

How to Redecorate When You're Not a Decorator

Interested in refreshing your home? Want a different vibe? Can't afford a decorator, but completely lacking in decorating skill yourself?

Good news! Even with all those constraints, you can still pull together a fabulous room. You've been in homes you like, so you already know what you like when you see it. You can use that natural ability to your advantage.

3 Places to Get Inspiration

Here are three places to start.

1. **Start with an inspiration room.** Look through magazines or websites like Houzz, Studio McGee, or Apartment Therapy. Find a room that perfectly reflects what you like. Then study that room. Understand what they're doing that you love. Then look around your own space and translate that into your space. Don't sweat about how you'll do it yet. Just focus on what would be different to make it work. Later you can figure out the project management bits, like budget and steps in the process.



2. **Start with an item you love that reflects your style.** Maybe you absolutely LOVE the multi-colored ceramic frog you bought on a trip to Mexico. Or you bought a blue and white Delftware cookie jar on vacation in The Netherlands, or an ornate Louie the Fourteenth reproduction clock. To design around an object, identify three main colors, as well as the general style of the object. For instance, the Louis the Fourteenth clock has gold and white color, and is an ornate style. Now Google "*gold, white, ornate room inspiration.*" Then see #1 above.
3. **Start with a store or shop that reflects your style,** like Ikea, Crate and Barrel, Target, Pottery Barn, or Bouclair. Go there and ask the workers for

advice about how to decorate your home. Take photos. Purchase a few items that can act as the color and style guidelines for your room.

How to Use Your Inspiration

Once you've selected a style and color scheme, sit in your space and rethink it.



How would you translate your inspiration room to your own space? What is currently in your space that doesn't reflect the style you want? What could you switch out to better match your style?

For instance, suppose I selected the picture above as my inspiration. That wall color is a perfect mossy green that makes me feel like I'm in a forest. The gray couch is similar to what I already have, but I can substitute different pillows. I like a little more going on in the pillows, so I can pick up the same tone of green, but add more design. I love the gray coffee table and want something like that. I also like the minimalist frames of the photos and can reframe some of my existing photos.

Sometimes you won't have any existing furniture or décor that fits the style you want, and you'll need to start from scratch. Sometimes you'll already have a few things you can keep. And sometimes, you like everything you have and you just need to move it around and add a different paint color or additional décor.

Create a Project Plan

A project plan can be a simple list of things to do and buy. The order of redecorating is fairly linear.

1. **Start with deciding your design and budget.** After spending mental time with your inspirations, get practical. Decide which pieces of furniture you'll keep and what else you'll want to buy. Add the cost of paint and other supplies. Then create a budget so you'll know how much you can spend on décor and furniture.
2. Next, remove your existing furniture.
3. Then paint. If you need to do any wiring or other construction, do it now.
4. Next, move stuff back in. Start with the furniture you want to keep. Move it around to different spots before settling on one place. Then add the existing décor you want to keep.
5. Buy and add the additional new furniture and décor you want (see below).

Buy What Else You Need

Main pieces: Some items carry more weight than others. For instance, lamps and light fixtures can set a tone or style. If you don't already have lamps that fit the style you want, put them on your buy list. Curtains or window coverings are another highly visible décor item. Finally, end tables or coffee tables or other "main" pieces of furniture can affect the feeling of your space. If you plan to buy second hand furniture, you'll have a better sense of what to look for.

Décor pieces: Once you have the main items in place, you'll want to add the fun stuff. If you started with that colorful Mexican pottery frog, now you'll want to look for other pottery, as well as other Mexican décor items. Or if you started with a blue and white Delft cookie jar, now you'll want to find more Delft pieces, or use blue frames on your photos with white matting. Your inspiration rooms will give you more ideas about décor items.

A Few Décor “Tricks”

Mirrors: If you lack natural light and can’t add a skylight or window, then consider using mirrors. For instance, we had a living room with just one outside window. The light lit the opposite wall, but didn’t do enough to light the whole room. A floor to ceiling mirror on the window wall and the opposite wall really lit the room!

Height: Don’t be afraid to fill up your wall with a painting or photo wall. Put your curtains up higher above the window. Use very tall lamps. Use layers of height, small, medium, tall.

Groupings: Put a group of photos together with similar or even identical frames. Put a group of décor items together, like several different heights of vases or a group of masks you got on vacation.



Wallpaper: While wallpaper can be overdone, a little can go a long way. If your design idea suits wallpaper, don’t be afraid to use it as an accent.



Wood: If you plan to make wood a dominate feature of your décor, you can often use different styles of furniture as long as the wood is a similar tone. For instance, you might be able to use an ornately carved chair next to a Danish modern coffee table if the woods look similar. Alternatively, you can often use different wood tones if you keep the shapes similar.

Conclusion

You don’t need to decorate all at once! You can start by deciding what one or two things would begin changing things. Maybe your wall color. Maybe a new couch or rug. Maybe a feature wall. Then go from there. For more ideas, Google “Easy Décor Tips.”