

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE LAKE MILLS GRAPHIC

Home Improvement

April 2016



Carpet Care

Carpet remains a popular option in flooring, especially in bedrooms where bare feet are more likely. Who relishes the thought of sliding out of bed onto an icy cold tile floor in the dead of winter? Carpet can feel great underfoot but can take a real beating over the years. It is important that you clean your carpet on a regular basis to keep it looking its best.

Frequent vacuuming is a must to remove loose dirt and debris. Generally, the more pets and children you have in your household, the more often you will have to vacuum your carpet. Weekly vacuuming may not be enough, and you should always vacuum up messes right away. Tracked-in mud or spilt coffee grounds can easily get ground into the carpet if not removed right away.

There are several vacuum cleaners on the market. You want one with enough suction power to pick up a lot of debris. Experts recommend a top-load vacuum cleaner that will allow the dirt to fall inward. You should empty the canister frequently and change or clean the filters regularly for optimal suction.

Regular cleaning is a must to remove any oily, sticky residue your vacuum cleaner misses. Several methods are available. Most experts recommend the multi-step process of steam cleaning. During this process, the carpet is first pre-treated with cleaner and then agitated to loosen the dirt and debris and work in the soap. Finally, it is rinsed and the water extracted.

You can steam-clean your carpet yourself, but most experts advise you hire a professional. Not only will they have all of the right equipment for the job, but they will know how to use it. Shop around for a good service, and when you find one, set up a regular cleaning schedule. Most experts recommend a professional cleaning every 12 to 18 months depending upon the number of people who live in your home and the amount of traffic it receives.

Most carpet cleaning services charge by the room. Jobs can run \$100 on up depending upon the number of rooms you have done. Many services offer specials. If the cost is still too steep, you may want to look into renting or purchasing a steam cleaner. Just be aware that most do-it-yourself cleaners will leave behind cleaning residue that will attract dirt.

In between steam cleanings, you may need to spot-clean your carpet from time to time. Purchase a good cleaner and clean up spills immediately. Don't leave the stain to set in. Blot up the excess liquid and clean up the spill according to the manufacturer's directions. Do not rub or scrub the spill. You could cause the carpet to fray and twist.

Beyond all of this, what else can you do to keep your carpet in good shape? Take off your shoes and walk around your home in your socks. Ask those who live with you or stop by for a visit to do the same. Limit walking around barefooted. The natural oils in your feet will attract dirt.

Give your carpet the care it deserves, and it will last you for a long time. When you are ready to purchase new carpet, shop around. Find out where the best brands are, consult with the experts and make the right choice for your home.

Clean From Top To Bottom

Mold. Mildew. Dirt. Oil. Grime. They are not pretty, and if left long enough, they can wreak havoc on a home. Spring brings nice weather and green gunk on and around your home. Hosing away the gunk is a necessity for the health and happiness of your home, and the best way to go about it is with a pressure washer.

A pressure washer makes quick work of outside cleaning. Water is directed through a high-pressure nozzle to sweep away all of the mold, mildew, dirt, oil and grime from siding, brick, stucco, decking and more. A pressure washer is not a hose. It is a tool, and it must be used properly to prevent damage and obtain a thorough clean.

You can purchase a pressure washer or rent one for the day. Many brands are available. If you are buying a pressure washer, make sure you do your homework. Read up on the various brands available and choose the one that is right for you. Generally, the more powerful the washer, the more it will cost but the heavier jobs it will be able to tackle. Choose a model that will serve your long-term needs and your budget.

Once you get the pressure washer home, make sure you know how to use it. Read the owner's manual and know what pressure to use for the job. The cleaning of brick, stucco and wood siding usually requires a lighter touch, about 1,500 pounds per square inch. The cleaning of concrete may take more.

Most exterior surfaces can be pressure washed, from decks and patios to driveways and sidewalks to brick, stucco and siding. The key is to adjust the pressure for each surface and attack the gunk from top to bottom, standing at least three feet away. This will prevent damage from intense pressure. If you have heavily soiled areas, you may want to look into using some type of cleaner and a scrub brush.

Read up on the surfaces you intend to clean and prepare accordingly. You should also take time out to prep the site. Close all windows and doors. Remove all obstacles. Cover all plants. Then get ready to clean the surface from top to bottom, washing the dirt down. This will save valuable time and energy.

Pressure washing is not hard, and doing it routinely could save you money and time later. If left long enough, gunk and grime can take a real toll on a home and cause rotting and other structural issues. It can also take a toll on your health. Don't leave it to Mother Nature to care for the exterior of your home. A good hard rain won't do as good of a cleaning as a pressure washer will. Borrow one, rent one or buy one and take the time to make the surfaces on and around your home shine.

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Installation Done Right

Vinyl siding is a big investment, and when done right, it can add tremendous value to a home. If the time has come for you to side your home, make sure you choose the right installer. The best siding in the world won't make up for poor installation. Here are some tips to ensure you select the best company for the job.

Ask around. Find out where friends and family got their siding done and how well the installation went. Browse ads as well. The best companies will have informative websites and offer free estimates. When you have a list of potential installers, give them a call and set up an appointment. Most will jump at the opportunity to send out someone to talk to you. If not, cross them off your list. If they are too busy to talk to you now, they will most certainly be too busy to talk to you later down the road during installation.

When interviewing potential installers, make sure they are knowledgeable about their products and procedures. The salesperson should be able to show you the siding products the company offers, as well as point out each product's features, benefits and warranties. They should also walk you through the installation process and offer design assistance and solutions to your unique needs. Ask about licensing, insurance and certification. Is everything in order? Can they provide a list of references? Do they seem easy to work with?

Before the salesperson leaves, make sure you get a written estimate. This should describe the work in detail, identify the products that will be used, and list all of the material and labor costs. It should also address time and payment schedules. You should know exactly what you will be getting for your money, from the prep work to the actual installation to the cleanup and when that will occur.

Whatever you do, don't sign on the dotted line until you are ready. Thank the salesperson for their time and get ready for the next appointment. Once you have met with the companies on your list, do your homework. Contact the references provided and find out how the installation went. Read some online reviews. Check with the Better Business Bureau to make sure no complaints have been lodged against the company.

Set up another meeting with the companies at the top of your list to discuss the job further. This is when you can talk money and make sure the financing is in order. If the price seems too steep, don't be afraid to say so. Chances are a deal can be made. You can also discuss design preferences and work scheduling. You don't want to be on vacation when the installation begins on your home. Most jobs can be completed in less than a week, barring bad weather, and you'll want to be there to ensure things are going as expected.

At this time, the salesperson should walk around your home with you and tell you exactly what will be done. They should describe the installation process from beginning to end and make sure all of your needs will be met. It is crucial that you do this step to ensure you and the installer are on the same page.



With any luck, you will find an installer you like and trust. Once you do, make sure you get a contract signed. Don't wait until it's too late and the installer is all booked up. Call as soon as you make your selection and be prepared to put down a deposit.

Choosing the right siding installer takes time. Don't rush the process. Siding is too big of an investment to take a chance on the installation. When you choose a company and the job begins, do what you can to assist the crew. Open up your home to them if you live in a remote area or temperatures are extreme. The crew will probably work from sunup to sundown, and giving them access to a bathroom or a shady porch will make the day easier for them.

When the job is done, take the time to review the work and let the foreman or project manager know if anything else needs done. Call, email, or text any concerns you have. Don't let things go for six months and then get in touch with the company and expect the crew to come rushing to your aid. Chances are they will be on another job, and you will have to wait, and wait, and wait. Speak up and get everything completed to your satisfaction as soon as possible. And, remember, if you've chosen wisely, everything should go well and end well.

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Quick, Inexpensive Updates

Is your home starting to look a little worn? Would you like to freshen it up but don't have a lot of time or cash to spare? No problem. Try these quick, inexpensive fixes.

Paint

Paint is one of the easiest, most inexpensive ways to spruce up a space. You can paint almost any surface and achieve a variety of finishes using faux painting techniques. And, you can paint as much or as little as you would like. You can paint an entire room, from top to bottom, or just one wall for a pop of color. You can add a few stencils on the stair steps or paint a windowsill. The choice is yours.

Lighting

Lighting is another quick, easy update that doesn't have to cost a bundle. You can save on your utility bills, too, by installing energy-efficient fixtures. Several stylish options are available, and depending upon your talents and skills, you might even be able to convert something old like a bucket into a fashionable light. New shades and energy-efficient bulbs are other quick fixes.

Woodwork

Woodwork can take a real beating over time, especially around doors and windows. Take a look at your woodwork. Could it use a little TLC? Clean and touch it up, or consider replacing it. Trim is relatively inexpensive, and with the right tools and knowledge, very easy to replace. Want to really spruce up your space? Add some crown molding, chair rails or decorative appliques.

Hardware

Hardware can easily be replaced. Many styles are available, and some are very inexpensive. For less than \$50, you can give your kitchen or bathroom a fresh look with new pulls and knobs. New hinges, handles and doorknobs are also relatively inexpensive fixes. While you're at it, why not replace the switch plate covers? Several styles are available

from the basic bright white to shiny stainless steel. You can even paint or wallpaper old covers.

Furniture

Furniture can easily be updated with slipcovers, pillows and throws. But don't stop there. Take inventory of your furniture. Are there pieces you no longer need? Could anything be repurposed? Clear out what you don't need and give whatever remains a facelift with paint, stain and fabric. Make those old dining chairs new again with a fresh coat of paint and reupholstered seats. Polish up the table, conceal the scratches with a stain stick, and you're all set for your next dinner party. As you make your way through other rooms, pay attention to the furniture arrangement. Could it be better? It's amazing how much of a difference a simple change in the furniture arrangement can make.

These are just a few strategies for sprucing up your space on a shoestring budget. There are many other quick fixes. You could:

- Reface cabinets.
- Install new faucets and toilet seats.
- Replace appliance face panels.
- Regrout tile.
- Hang new blinds and drapes.
- Switch out rugs.
- Add some artwork and accessories.
- Change out photo frames.
- Roll out new rugs.
- Bring in some plants and flowers.

And, don't forget the importance of a good cleaning. Clearing away the clutter and cleaning the space from top to bottom can make it look like new.



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Reface or Replace?

Kitchens are often the heart of a home. They're the place where people gather together to enjoy each other's company as they prepare food, pay bills or do other chores. Kitchens work overtime and can take a real beating over the years, especially the cabinets. While some homeowners choose to reface their cabinets, others choose to replace them entirely. There are pros and cons to each, of course, but either way, the heart of the home will get a much-needed facelift.

Refacing cabinets is generally the less expensive option of the two. With refacing, cabinet boxes are left in place while the exposed frames are refaced with plastic veneer or wood and new cabinet doors and drawers or drawer fronts are installed. For an additional cost, other accessories may be incorporated, such as pull-out shelves, a lazy Susan, flip-out drawer fronts, a wine rack or a pull-out trash bin. Some refacers will even replace countertops, sinks and flooring. Need a cabinet above the refrigerator? No problem. Your refacer can custom-build one for an additional fee. Refacing works best on cabinets that are in good condition but could use some updating. The average cost for a job runs from \$5,000 to \$8,000.

Replacing is just what it sounds like. All of the old kitchen cabinets are removed and new ones are installed. This option is much more time consuming, but if your cabinets are in terrible shape or you are looking to create a better layout or add storage, new cabinets are your best bet. But, be prepared to shell out some money. New cabinets can cost anywhere from \$5,000 on up. Add in the cost of installation and extras like molding, and you can see why replacement is the more expensive option.

Both options have their pros and cons. Refacing can generally be done in a week or less, whereas installing new cabinets can take weeks. New cabinets mean new everything inside and out, whereas with refaced cabinets, you get just new doors, drawers and hardware. If your cabinets are older, that could be a plus, as many cabinets built 20 or 30 years ago are of better quality than some of the cabinets on the market today. Refacing will do nothing for cabinets that are in poor condition or misaligned due to sagging floors.

To determine the best option for you, consult with some reputable contractors. They can tell you whether your cabinets are in good enough condition to reface and advise you as to the best route to take. If you are looking for more counter space, for example, new cabinets



may be the way to go.

Budget is always a factor. How much do you have to spend? Generally, it costs twice as much to replace cabinets as it does to reface them. Should you purchase stock cabinets or install them yourself, however, you may be able to save enough to afford new cabinets. Look around and do your homework.

The right cabinets, new or updated, can enhance the feel of any kitchen. Review the options carefully and make the right choice for you. Reface or replace, you're sure to end up with a kitchen your friends and family will enjoy hanging out in.

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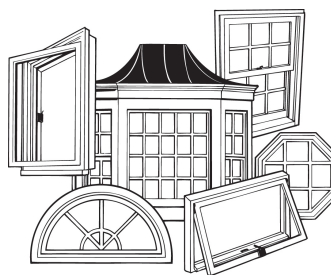
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Step Up The Transformation

Along with entrances and exits, stairways are some of the most heavily trafficked areas of the home. You and your family probably go up and down the stairs a dozen times a day, and if there is carpeting underfoot, that can lead to a lot of wear and tear. Fortunately, there are many options for dealing with a carpeted stairway that has seen better days.

Study the carpeting on your stairs. What kind of condition is it in? Is it just soiled and stained? Give it a good cleaning. Fill up a bucket with warm water, grab a bottle of carpet cleaner and a scrub brush, and get busy. For a deeper cleaning, you might want to rent a steam cleaner or hire a carpet cleaning service.

For carpet beyond cleaning, replacement might be your best bet. This can be costly, but if you live in an area with cold weather or with young children or seniors prone to falls, it is worth considering. Tramping up and down hard, cold steps is never fun, and falls down hard steps can lead to serious injury. Bring warmth, comfort and cushioning to your stairs with new carpet. You can opt for wall-to-wall carpeting or a runner, though with a runner, you may have to have the stairs refinished.

While nice, carpeted stairs can be difficult to keep clean. Along with regular vacuuming, you may have to do a deeper cleaning from time to time. If you're not one for hauling the vacuum cleaner or steam cleaner up and down the stairs, consider some alternatives. Many homeowners these days are replacing the carpet on their stairs with hardwood. Although expensive to install, hardwood is durable and easy to clean. Laminate is a more affordable option, and like hardwood, it is easy to clean. Just sweep and dust with a wet-dry mop.

If hardwood and laminate are not your style, paint is another option. Paint is very affordable and offers endless possibilities. You can open up the space by painting the stairs white. You can brighten up the space with bolder paint color choices and freehand designs. You can add some whimsy to the space with stenciled or tiled stairs. Just paint the stairs whatever color you want and stencil in some designs or apply tile to the risers. Tiled risers are a feature in many homes of the Southwest. For those concerned about falling on slick, painted stairs, carpet tiles are available for the treads.

The sky is the limit when it comes to transforming your stairs. Rethink that tired, worn carpet. New carpet. Hardwood. Paint. It's your choice, and depending upon the route you take, you might just cut down your cleaning time.



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See the transformation and details on Page 10.

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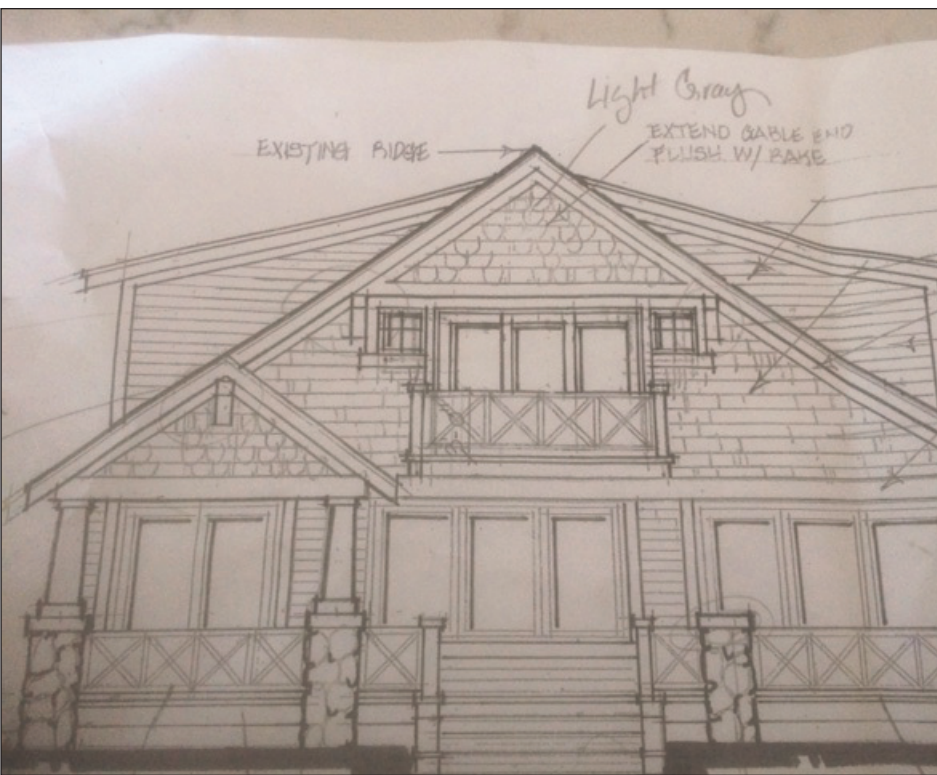
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Submitted photos

Concept to completion

A total renovation of a home on Clear Lake presented an opportunity for Bristol Construction to stretch their creative muscles both inside and out.

The exterior features four different styles of smart lap siding, including scallops and shakes. They also added the front porch, balcony and dormers. The decorative stone pillars on the porch gives the project a real lakefront or water feel.

Inside, a vaulted ceiling helps create a stunning view of the lake.

See more Bristol Construction projects on Pages 9 & 15.



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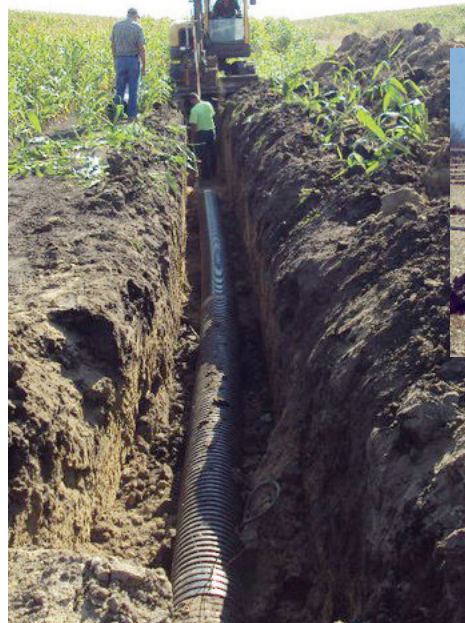
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After

The LP Smartside siding is virtually maintenance-free, holding paint for 20 years or longer. It is available in different styles, to allow unique configurations and an eye catching look. Here, Mannes Construction utilized traditional lap type siding for most of the exterior, while doing the gable ends with LP shakes, to provide a contrast.

Under the siding, the crew utilized energy shield, a foil coated foam, which adds R-value to a home without having to tear into the walls to seal the outside out, while keeping the inside comfortable.



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A laminate countertop and tile backsplash adds a clean and classic look to this Lake Mills home, recently upgraded by Mannes Construction.



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Welcome One And All

Nothing says welcome home more than an inviting entrance. Take a step outside your front door. Does your entrance say welcome? Is the front door appealing? Is there a mat for people to wipe their shoes on? Is there a doorbell or doorknocker for people to let you know of their arrival? To find out just how welcoming your entrance is, pretend you are a visitor. What do you see? Take some photos. Things tend to look differently in photos.

One of the easiest ways to dress up a home's entrance is with paint. Could your front door use a new coat of paint? How about your porch? Before you get the old paint cans out of the garage, consider if it is time for an update. Instead of black or brown, maybe you could try a bolder color for your front door. Red, blue or green can make a real statement and pull visitors' eyes immediately to your front door. Add some new hardware to your door and a new coat of paint on the porch floor, and your entrance will really pop.



Lighting is a must in any entrance. Is your entrance well lit? If not, perhaps it's time to add some lights, or at the very least, replace the ones you have. Exterior lighting comes in a wide range of styles and finishes. Brighter, more energy-efficient lighting will do wonders for your entrance and your pocketbook.

Accessories are another good way to dress up an entrance. A welcome mat is a must to keep dirt out of the home. A wreath will help dress up any space, as will statuary and plants. Depending upon how large of a space you have, you might even be able to add some furniture. A bench works great for visitors needing someplace to rest their bags while they wait for you to answer the door.

If you have a path leading up to your front door, you might want to examine that area too. Is there anything you can do to add interest, such as installing lighting or planting some flowers. Anything you can do to dress up the walkway will add to the welcoming feel of your home.

There are hundreds of things you can do to make the entrance of your home more welcoming, and they don't have to cost you a bundle. A new wreath or doormat can really perk up the space. For further ideas, browse online or consult a professional.

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Soil settles, tree roots expand, rain falls, the sun beats down, and before you know it, your driveway has not one but several cracks. Replacing the whole driveway can be expensive. Repairing the cracks can be much more cost effective, but the results may be unsightly. The best solution might be to repair the cracks and resurface the driveway.

Resurfacing is essentially applying a new layer of concrete over the existing slab. It only takes a few days, and if done right, it can make your driveway look like new. The first step is to repair the cracks, and in order for them not to resurface, you must repair them right. Grind them out. Then give the whole driveway a good cleaning. This will ensure good adhesion of the concrete resurfacer later. Use a power washer to remove all dirt, debris, oil, grease and loose concrete. Pay special attention to the cracks, making sure all debris has been removed. Finally, fill the cracks with concrete epoxy. This will bond the broken slabs together and keep the cracks from reappearing.

In order to resurface the driveway, you will need a concrete resurfacer. Regular concrete will not do. It may cost less, but it has no bonding agents and will not adhere to the slab. Be prepared to spend the amount needed for a quality concrete resurfacer. Most brands come in gray, but if you desire, you may have the resurfacer tinted. Ask the salesperson for assistance with tinting the resurfacer of your choice.

Check the weather and choose a good day for application. The temperature must be 50° or above on the day of and 40° or above in the day following, with no rain for at least eight hours after application. You may also want to gather a few friends to assist you. Resurfacing an entire driveway is a lot of work.

Before you get started, there is some prep work you should do. Sweep your driveway, and if needed, clean it again. Then fill all expansion and control joints with weather stripping to prevent the concrete resurfacer from getting into them. Finally, mix the resurfacer according to the manufacturer's directions. You want a syrup consistency.

When you are ready for application, pour the resurfacer onto the slab in one-foot wide strips and use a long-handled squeegee to scrub it in and spread it back and forth. Wait five minutes and then use a concrete broom to apply a non-slip finish. Mist it with water for the next 24 to 48 hours to cure it.

Stand back and admire your new driveway. You should be able to walk on it in six to eight hours and park on it in 24 to 48 hours.



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Storage Above

We all have things we need to store. Many of us turn to our closets and drawers for storage, then to our garages and basements, and finally to our attics when all else is full. If you have an attic bursting at the seams, here are some tips for dealing with it.

Unlike drawers, closets, garages and basements, attics are not as easily accessible, and once something goes into them, it really is out of sight, out of mind. Chances are, there are a lot of forgotten items hiding in your attic, things you haven't seen in a really long time, things you may not even need. To be sure, you will have to clear out the attic, drag everything downstairs and go through it.

Choose a good day to clear out the attic and grab some buddies to help. Don't go it alone. It could take you many hours going up and down the stairs to get everything out, and if you are flying solo, you may just give up and call it quits.

Remove everything from the attic and take the time to sort through it. Have a keep pile, a donate pile and a trash pile and be ruthless in the sorting, retaining only what you need and use. If you haven't seen or used an item in a year, you probably don't need it. Donate it. If something is broken, toss it. Don't set it back with the intentions that you will fix it when you have time. Chances are you will never find the time. The same goes for a sell pile. Don't start one unless you know for certain that you will make the time to list the items or take them to a consignment shop.

When you are finished sorting, deal with the piles. Bag up the trash and drop it in the garbage bin or haul it away. Box up the donate items and take them to the nearest donation center. Box up the sell items and take them to the nearest consignment shop or list them for sale.

Plan a day to deal with the keep pile and follow through. Pull out items that should not be stored in the attic due to extreme temperatures, candles, for example, and store them elsewhere. Then place like items together in plastic bins. Don't use cardboard boxes, which can easily be penetrated by rodents, insects and dust. Label all bins for easier access.

Depending upon what and how much you are storing in your attic, you may want to make an inventory. That way, you will know for certain what is and is not up there and won't spend countless hours searching for something.

Once you have everything boxed and inventoried, you can start putting it back in the attic. Don't pile bins wherever. Place bins with items you use often near the door with plenty of room to get to them. Place bins with items you use less often, like Christmas decorations, farther back. If your attic does not have a floor, take extra care with storage. Put down some plywood for bins.

Attic storage is essential for many, especially those with few closets, no basement and a small garage. Maximize your attic's storage potential by taking the time to clear it out and reorganizing everything in a more efficient way.



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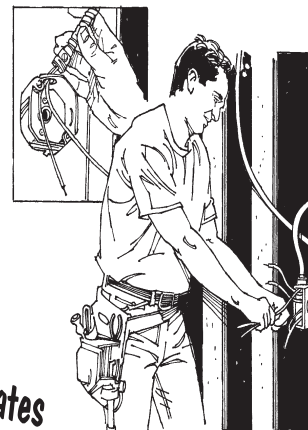
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Safe, Secure and Beautiful

Lighting is one of the most important features of a home, indoors and out. It provides illumination for tasks inside and keeps burglars away outside. When chosen well, lighting can also enhance a home's beauty. Here are some tips the next time you change or add to your outdoor lighting.

Outdoor lighting comes in many types. Post lights are mounted on a post, which is usually located near the driveway. Wall lights are mounted on walls near exterior doors—on each side of the garage door, for example. Ceiling mount lights are mounted on the ceiling of a porch or portico to illuminate the front entrance. Hanging lights serve the same purpose as ceiling mount lights, but make more of a statement in grand entrances and tall porches.

Make a list of the outdoor lights you need and the amount you have to spend, and then get ready to shop. Outdoor lights come in a variety of styles. Look for a style that complements the style of your home. While lanterns might work well for a beach house, they may not suit your contemporary home. You might need a sleeker, cleaner style.



Finish is another aspect to consider. Again, look to your house as a guide. If you have a lot of brass, brass fixtures are the way to go. If you have a lot of ironwork, look for black fixtures. If you have a lot of chrome, look for chrome fixtures.

Scale is vital. Too small or too large of lights can detract from the beauty of your home. Look for appropriate sized lights. If you are looking for wall lights for a two-story home, for example, you should focus on lights that are 18 to 24 inches tall. Pay attention to the elements in the area where the lights will go. While you might adore hanging lights, having one in your small portico might not work. You don't want guests hitting their head on the light every time they enter or exit your home.

Want to make your home really glow? Update the outdoor lighting. Determine your needs and look for the right style, finish and scale to create a safe, secure, beautiful home.

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