



# HOME IMPROVEMENTS THAT INCREASE THE VALUE OF YOUR HOME



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“Home is where the heart is.”

- *Pliny The Elder*

**H**ome ownership offers many benefits. Not only do you have a place to call your own, ***a home can be a smart investment.*** Although the news continues to report the doom and gloom of the housing market, responsible property ownership can still be a solid investment strategy.

A few strategic updates to your home can help protect your investment for many years. For those who plan to remain in their homes for a few years, these updates will make the time in your home more comfortable and enjoyable.

When you're ready to update your home, it's wise to be as economical as possible. Plan to make changes that will pay off in the future. This report provides some information to ponder regarding home improvements that will increase the value of your home.

“You are a king by your own fireside,  
as much as any monarch in his throne.”

***-Miguel de Cervantes***

## **Sprucing Up the Exterior of Your Home**

Everyone likes a house that looks beautiful on the outside. A nice green lawn, some simple bushes and flower plantings, and a clean-looking, well-kept exterior make a lovely home.

***Sprucing up your home's exterior not only makes you happier when you pull up in the driveway, it increases the value of your home.***

## SIMPLE LANDSCAPING

As so many homeowners concentrate attention and cash on the interior, landscaping is an often-ignored aspect of the home improvement genre. Nonetheless, simple landscaping improves the appearance and increases the value and curbside appeal of your home.

Visit local plant nurseries and gardening departments of big box stores in your area. Find sales people who appear knowledgeable about the best local plants for ease of care and hardiness.

Once you find people who can offer you helpful, free advice regarding your landscaping, you're ready to get your yard in shape to increase your home's value.

1. **Attend to your grass.** If you have weeds or areas of brown grass, your local home improvement store has a wide variety of products to help restore your yard's lush color.
  - ✓ Learn how to apply lawn additives and environment-friendly fertilizers to take care of your lawn concerns for relatively low costs.
  - ✓ Mow the lawn at regular intervals and use an edger to create the perfect manicured lawn.
2. **Evaluate the trees in your yard.** Are you happy with them?
  - ✓ Trees are an important aesthetic, as well as good for the environment. If you don't have any trees, consider planting at least two or three of them.

- ✓ Think about a tree's maximum size before planting, as the tree will need plenty of space to grow to its full size over the years.
  - ✓ Consider also the tree's placement in terms of proximity to your house, the neighbor's yard, your driveway, and walkways.
  - ✓ Avoid putting in trees too close to property lines, as falling blooms and leaves can be annoying to neighbors.
3. **Do you have any bushes in your yard?** If so, keep them well trimmed and nicely shaped.
- ✓ If you don't have any bushes, you'd be surprised at how a few bushes can spruce up the look.
  - ✓ ***Flowering bushes are especially lovely during spring and summer and the blooming buds bring a nice color contrast to your green grass.***
4. **Flowers are a must-have.** Planting a few in-season flowers will beautify your yard.
- ✓ If you prefer, plant perennials (flowers/plants that return every year on their own) that bloom. As the perennials establish themselves, you can depend less and less on purchasing annuals every year.
  - ✓ When selecting flowers, a general color scheme for the blooms is very pleasing. For example, stick with flowers having purple, yellow, and white blooms.
  - ✓ Should you put your property up for sale, blooming flowers in your yard will draw attention and increase potential buyers' interests in your home.

## EXTERIOR PAINTING

The outside of your home is especially important for added home value. ***Nothing draws more attention to your homestead than the appearance of the exterior of your house.*** Remember, also, the appearance of your driveway, porch and walkways when discussing your home's exterior.

### Condition of Your Driveway, Porch and Walkways

When you're pondering possible home improvements to increase the value of your home, take a good look at your driveway, porch and walkways or sidewalks on your property.

**These suggestions will help you increase the value of your home by taking care of these aspects of your yard:**

1. **Clean your driveway every 3 months to ensure it has a clean, fresh appearance.** Avoid parking cars in your driveway that have leaking oil pans.
  - ✓ Use a pressure washer quarterly to clean off your driveway.
  - ✓ In the event your driveway hasn't been taken care of in the past (i.e. before you owned the home), a simple and not too expensive way to beautify its appearance is to paint it. Specially formulated paints for concrete that can withstand weather and the wear of car tires are available at paint shops and home improvement stores.
2. **How does your porch look?** Perhaps it needs a good cleaning.

- ✓ ***Sweeping periodically and keeping clutter off the porch shows that you take care of your home.***
- ✓ Occasional mopping or hosing down will keep your porch looking spic and span and improve the overall appearance of your home's exterior.
- ✓ If your porch needs a coat of paint, consult your local paint or home improvement store to buy a paint product that can take the weather and the wear that a porch endures year round.

## House Exterior

***Unsurpassed in its ability to impress, your home's exterior is the first thing people see when they drive by your property.*** Should you ever put your property up for sale, the condition of your house's exterior makes more of an initial impression than any other aspect of the home. To increase the value of your home, your house's exterior needs to appear clean and fresh.

1. **Keeping a home clean from the outside takes some diligence.** Walk around the house with a broom to sweep down leaves and cobwebs monthly to give your home a well-kept appearance.
  - ✓ If you see that the exterior is dirty, you might want to use your water hose to spray off your home.
  - ✓ If you're not planning to paint afterward, take care that you use a light spray. Higher pressure spraying on a home's exterior can trigger old paint that's already flaking to peel off even more.
2. **If your paint is starting to flake, it's time to re-paint.** Depending on the size of the exterior of your house, you may want to ask friends and family members to help you with the job. Throwing a painting party gets the job

done and saves money over hiring a painting contractor.

- ✓ Although it's important to conserve your budget when performing home improvement projects, obtain the best exterior paint you can afford. Watch your local home improvement stores and paint shops' ads for sales on mid- or high-quality paints.
- ✓ ***In the case of exterior paint, quality matters in terms of how easily the paint goes on and how long the house's surface retains a fresh appearance.***
- ✓ Of course, you'll want to spray down the home a day or two before painting and allow the dry completely.
- ✓ Avoid painting anything outdoors when it's the slightest bit damp as paint doesn't cover well when mixed with water.

3. **Clean exterior window frames and windows at least twice a year.** Doing so will cost you almost nothing but a couple of good cleaning products and the time it takes to do the labor.

- ✓ You'll increase the value of your home simply by putting some elbow grease into this special task.

Your landscaping, exterior appearance of the house, and the look of your yard combine to reveal the care you've given to your home.

“People’s backyards are much more interesting than their front gardens, and houses that back on to railways are public benefactors.”

*-John Betjeman*

## Updating the Interior of Your Home

Focus on making the interior of your home as clean, bright and updated as you can while staying within your budget.

### RE-WORKING OR REMODELING YOUR KITCHEN

The kitchen is the single most important room of any house. Home improvement experts tout that if you remodel your kitchen, you’ll get back 85% of what you spent on the remodel when you sell the home.

1. **Arrange your kitchen so that it *looks* spacious.** Regardless of its actual size, how you arrange and store items in your kitchen has a major impact on your kitchen’s appearance.
2. **Take a look at your cabinets.** Are they in good shape? Perhaps they just need a good cleaning and polishing.
  - ✓ After you lightly wash cabinet surfaces, allow them to air-dry.
  - ✓ Next, use a spray polish to bring out the sheen of wood cabinets. These polishes place a protective coating over the wood, which makes the cabinets more resistant to food stains. The next time the cabinet doors need to be cleaned, a quick wipe-down will do the trick.

3. **Consider replacing your sink if it's not in good shape.** Although doing so involves hiring a plumber, if you purchase the sink yourself, you'll realize decent savings at your big box home improvement store. So, you'll just have the plumber's labor and the cost of any ancillary small parts he'll need to finish the job.
  
4. **Remember the countertops.** If you have good cabinetry and decent appliances, *one dramatic way to update a kitchen is to install new countertops.*
  - ✓ For a small amount of money, comparatively speaking, you can have the old countertop removed and a new one of your choosing affixed.
  - ✓ The look and value of your home will increase simply by making this one change in your kitchen.
  
5. **A new coat of paint works wonders to bring your kitchen some spice and freshness.** A can of good quality paint might be the only thing your kitchen needs.
  
6. **Install a backsplash.** With a small investment and some work on your part, you can install a backsplash of durable tiles in your kitchen.
  - ✓ *Tile in the kitchen brings up the value of the house and shows quite well, should you put the house up for sale.*
  
7. **Consider new appliances.** Check with your local discount appliance dealer for a "package deal" price on new kitchen appliances. A new refrigerator, stove, microwave, and dishwasher might be just the re-working your kitchen needs to look updated and increase your home's value.

8. **Floors are another important element of a nice kitchen.** If you already have a tile floor, then you're ahead of the game in terms of home value.
  - ✓ Examine your floors. Perhaps a good scrubbing is all you need to bring sheen and shine.
  - ✓ Replacing old grout can bring new freshness to an older tile floor.
  - ✓ If you need new flooring, choices of tile, linoleum and vinyl tile are best for kitchens. Linoleum is most likely the lower-cost choice.
  - ✓ Avoid installing carpet in the kitchen due to difficulties keeping it clean.
9. **Update the lighting.** These days, pendant and "potlights" or recessed lighting can really brighten up the look of your kitchen.
10. **Spread out the cost.** If upon investigating your kitchen, you realize it needs quite a few expensive changes, consider updating just one of the above elements yearly. Start with the most relevant.
  - ✓ Do the flooring one year, the countertops the next year, and the lighting the next, for example.

## UPDATING BATHROOMS

Updating bathrooms can be an expensive proposition. Take a long hard look at your bathroom. Does it look clean and fresh? Do you need to make a few changes to bring it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

1. **If you have a wood cabinet below the sink, check the condition of the cabinet.** Clean the cabinet surfaces and put on a coat of spray polish if the cabinet is wood. Replace the cabinet if it has water damage or go for

an updated look.

2. **Examine the sink.** Is it pretty old? Maybe it has stains you can't remove, no matter how hard you scrub.
  - ✓ Replacing a sink in a bathroom can be a low-cost option that updates your bathroom.
  - ✓ If your countertop is over 10 years old, you might want to replace it, as well.
  - ***Replacing the countertop (including a new sink) may be the only updating you need to do to bring your bathroom up to date.***
3. **Replace the shower head.** If you have a shower, updating the shower head is a wonderfully simple, inexpensive update for your bathtub/shower.
4. **Did you know that you could resurface porcelain and fiberglass tubs?** Before doing such projects, check the pricing of replacing the bathtub and compare the bottom line to an estimate for resurfacing to see if it's cost effective to go the resurfacing route.
  - ✓ If your bathroom doesn't need a lot of other attention except for a new bathtub, you might consider going ahead and installing a new tub.
  - ✓ Compare the 2 estimates and take into account any other aspects of the bathroom that will require updating.
5. **Consider installing tile on the wall around the tub.** For a few dollars more, installing some wall tile in the bathroom can really jazz up your bathroom's appearance while increasing the value of your home.

Particularly if you're a "do-it-yourselfer," find some great tile at wholesale prices and go for it.

- ✓ Tile protects walls and is a definite selling feature, should you decide to sell in the future.

## INTERIOR LIGHTING MAKE-OVERS

If you find yourself in a budget crunch, yet want to do something to bring some value and updating to your home, consider an interior lighting make-over.

1. **Do a walk-through of your home with pencil and paper in-hand.** Which rooms have really old-looking or inadequate lighting? Make a note of the major areas that require new lighting fixtures.
2. **Lighting makes a big difference.** You'll be pleased at the difference that updated lighting fixtures can bring to a room. Whether a room needs brighter lighting or a dramatic focal point, lighting make-overs can bring some real "pop" to a room to enhance the room's aesthetics.
3. **Shop for deals.** Check home improvement stores for lighting fixtures on clearance. At savings of 50% and more, it's possible to replace 3 or 4 lighting fixtures for a very reasonable amount of cash.

## INSULATION RE-DO

These days, increasing the value of your home involves completing eco-friendly home improvements. ***Ensuring you have as much insulation as industry experts suggest will save you money on your electricity bills and add value to your home.***

Have 2 or 3 experts check the level of your insulation. Find insulation experts who are willing to provide free estimates for this service. Do they have any recommendations for you? If so, obtain written estimates to determine whether getting new insulation or adding more insulation will be cost-effective for you.

Paying special attention to the interior of your home can make a big difference in terms of upping the property's value. ***Focus most on your kitchen and bathroom(s)*** when updating your home as you'll be more likely to earn back the money you spent on such repairs, should you decide to sell the house.

“Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful,  
or believe to be beautiful.”

***-William Morris***

## Home Improvements to Avoid

In the event you hope to update your home without breaking the bank, you'll most likely not want to do a complete remodel of any single room in the house.

Complete remodeling involves entire rooms being ripped out or deconstructed, like a bathroom, for example. Even though you want to make some home improvements to increase your home's value, it's wise to avoid those improvements that will cost large amounts of money.

Projects such as complete remodeling of rooms and putting in in-ground swimming pools tend to be quite pricey and rarely pay off in the future when the property is sold.

## IN-GROUND SWIMMING POOLS

Having an in-ground swimming pool costs thousands of dollars these days.

1. **Undertaking the installation of an in-ground swimming pool will rarely bring you more money, unless you live in the states of Florida or California.**

- ✓ Even then, many people seek homes without swimming pools due to the cost and constant care such pools demand.
- ✓ Once the pool is installed, either you or a service provider you pay has the job of cleaning it weekly and checking for needed chemicals. Chemicals are required to keep the pool safe for swimming and cause an ongoing cost.

2. **Therefore, *put in a swimming pool only if you really want one for your own enjoyment.*** Otherwise, it's best to avoid installing an in-ground swimming pool simply to increase the value of your home.

- ✓ In the event you decide to sell a home with a pool, you might be unpleasantly surprised to see that it really didn't bring in much (if any) extra funds over the cost of your home without the pool.

It's necessary to be judicious about avoiding undertaking home improvements that will cause you to over-spend in your efforts to increase your home's value. Avoiding high-cost remodels will keep money in your pocket, as will eliminating unnecessary additions like in-ground swimming pools. You can increase your home's value and save money, too by avoiding such projects.

“The ideal of happiness has always taken material form in the house, whether cottage or castle; it stands for permanence and separation from the world.”

***-Simone de Beauvoir***

## Summary

It's smart to make changes to your home as a way of increasing its value. Getting the yard in good shape, cleaning and painting the exterior, and sprucing up the interior of your home can pay off.

Avoid complete remodel projects that drain your bank account. Using these tips will increase the pleasure and value of your one true sanctuary, your home!

“We shape our dwellings, and afterwards our dwellings shape us.”

***-Sir Winston Churchill***