



TRI-STATE HOME TRENDS

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SCREENED PORCH TO A
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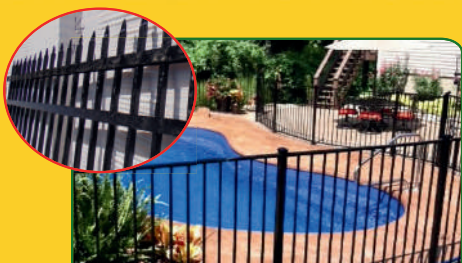
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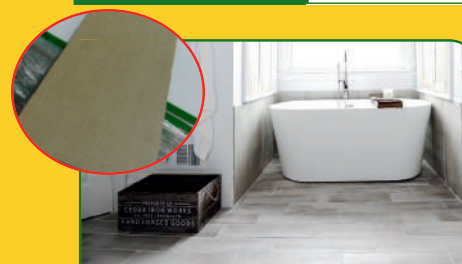
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Are you an Iowa business or homeowner interested in installing solar panels but unsure what solar incentives or resources are available in the state? Let us lay out for you what kind of incentives you can expect and groups you can turn to for more information on the state of solar energy in Iowa.

A GUIDE TO GOING SOLAR IN IOWA: SOLAR INCENTIVES, ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS & MORE

Federal Incentives

The Solar Investment Tax Credit (ITC)

This tax credit is equal to 30% of the cost of the solar installation. This tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the income taxes a person or company would otherwise pay the federal government. The eligible ITC amount is the sum of materials necessary for a solar installation, including solar panels, inverters, racking, electrical updates, installation, and ener-

gy storage of 5 kilowatt hours or greater. Through 2025, tax-exempt organizations, including non-profits and local governments, can also take advantage of this tax credit through direct payment of at least a portion of the credit amount or transfer of the credit.

Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System (MACRS)

This program governs the amount of time that businesses and agricultural operations must spread depreciation

over for various pieces of equipment. For solar arrays, that time is 5 years. This accelerated depreciation allows for the tax benefits to be accrued earlier in the array's productive life. This in turn shortens the time it takes for the array to pay for itself.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Energy for America Program Grant (REAP)

These grants are available for agricultural operations and rural small businesses which invest in renewable en-



ergy systems and are located in areas with a population of 50,000 or less. The grants can cover up to 50% of eligible costs of a solar project.

State Incentives

Iowa Solar Sales Tax Exemption

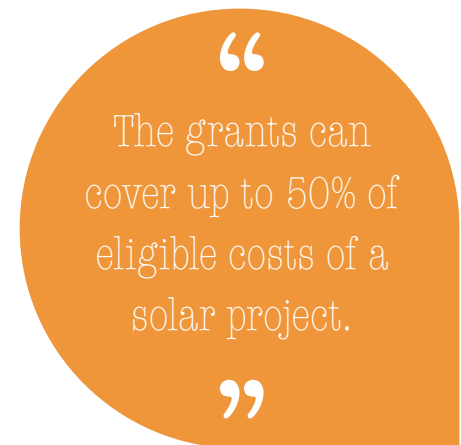
This rule exempts solar panels and equipment from state sales tax, saving you 7% of the system's cost.

Iowa Property Tax Exemption

Increases in property values stemming from adding solar panels to your property won't increase your property's valuation, and therefore your property taxes, for the first five years.

Solar Related Organizations in Iowa

Iowa Solar Energy Trade Association



This association is working to advance excellence in safety, quality of workmanship, and technical standards to benefit both the state's solar industry and its clients in Iowa. Their work focuses on policy development, advocacy, education, and networking. You can visit their website at lowase-ta.org.

Iowa Environmental Council

The IEC works to build a healthy and sustainable future for all Iowans through education, advocacy, and coalition-building. They recognize climate change and environmental justice are the root causes of the challenges Iowa faces around water quality and land stewardship, and they continue to push for 100% clean energy. You can visit their website at laenvironment.org.

Clean Energy Districts

These local institutions aim to strengthen communities by leading, implementing, and accelerating the locally owned clean energy transition. They create change through the principal strategies of energy planning, market transformation, public engagement, advocacy, and readiness. You can visit their website at Cleanenergydistricts.org. ♦

This article was submitted by Eagle Point Solar. You can visit their website at EaglePointSolar.com.

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6 KITCHEN UPDATES THAT ADD VALUE TO YOUR HOME

If you're considering a kitchen renovation, you've probably heard cautions about avoiding overly trendy designs that can diminish your home's value and limit its appeal to future buyers. That's sound advice, but many of this year's trends are relatively neutral and have long-term staying power.

Kitchen upgrades are typically all about making practical updates to meet the needs of a family. The key to smart design is incorporating functional elements a family requires while striking a balance between style and trends that quickly become outdated.

Before you dive into a kitchen project, consider these on-trend design recommendations from the experts at Wellborn Cabinet.

Add Health-Focused Features

As the hub of nutrition, it's no surprise wellness design features are making their way into the kitchen. Some examples include appliances with air frying or steaming features, and double ovens are appearing in more homes, making home meals for the family easier to manage. Also look for technology that simplifies meal planning and managing your pantry inventory, as well as features that regulate food storage temperatures more precisely, including during power outages.

Shift Back to Wood Stains

Painted cabinets had their moment, but the latest designs are revealing a movement back toward warm wood grains, specifically oak. As trends



continue to shift toward embracing natural elements, as well as exploring diverse color palettes, cabinet manufacturers are constantly innovating to meet the demands of consumers and design professionals alike.

Dedicate Space for Beverages

Food prep may be a mainstay in functional kitchen design, but a growing number of homeowners are calling beverages a close second with the addition of built-in coffee bars or smoothie stations and specialized storage for beer and wine. Countertop or supplementary nugget ice makers are another example of trending

kitchen accessories that reinforce a growing focus on beverages for all occasions.

Go for Contemporary Cabinetry

Your kitchen's cabinet doors play an important role in defining your design aesthetic. Consider door styles that have been designed to support the trend toward a simpler, smaller rail that's in favor among designers and homeowners alike. With softer, more up-to-date appearances, they should feature eased profiles to produce simple, straight, clean appearances.

Embrace the Middle Ground

Kitchen islands are hardly a new design element, but an increasing number of homeowners are making them a major focus of their renovations. A kitchen trends study by Houzz revealed 42% of homeowners are opting for islands that are seven feet long or more. That's extra prep space, but also more room for casual seating or socializing while hosting. Also gaining popularity are double islands for double the workspace.

Skip Bland Backsplash Tile

The wall space between your countertops and upper cabinets may not amount to much, but it's a sure place to make a style statement. This year's designers are saying farewell to stark white subway tile backsplashes. Instead, nature- and earth-inspired tones are trending. You can still use subway tile but consider a variation from the traditional stacked design. Texture is another option for modernizing your backsplash; think handcrafted tiles or earthy textures but take care to avoid overly busy patterns. ♦

Find more inspiration for your kitchen remodel at Wellborn.com.



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Welu Pumping serves both residential and commercial customers. Commercial services include cleaning grease traps, car wash pits and other types of grit pits. For residential customers, they pump out septic tanks in Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois. They also perform septic inspections in

Iowa and Wisconsin. The requirements for septic inspections do vary from state to state, so be sure to ask questions. While they offer pumping services and inspections, they do not install or repair septic systems.

Welu Pumping employs an Iowa Certified Time of Transfer Inspector. If you are selling your home and it has a septic system, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and county health departments require an inspection before you can sell your house. Welu Pumping has been doing these inspections since the Iowa DNR first required them in 2009 and can answer any questions you may have regarding this process.

Their longevity in the community, makes them unique with an expertise, knowledge and reputation that can

only be achieved over time. Welu Pumping offers continual training for their drivers and customer service representatives on the details involved in maintaining septic systems. They also take pride in answering all customer questions, regardless of whether you engage them for service or not.

Septic Pumping can be a dirty job and Welu Pumping always provides a high level of professionalism. Their drivers wear uniforms and a smile, and their trucks are always shiny, clean and well-maintained to better serve their customers.

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sludge gets high enough, it will clog drainage pipes and the soil in the drain fields. If this happens, the solution will most likely be an expensive one, which is to dig up and replace the entire drain field.

Pumping should be done every three to five years, depending on the number of people in the home and the number of bathrooms. You should also avoid throwing excess grease, rinds and similar garbage down the drain. Likewise, it is best not to use a garbage disposal system when you have a septic tank. The more solid waste that is sent down a drain, the quicker the tank will fill up. Additionally, keeping live bacteria in your system helps digest organic waste matter.

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A Guide to the Primary Types of **INDOOR HOUSE PAINT** & Their Best Uses

When it comes to choosing paint for an indoor project, understanding the different types of house paints available can make a significant difference in the outcome. The right paint not only enhances the beauty of your home but also ensures durability, ease of cleaning, and resistance to wear and tear. This article explores the primary types of indoor house paints and the best uses for each.

1. Flat (Matte) Paint

Best For: Low-traffic areas, ceilings, and adult bedrooms.

Flat or matte paint has the least amount of sheen, which means it doesn't reflect much light. This paint type is excellent for hiding imperfections on walls, such as dents, cracks, or patches, making it ideal for ceilings and low-traffic areas like formal living rooms or adult bedrooms. However, its lack of gloss makes it more susceptible to stains and difficult to clean, so it's not recommended for areas that require regular washing or get frequent use, like kitchens or children's rooms.

Advantages

- ✓ Hides imperfections well
- ✓ Offers a smooth, non-reflective finish

Drawbacks

- ✓ Difficult to clean and maintain
- ✓ Prone to scuffing and staining

2. Eggshell Paint

Best For: Living rooms, dining rooms, and hallways.

Eggshell paint offers a soft, subtle sheen that is slightly more reflective than flat paint. It's a great middle-

ground option for areas that see moderate traffic and where some cleaning might be necessary. Its light sheen gives walls a smooth finish without highlighting flaws, making it suitable for living rooms, dining areas, and hallways.

Advantages

- ✓ Easier to clean than flat paint
- ✓ Subtle sheen adds elegance without being too shiny

Drawbacks

- ✓ Doesn't hide imperfections as well as flat paint

3. Satin Paint

Best For: Kitchens, bathrooms, and high-traffic areas.

Satin paint has a velvety finish with a noticeable gloss, making it a popular choice for rooms that require regular cleaning. It's moisture-resistant, which makes it particularly well-suited for kitchens and bathrooms where humidity levels are higher. Satin paint can also handle the wear and tear of high-traffic areas like hallways or family rooms.

Advantages

- ✓ Durable and easy to clean
- ✓ Moisture-resistant
- ✓ Provides a warm, smooth sheen

Drawbacks

- ✓ Can highlight wall imperfections
- ✓ Requires careful application for a smooth finish

4. Semi-Gloss Paint

Best For: Trim, moldings, doors, kitchens, and bathrooms.

Semi-gloss paint has a higher sheen than satin, making it more reflective and durable. It's excellent for surfaces that endure frequent cleaning, such as trim, moldings, doors, and cabinetry. Its moisture resistance also makes it perfect for kitchens and bathrooms. However, like satin paint, it can reveal wall imperfections, so it's best applied to smooth surfaces or areas where the paint finish is not a major visual focal point.

Advantages

- ✓ Highly durable and easy to clean
- ✓ Resists moisture well



- ✓ Adds a noticeable shine and reflective quality

Drawbacks

- ✓ Highlights surface imperfections
- ✓ May be too shiny for large wall areas

5. High-Gloss Paint

Best For: Doors, trim, cabinets, and furniture.

High-gloss paint has the most reflective finish of all paint types, giving surfaces a shiny, almost mirror-like look. It's the most durable and easy to clean, making it ideal for surfaces that see a lot of wear, such as cabinets, doors, and furniture. The downside is that high-gloss paint accentuates every bump or flaw on a surface, so it's best used on perfectly smooth surfaces.

Advantages

- ✓ Extremely durable and easy to clean
- ✓ Provides a polished, modern look

Drawbacks

- ✓ Highlights imperfections more than any other finish
- ✓ May appear too shiny for some preferences, especially on large surfaces

6. Specialty Paints

In addition to these common types, there are also specialty paints designed for specific purposes:

Chalkboard Paint: Great for creating writable surfaces in children's rooms or kitchens.

Metallic Paint: Adds a touch of glam with reflective metal-like finishes, ideal for accent walls or furniture.



Textured Paint: Used to create depth and dimension on walls, ideal for unique accent designs.

Tips for Choosing the Right Paint Finish

Consider Traffic: High-traffic areas like hallways and kitchens need durable, easy-to-clean finishes like satin or semi-gloss, while low-traffic areas like bedrooms can use flat or eggshell paints.

Reflectivity: Higher sheens like semi-gloss and gloss will reflect more light, creating a brighter room, while flatter finishes absorb light for a softer, more subdued effect.

Surface Imperfections: If you're painting older walls with imperfections, opt for flat or eggshell paint to avoid highlighting bumps and cracks.

Conclusion

Choosing the right type of indoor house paint depends largely on the function of the room, the amount of traffic it gets, and the look you wish to achieve. For areas prone to moisture and dirt, durable options like satin and semi-gloss are ideal. For a soft, elegant finish in low-traffic spaces, flat and eggshell paints offer a sophisticated touch. By understanding the strengths and limitations of each paint type, you can select the best option to suit your home's aesthetic and practical needs. ♦



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INSURANCE BASICS FOR A FIRST TIME HOME BUYER

Buying a home is a significant milestone, and having the right insurance in place is essential to protect your investment. Homeowners Insurance protects your home's structure, personal belongings, and provides liability coverage. There are a lot of factors that decide an insurance rate, so allow adequate time for your lender and insurance agent to research your needs and help you design an appropriate policy. The insurance premium may be a factor in qualifying for the home purchase and will affect your monthly mortgage payment.

Here's a Breakdown of the primary types of Insurance you'll likely need:

Dwelling Coverage

Covers the cost to rebuild your home in case of damage.

Personal Property Coverage

Covers the value of your belongings inside the home.

Liability Coverage

Protects you from lawsuits if someone is injured on your property.

Additional Living Expenses

Covers temporary housing costs if your home is uninhabitable.

Deductibles

The amount you're responsible for paying out of pocket before your insurance begins paying expenses.

Aside from the standard coverage there are additional endorsements available to customize coverage to your specific needs. These endorsements can provide extra cov-

erage or modify existing coverage to better protect your assets. Below are some possible endorsement (add on coverage) options.

Earthquake coverage: Adds protection against damage caused by earthquakes.

Flood coverage: Covers damage caused by flooding, often required in flood prone areas but available to all.

Water backup coverage: Protects against damages caused by water backing up from sewers, drains and/or sump pumps.

Identity theft coverage: Provides financial assistance and support in case of identity theft.

Equipment breakdown coverage: Protects against damage to appliances and other equipment due to mechanical failure.

Business pursuits coverage: Covers business activities conducted from home- these may require a commercial insurance policy.

Buried lines coverage: Covers water/sewer lines exiting the home running thru your property.

Personal property replacement cost: Reimburses you for the cost to replace damaged items in your home at current market prices, rather than their depreciated value.

Scheduled personal property: Provides specific coverage for high value items such as jewelry, art, antiques, musical instruments, and firearms.

Ordinance or Law coverage: Covers

the increased cost of rebuilding your home to comply with building codes and zoning laws.

Roofing Replacement cost: Replaces roofing materials in the event of a covered loss at the current market value without depreciation. This may not be an option on older roofs.

As a first-time home buyer a few tips to make sure you are getting the best rates, and coverage is to shop around. There are several discounts available with most carriers that are worth asking about. For example, you may be able to bundle your car insurance and homeowners insurance to achieve a multipolicy discount.

Safety features such as a battery back up on a sump pump or a security system in the home can also provide discounts. Property updates, especially with roofing, can offer a substantial decrease in insurance premiums and should be researched. Roofing coverage and deductibles drastically vary between carriers and even when a policy renews. Knowing if you have replacement or actual cash value (depreciation) coverage and what deductible applies on roofing claims is crucial. Not all carriers and coverage are the same so when comparing quotes, it's important to look through all the coverage including endorsements. Buying just on the cost of the premium could leave gaps in coverage causing repairs to be paid out of your pocket. ♦



How to **TRANSFORM A SCREENED PORCH** to a Room in the Yard

A screened porch can provide the perfect spot to enjoy a little shade and escape all the pesky bugs that flourish during the warm summer months. It can also transform how you use your yard, especially if it makes you feel like a part of the yard & garden. These simple tips can help transform a screened porch from a room in the house to a part of the yard.

Choose a Design with Plenty of Windows and Screening

The best way to make a screened porch feel like being outdoors is to make sure it can receive plenty of light. Choose a model that offers several windows and screening so your view isn't obstructed, and you can see all angles of the yard and garden.

Plan a Nearby Garden

While it's impossible to have an entire garden inside your porch, you can have one very close to it. Plan out a garden that borders the porch or that is close by to provide you with that lovely scenery. If you are planting things up against the base of the porch, be sure you pick shrubs and bushes that do well in those lighting conditions.

Add a Water Feature

One of the best ways to create a sense of nature and relaxation in your yard is to install a water feature like a fountain or a pond. Place the feature near the porch so when you're sitting in the screened area, you'll not only



be able to see the water but also hear it.

Hang Bird Feeders

You can also install sturdy hooks on the roofline of the porch that are strong enough to hold bird feeders. You'll be able to enjoy nature up close and personal, as you attract all kinds

of incredible bird varieties to your yard.

Use Indoor Plants

Lastly, there is nothing wrong with using standard indoor plants in your screened porch to give it a green touch and sense of nature. Choose varying heights, colors, and sizes to add interest. ♦



What to Look for When **PURCHASING CARPET** for Your Home

Choosing the right carpet for your home is an important decision that can affect not just the aesthetic appeal of your space but also its comfort, durability, and maintenance needs. With a variety of styles, materials, and price points to consider, finding the right carpet can be overwhelming. Here are key factors to help guide you through the process of purchasing carpet for your home.



Carpet Fibers: Material Matters

Carpets are made from various types of fibers, each with its own set of advantages and disadvantages. The most common carpet fibers include:

Nylon

One of the most popular choices due to its strength, durability, and resilience. Nylon carpets are highly resistant to wear and can withstand high-traffic areas. They're also relatively stain-resistant, making them ideal for homes with kids or pets.

Polyester

Known for its luxurious, soft texture and vibrant colors, polyester is a great option if comfort is a priority. It's less durable than nylon but generally more affordable. Polyester carpets are also more eco-friendly, as many are made from recycled materials.

Olefin (Polypropylene)

This fiber is moisture- and stain-resistant, making it ideal for basements or

outdoor spaces. However, it is less durable than nylon and polyester, especially in high-traffic areas.

Wool

A premium choice for those looking for natural, eco-friendly options. Wool is soft, durable, and naturally stain resistant. However, it comes with a higher price tag and requires more maintenance to prevent matting and stains.

Carpet Pile: Texture and Appearance

Carpet pile refers to how the carpet fibers are cut or looped, and it greatly affects the carpet's texture, look, and performance. The two main types are ****cut pile**** and ****loop pile****:

Cut Pile

This type has fibers that are cut evenly, resulting in a softer, plusher look. Popular cut pile styles include:

Saxony

Smooth and dense, offering a luxurious feel. It's great for formal spaces but can show footprints and vacuum marks.

Frieze

A more durable option with twisted fibers that give it a textured look. It's ideal for high-traffic areas and can help hide dirt and footprints.

Loop Pile

Here, the fibers are looped, providing a more casual and durable texture. Loop pile carpets can handle heavy foot traffic without showing wear. Popular loop pile styles include Berber, a popular choice for its durability and resistance to staining. Berber is great for family rooms, hallways, and offices.

Some carpets combine both cut and loop pile to create unique textures and patterns, adding a decorative touch to your flooring.

Durability: Consider Your Lifestyle

The durability of your carpet is critical, especially if it is installed in high-traffic areas like hallways, living rooms, or staircases. When assessing durability, consider the ****density**** of the carpet. Denser carpets have fibers that are packed closely together, making them more resilient to wear and tear.

Also, check the face weight of the carpet, which refers to the weight of the carpet fibers per square yard. Generally, the higher the face weight, the more durable and long-lasting the carpet will be.

If you have a busy household with children, pets, or frequent visitors, look for carpets with enhanced durability features like stain-resistant treatments or tightly twisted fibers.

Carpet Padding: The Foundation of Comfort

Often overlooked, carpet padding plays a crucial role in how comfortable and long-lasting your carpet will be. A good-quality padding not only provides a cushioned feel underfoot but also helps insulate the room and absorb sound. Padding also supports

the carpet fibers, reducing wear over time.

Choose the right thickness and material for your space. For high-traffic areas, consider a firmer, denser padding, while softer padding may work well in bedrooms for extra comfort.

Stain Resistance: An Important Consideration

If spills and stains are a concern in your household, look for carpets that offer stain resistance. Some carpets are treated with stain-repellent chemicals, while others are made from materials that naturally resist staining (like solution-dyed nylon or polyester).

Consider carpets with built-in stain protection rather than those that rely on surface treatments, as these tend to wear off over time. If you have children, pets, or frequent guests, a carpet with stain-resistant properties will make maintenance much easier.

Style and Color: Match Your Home's Aesthetic

Carpet can be a focal point in your home or a subtle backdrop that ties the space together. When choosing a style and color, think about the overall look and feel you want to achieve.

Neutral Colors

Beige, gray, or taupe carpets offer versatility and complement most design schemes. They're great for rooms where you want the decor to stand out, as the carpet won't dominate the space.

Bold Colors and Patterns

If you want the carpet to be a statement piece, go for bold colors or patterned designs. Just make sure they match the existing color palette of the room.

Dark colors can help hide dirt and stains, while light colors can make a small space feel larger. However, lighter colors may require more maintenance.



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Installation: Professional or DIY?

Finally, consider the installation process. While some homeowners may choose to install carpet themselves, professional installation is often recommended for the best results. Improper installation can lead to wrinkles, uneven wear, and shortened lifespan of your carpet.

Ask the retailer if they offer installation services and inquire about the cost, as this can vary significantly.

Conclusion

When purchasing carpet for your home, it's important to consider more than just looks. The right carpet should match your lifestyle, providing the perfect balance of durability, comfort, and aesthetics. Whether you're prioritizing stain resistance, luxurious comfort, or eco-friendly materials, taking the time to evaluate your needs will ensure that you make the best investment for your home. ♦



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5 UPDATES TO IMPROVE HOME SECURITY



Home improvement projects often focus on updating the aesthetic of your house, but upgrades that make your living space more secure and comfortable for you and your family are sometimes even more important.

From your front door to the interior of your home and more, these ideas from the experts at Masonite can help provide greater peace of mind – ensuring what matters most is always protected.

Ensure Your Home is Well-Lit

A well-lit home exterior makes it easier to spot potential threats and may even deter people and animals that don't belong on your property. Automatic outdoor lighting, either set to a timer or triggered by motion or light sensors, can help you see what's going on outside. Ensure fixtures on your porch, patio and garage are in good working order and replace burned out bulbs or lights that no longer function. Adding landscape lighting can also aid in security while boosting curb appeal.

Protect Your Home with a Secure Front Door

Upgrading your front door can do much more than just improve the look of your home – it's also an important part of providing enhanced security for you and your family.

Reduce Fire Hazards

Many elements of a home like furnaces, chimneys, hot water heaters and other gas appliances provide value to homeowners through comfort and convenience but can pose risks without proper maintenance. Hiring a professional to check your heating and air conditioning system annually can help you avoid costly repairs while also protecting your loved ones. Keeping the chimney clean of debris, creosote and soot helps lower fire risk and ensures smoke, carbon dioxide and other gases are safely carried out of the home.

Control Home Systems On the Go

Installing security systems, doorbells, lighting and other systems that can

be controlled from a smartphone app can provide added convenience and peace of mind. You can remotely turn lights on and off, unlock doors, change the temperature, open or close garage doors and check camera feeds while away.

Replace Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

A simple project to make your home safer, it's essential to check your smoke detectors regularly and replace the batteries every six months. If you discover the date of manufacture on the back of your smoke detectors is more than 10 years ago, replacement is recommended by the National Fire Protection Association. While checking your smoke detectors, test or install carbon monoxide alarms to ensure you have a way to detect the invisible, odorless gas that can cause serious health problems if left unchecked. ♦

For more information visit [Masonite.com](https://www.masonite.com).



How to Give Your Deck a **COMPOSITE MAKEOVER**

Of the more than 60 million decks in the U.S., it is estimated that 50% are “past their useful life” and in need of repair or replacement, according to a report by the North American Decking and Railing Association (NADRA). If yours is among them, consider this. If your substructure is in good shape, resurfacing the walking surface with high-performance composite can be a simple way to breathe new life into your deck, requiring about the same amount of time and energy as resurfacing with wood. And, you’ll never have to stain your deck again.

Composite decking has gained popularity among today’s homeowners who relish not having to sand, stain or seal the surface every year and who appreciate the eco-friendly nature of the material, which is made from mostly recycled and reclaimed materials. Better yet, with a little

know-how and a few standard tools, even a novice DIYer can install it.

Following are a few tips for taking your existing deck from wood to “wow” by resurfacing it with high-performance, low-maintenance composite decking:

Resurfacing is different than rebuilding - Unlike building a deck from the ground up, deck resurfacing involves removing and replacing the deck boards with new materials to give it a fresh, updated look. Think of it as a facelift for your deck. Installing composite decking will also extend the life of a deck with boards that are warrantied to last anywhere from 25-50 years or more.

A firm foundation is key - Before pulling up any boards, assess your deck’s foundation to ensure it is structurally sound. Start from the ground up by examining the footings, posts and joists. Pay close attention to the condi-

tion of the wood. Discolored or spongy wood indicates rot and should be replaced before proceeding. If the framing and substructure are intact, you’re good to go.

Use your resources - You don’t need to be a building expert to tackle a resurfacing project. Utilizing online design tools and cost calculators can help you with product selection and budgeting. There are also step-by-step videos, installation guides and how-to articles available to walk you through the process.

Resurfacing an aging or decaying wood deck with new composite decking is a doable DIY project that can be completed over the course of just a weekend or two. You get a brand-new deck for a lot less money than starting from scratch, and a lot less hassle through the years. ♦

For more resources, visit [Trex.com](https://www.trex.com).

4 WAYS TO INCORPORATE OFF WHITES INTO YOUR HOME'S DESIGN

Interior design styles are always changing. Since the 1990s, interior styles have moved from sleekness to warm tones to clean basics and now, to a natural warmth that introduces a holistic balance that is inviting and raw. There are many ways you can invite natural warmth into your home, and one of the easiest ways is by using white.

Whites can easily elevate a space, creating a light and tranquil atmosphere with a touch of elegance. Over time, white has evolved from a bright white with blue undertones to take on more natural hues from wood tones and stones for a softer, more natural and approachable aesthetic.

You don't have to plan a full design overhaul to embrace warmth in your home design. Check out these four simple ways to incorporate warm whites into your home's design.

1. Living Room

The living room is the heart of your home. Because the living room is often a gathering place for family members or guests, the space should be open and inviting. You can, of course, paint your walls in a warm white with red undertones to reflect natural lighting. However, painting isn't your only option.

If you've been thinking of replacing your furniture, opt for a creamy white plush sofa or armchairs. You can also add a basket made of natural materials like rattan and fill it with cozy off-white blankets. Don't forget to accentuate the room with white

sheer curtains that can filter natural light for a soft glow.

2. Kitchen

A well-designed kitchen should balance functionality with style. Incorporate warm whites by choosing cabinetry that almost feels taupe in color and pair this with leathered marble countertops. You can complete the look by adding white kitchen tools and appliances.

Kitchen gadgets, especially tools you use every day, can act as an extension of your design. Instead of hiding an appliance, choose appliances that

serve as an extension of your kitchen design. For example, coffee lovers should consider espresso machines that were designed specifically for the countertop. An espresso machine in porcelain white can integrate into your home seamlessly and bring everything you love about espresso right to your countertop.

3. Bathroom

Natural white hues in your bathroom can evoke a sense of serenity and cleanliness, like a spa. Using ivory-colored tiles on the walls, countertops and flooring, you can create the illu-



sion of a larger, more open space. You can pair this brilliant tile with unlacquered brass or brushed nickel fixtures for a touch of elegance. Don't forget to add plush white towels and bathmats.

4. Bedroom

Turn your bedroom into an escape from the everyday by creating a calm environment. If you're shopping for new furniture, look for an upholstered headboard in natural whites and pair it with a bed frame in white oak. For a quick infusion of style, add crisp white linen bedding and layer with textured throws and cushions in various natural white hues and earth tones for depth and visual interest. Remember to opt for soft, ambient lighting to complete the space.

Are you ready to embrace warmth in your home? Embrace the versatility of whites in your design choices. Use these four easy tips to create a home that is inviting, grounded and on-trend with a color that illuminates your living spaces. ♦



7 Surprising **HOME UPGRADE** Ideas in Unexpected Spaces

Not all great things come in big packages, and home upgrades are an example of the truth in this wisdom. Unexpected, smaller spaces may not get the same attention as high-traffic areas like kitchens, bathrooms, and living areas, but their impact can be just as powerful.

Get inspired to make improvements to the lesser-used areas of your home with these tips.

Entryway

It's the impression that welcomes guests into your home, so even if the space is small, your entryway war-





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rants some TLC. Focus on making it open and inviting by removing any unnecessary furnishings. Some functional storage, like a bench with integrated coat hooks, can serve a practical purpose, and if you have the space, some built-in cabinetry with an eye-catching countertop can incorporate stylish storage.

Laundry Room

Getting motivated to do chores like laundry is easier when you have an attractive setting to work in. Introducing pops of color in nontraditional places, like the cabinetry and storage spaces, adds a high-end elegance and makes it more functional. Water-inspired and earthy hues are perfect for the laundry space.

Closet

A cluttered closet may not be the first thing a guest notices, but it's a space you visit daily. Improving the organizational features can streamline your morning routine and put you in a

more positive frame of mind to start each day. There's no right or wrong when it comes to closet design, but using cabinetry in place of open shelving and rods creates a more luxurious feel. Plan for adequate hanging and closed storage, and if space allows, be sure to plan for shoes and accessories since these items can easily contribute to a closet's disarray.

Mini Bar

If you fear you don't have room for a mini bar, you may be surprised. Reimagining a larder cabinet, like the ones in 30-to-42-inch widths, can create an instant bar out of just about any wall space where you can fit a cabinet. Install it as a coffee bar or traditional bar or add an optional appliance pullout shelf for more versatility.

Pantry

Guests may not find themselves in your pantry very often, but you likely use this space every day. Trans-

form your pantry for heightened utility in simple ways like using clear plastic bins for small, boxed foods or stylish wicker baskets to hide away snacks. For a more permanent solution, take advantage of unused space on the back of the pantry door with thin shelves for items like seasoning packets and smaller canned goods.

Guest Bathroom

Swapping out a tired vanity and countertop is a relatively affordable upgrade that can completely change the style of a secondary bathroom. Be sure to also update the fixtures for a more contemporary look and, if the budget allows, replace the flooring. Finish the project with a fresh coat of paint in a light, airy shade and add new textiles and a few decorative touches to complete the job.

Hideaway Storage Spaces

One feature that enhances virtually any space is more storage. Having convenient places to tuck away all your stuff makes rooms feel more open and inviting. Hidden storage solutions are often better because you can enjoy the functionality they add to the space without interrupting your design aesthetic.

Here are some clever ideas for keeping necessary items tucked out of sight but within easy reach:

Built-in Step Stool

If you love the look of tall cabinets but struggle to reach the top shelves, a practical addition is a hidden step ladder in a pullout caddy. Specially designed ladders that fold down extra narrow and feature nonslip rubber treads make this a handy addition you'll reach for again and again.

Paper Towel Pullout

Keep paper towels hidden but close by hiding them in a pullout cabinet. Many models feature a built-in paper towel holder and bottom shelf that is ideal for organizing cleaning prod-

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ucts. Some models also include a space behind the paper towels that's perfect for storing sponges and other kitchen supplies.

Drawer Dividers

While you can find many after-market options to organize the insides of your drawers and cabinets, choosing organizers designed to work seamlessly with your cabinetry creates a more polished look (and saves the headaches of measuring and guesstimating the fit). Tray dividers are useful for sorting cookie sheets and baking pans, while you can find dividers in a variety of heights to match drawers below the oven or where you store your cutlery. Another option that serves a similar purpose is pegs, which keep fragile items from shifting when drawers are opened or closed. ♦

■ This article was provided by Wellborn Cabinet, Inc.

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