

Home pros share affordable decorating ideas



AFTER: The color is balanced with about 60 percent beige (walls, sofa, chair, floor, fireplace tile); 30 percent red (rug); and 10 percent blue (rug, pillows, wall decor). (Photo courtesy of Angie's List member Sarah N. of Seattle)



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by Ellen Miller

Want to wake up a tired room without overspending? Take some tips from professional [home stagers](#), whose expertise in preparing houses for sale, often by editing and rearranging what's already there, can work well for folks who plan to stay put but could use a fresh look.

Here are three general approaches for updating a room, suggested by home staging experts who are highly rated by Angie's List members:

Do the math

Maureen Bray of [Room Solutions Staging](#) in Portland, Ore., has a tried-and-true formula for planning color. "A good balance is found when about 60 percent of the room is one color, 30 percent is a secondary color and 10 percent is an accent color," she says. "This formula helps a space feel balanced and allows the eye to move from one point to the next with an easy flow."

Bray suggests other perk-ups:

- "Add a touch of the outdoors with a few green plants or other items, such as branches, boughs, sticks, flowers or leaves."
- "When possible, hide small electronics."
- "Soften the effect of a large flat-screen TV with a few well-chosen decor items." Examples include "a simple woven vase, a few books, a decorative box and a plant."

Define areas with rugs

Open floor plans can be a challenge and area rugs can be an answer, says Catherine Morrow, president, [Room Reflections Interior Redesign & Home Staging](#) of Marietta, Ga. "It's important to delineate distinct living areas or zones. Area rugs work wonders," she says. "You don't want to cover the whole floor if it's beautiful hardwood, but a rug is soft under the feet, finishes off the area and makes an area feel like a room."

Morrow's tips for determining proper rug size:

- "Measure the length of your sofa and love seat, or each side's length if you're working with a sectional. Make sure your area rug is at least as long as what it will be in front of. You can then go larger, but if you go smaller, it's going to look skimpy."
- "Whenever possible, area rugs beneath dining tables should extend 2 feet beyond the table's dimensions in each direction to allow for pulling the chairs in and out."

Mix it up

"Inviting rooms possess an eclectic, collected-over-time look," says Morrow. "Trade out the head chairs, or even all the chairs, from a traditional, matching dining set for upholstered parson chairs. Or, if they're not too precious, paint the existing chairs a contrasting color that works well with the rest of the decor."

Other tips:

- Check out a room from different angles and rearrange the furniture, giving yourself a day or two with each arrangement until you find your favorite.
- [Paint](#) walls or furniture.
- Rethink [art](#) and accessories. Store some and rearrange the rest, possibly seasonally.

Ellen Miller



Ellen Miller enjoys educating and entertaining consumers with online content for Angie's List, which she joined long before becoming a writer and editor there.

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