clutter, polish the hardwoods, clean the countertops, and dust the light fixtures. You can make a stainless steel sink shine with thrifty cleaning remedies such as baby oil or club soda, according to DoItYourself.com.

*Tips:*

**Box it up.** Most people pack up after they sell the house, but why wait? Sellers should start packing as early as possible—ideally, before they put the home on the market.

**Show off the laundry space.** Make the laundry room fresh, inviting, and organized. Make sure light bulbs are working, and hide soaps in a cupboard or line them neatly on a shelf.

**Focus their attention.** Pick a focal point for each room. For example, the focal point of a bedroom is usually the bed, and for a music room, it's the piano. If a room is mostly empty, you can help draw attention to a corner with a plant or mirror.

### Floors

Hardwoods are on most buyers' wish lists (red oak being the most popular). Hardwood flooring averages about \$5 to \$15 per square foot, plus about \$2 to \$8 per square foot for installation, so it'll be pricier than vinyl, carpet, or other options. But it can make a huge difference. To imitate the look for less, try vinyl or Bamboo flooring, a sustainable resource that resembles wood but averages \$4 to \$6 per square foot.

*Tips:*

**Call the experts.** Dirty, worn carpet may benefit from professional cleaning.

**Refinish it for cheap.** Practically any beaten-up hardwood can be salvaged with refinishing. Call a professional tile company to freshen up ceramic tile grout—or, for do-it-yourselfers, hardware stores sell grout paint.

**Add a layer on top or bottom.** Use an area rug, even over carpets. It'll add a splash of color, and bring definition to living areas. If you're adding inexpensive carpeting, consider upgrading the carpet pad, Fisher says.

### Lighting

New lighting fixtures are a quick way to create ambiance. Contemporary choices are brushed nickel and chrome finishes. Use lighting to highlight special features—pendant lights to show off that kitchen island or sconces to illuminate a foyer. Under-cabinet lighting in the kitchen is affordable and makes countertops sparkle.

*Tips:*

**Go natural.** Open those blinds and wipe down the windows. You'd be surprised at how much a simple window cleaning can instantly improve natural light.

**Save on energy costs.** Compact fluorescent bulbs remain the go-to choice for energy efficiency.

**Don't forget the basement.** The biggest problem with basements is a lack of adequate lighting. Paint walls an opaque color so natural light will appear brighter.

### **Paint**

A home's interior painted in a pale yellow or light green, or even beige, gives buyers an idea of what they can do with a space. Reserve darker or trendier colors for accent walls or to highlight details such as a fireplace or an arched doorway. Common color picks for accent walls are dark red, green or stone gray. Or instead of introducing a new color, use the paint in the rest of the room as a guide, choosing a color that's three shades darker. To bring depth to a long hallway paint the wall at the end of a long hallway a different shade than the others.

*Tips:*

**Shine with sheen.** Flat or matte finish is difficult to clean and shows scuffs. Increasing the sheen can brighten rooms. Eggshell or satin bounces light off the walls to make spaces seem larger. Semi-gloss, higher on the sheen level, is a good option for kitchens and bathrooms since it's easy to clean. Gloss, the shiniest of all, is best for big "statement" areas, such as the front door,

**Create monochromatic harmony.** Use different variations of the same color throughout the home. Choose a color card, which usually has about three or four similar hues, and use two or more colors from the single card. Use the lighter colors in the main living areas and darker shades for the rooms that branch out, such as the bedrooms.

**Paint the baseboards white.** But don't use stark white.

## **7 Ways to Create a Cohesive Style**

1. **Concentrate on big impact rooms.** Kitchens and bathrooms still usually offer the most bang for your buck.

2. **Go neutral.** Don't introduce too much color to the "bones" of the home. Stay neutral with walls, cabinets, and fixtures. Bring in pops of colors through accessories.

3. **Consult an expert.** A professional stager or remodeler can work within your budget and pinpoint where best to spend your dollars.

4. **Know when inexpensive won't work.** Certain projects simply can't be done cheaply, especially in a high-end home.

5. **Find inspiration.** For design guidance, grab a catalog from Pottery Barn, Restoration Hardware, or Williams-Sonoma.

6. **Plan your budget.** Even small projects can carry a premium if a contractor is needed for installation. For labor savings, bulk your work, grouping several projects in a full day's work rather than hiring a handyman or contractor for separate hourly jobs.

7. **Complement the architecture.** Match the styles of your improvements to the style of the house.

*(Paraphrased from an article in a National Association of Realtors website)*