your home

Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

IMAGINE SAVING $ ON a new bathroom

Thinking about remodeling your bathroom? Before you start the often pricey process, consider these tips to help avoid flushing hard-earned cash down the drain.

- **Plan ahead.** While hiring an architect or designer may seem like a costly move, having an expert help with remodel plans may be for the best. Working with a professional will help ensure that your budget and design are sensible, along with constructing a realistic timeline for the project.
- **Don't mess with pipes.** You may be tempted to move sinks and toilets around, but that can be extremely expensive. Consider using existing plumbing fixtures to help rein in spending, as new pipelines can cost up to $5,000 each.
- **Try open shelving.** Bathrooms have some of the smallest square footage of any room in your home. To open the room up, add open shelving units instead of installing expensive cabinets.
- **Salvage away.** A great way to save money is to use salvaged materials or furniture to upgrade your bathroom. Check out flea markets, garage sales, antique stores, resellers and auctions to get great deals on older, unused items. A salvaged piece of furniture makes a great focal point for your bathroom without breaking the bank.

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5 STEPS TO TIDY YOUR GARAGE

As an area used for extra storage, your garage can become cluttered and unorganized—and fast! Looking at a messy space can be overwhelming, but here's how to make it tidy.

1. Remove all items. This is an obvious but necessary step to ensure all areas get properly cleaned, including the floor, ceiling and walls.

2. What stays and what goes. Take a look at the pile of possessions outside of the garage and make some decisions on what absolutely must stay and what can be donated or thrown away.

3. Start scrubbing. Use a broom to clear cobwebs off walls or ceilings. Check windows and light fixtures to make sure everything is in working order. Start from the furthest inside point and sweep all debris to the front and out the door. Mop the floor to remove all the grime.

4. Painting the floor. A fresh coat of paint will help extend the overall life of your garage floor, while filling in any cracks. You shouldn't need more than two to four cans of paint to cover the entire floor.

5. Keep it organized. Install shelving to keep items off the newly painted floor. Place items you'll be storing long-term in the garage first, followed by the items you'll be using more frequently placed toward the front. Make sure to stay on top of organizing to prevent another massive overhaul of your storage space!

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FINISHING your basement

You've moved into a home with an unfinished basement. You may be wondering if you should spend the money to finish it or leave it as is? Here are some common basement issues to think about before making the decision.

Construction details matter: Creating walkable spaces and having good drainage is important when finishing your basement, but these thoughts may get lost in the shuffle when remodeling. Aim to keep the ceilings 8 feet or higher to ensure comfortable ways to move around the basement. And make sure to seal all cracks in the foundation of your home to prevent flooding. French drains or a sump pump may be a necessary installation to keep your new basement dry.

Not all space is equal. Many homeowners think that finishing their basement will instantly improve the value of their home. But be aware, above-grade space is still deemed more valuable than its lower-level counterpart. For example, take two homes: Home A with 2,500 square feet, all above-grade, and Home B with 2,000 square feet above, and 500 below-grade. All else being equal, Home A will always be valued higher than Home B, something potential renovators should know.

Most popular features: When finishing your basement, it's a good idea to figure out what elements you'd like to include in the design. Some popular ways to renovate include adding these features: an in-law suite, a home theater, a sports bar/man cave, a workout room/personal gym or a playroom for kids.

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