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**read #6 "*Hire a Decorator for a day*"

21 fresh & frugal decorating ideas

Think fashion as artwork! Shop Goodwill online for vintage linens! Check out our neat solutions to age-old interior design dilemmas.

About this partnership: USA WEEKEND Magazine collaborated with Budget Living, the award-winning magazine for people who want to spend smart and live rich, to bring you this special report. For even more advice, pick up the latest copy of Budget Living at bookstores and newsstands nationwide, and get subscription information online at Blmag.com.

Want your home to be a house of style, without having to take out a second mortgage? The key to getting a smart-looking pad is to open your mind, not your wallet. To that end, we asked the editors of Budget Living magazine to rustle up some of their forward-thinking ideas to add charm, wit and sophistication to your abode for just a few bucks -- or even for free.

1. Dress up your walls, and bring fashion out of the closet

Your fabulous purses, aprons and hats deserve to be seen, so tack 'em up on the living room wall. Or go minimalist: Display one vintage item on an antique hanger.

2. Get highbrow art at a way-low price

The Library of Congress sells fine art reproductions -- everything from Walker Evans photographs to Japanese woodcut prints -- at reasonable prices online (loc.gov/rr/print/catalog.html). Black-and-white 8-by-10-inch photos start at \$25, and a one-time \$14 processing fee covers up to 25 prints.

3. Go beachy in the boudoir

Trim three raffia table skirts (\$12 each at orientaltrading.com) to dust-ruffle length, and attach them to the top of your box spring with a few dozen T-pins (at crafts stores). Complete the luau look with tropical-print bedding.

4. Give your kitchen cabinets a quick, clean makeover

Buying new wooden cabinets can cost a bundle, but repainting your old ones is easy and inexpensive. Start with a coat of flat primer, and top it with semigloss latex enamel. Next, ditch those dowdy knobs and drawer pulls for cool vintage or reproduction ones. Try Liz's Antique Hardware (lahardware.com) or Anthropologie (anthropologie.com).



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5. Transform the look of your living room

... as often as you like. Making a style switch is a cinch if you have neutral furniture - just add unique, eye-catching throw pillows. When you're in the mood for a change, replacing them will be inexpensive and hassle-free.

****6. Hire a decorator for a day**

An "interior refiner" will help you make the best of what you have for as little as a few hundred dollars per room (a fraction of the cost of a full interior design job). Locate one near you at interiorrefiners.com.

7. Check out shopgoodwill.com

We love eBay, but there's less bidding competition at Goodwill's auction site, not to mention a better selection of vintage linens and housewares than you're likely to find at your local Goodwill store.

8. Tuck a home office into a spare closet

Create a custom desk by mounting "L" brackets on the walls about 21/2 feet from the floor, and attach a sheet of cut-to-size pine or pressed board to serve as a desktop. Then pull up a chair and get busy!

9. Make a home office

Create one that's cozy, not corporate. Give your work space relaxed, quirky charm by borrowing from the domestic sphere. A dish drainer makes a clever file holder, while a vintage sideboard is perfect for keeping eyesores like the fax machine and printer out of sight.

10. Monogram your pillows

Iron-on letters will add a dash of old-school, preppy style to any room, setting you back just a few bucks. Try joann.com or your neighborhood fabric store.

11. Create pop art

Take household products with bold graphics -- Brillo pads, Tide detergent and, of course, Campbell's soup -- and put the labels in pre-matted frames.

Perfect paint projects

12. You don't need to be Jackson Pollock to make large-scale wall art, above. Pick up a quart of Benjamin Moore chalkboard paint (about \$11), tape the perimeter of the area you want to transform, brush on a couple of coats, and let dry. Then, grab a piece of chalk, and start doodling.

13. If your refrigerator door can't handle any more memos, paint a blank wall with Magically Magnetic Paint Additive (available at lyt.com). For \$15, you get enough concentrate to mix with a quart of primer to make any surface magnetically attractive.

14. A genuine mercury-glass vase can run a few hundred bucks, but a ho-hum florist's vase can easily be turned into a clever fake by just spritzing the inside with Krylon Looking Glass Mirror-Like Paint, available for \$12.

15. Mix it up in your dining room

Complete antique dining sets are hard to come by as they're usually very expensive, so go for mismatched pieces that are far more interesting and easier to score.

Six snappy frames

These easy outside-the-box framing ideas require little more than a protective piece of Plexiglas (most retailers will custom-cut it for you; look in the Yellow Pages under "Plastics") -- yet each one will put your Kodak moments in a whole new context.

16. Etch A Sketch: Pop off this iconic toy's knobs and red frame with a screwdriver, lay your photo atop the gray screen, add a layer of Plexiglas, and reassemble.

17. Paint set: Remove the paints from the sectioned tray of a kids' watercolor set, cut your images to fit in the slots, tape them in place, and flip the clear plastic lid closed.

18. Action figure: All you need is a toy with a steady stance and weapon-ready mitts -- think G.I. Joe (preferably with Kung-Fu Grip) or Mighty Morphin Power Rangers. Slip a photo into its plastic hands, and stand it up.

19. Safety goggles: Take those shop-class standards (\$4 at homedepot.com) from geeky to cheeky by trimming a photo to fit behind the shield.

20. Clipboard: Nothing could be simpler than clamping your snapshot behind a layer of Plexiglas and hanging it up.

21. Napkin holder: Dish up memories from a diner-style napkin dispenser (we scored one for \$5 at restockit.com). Place the photo and a piece of Plexiglas against the spring-loaded plate (where the napkins normally go).

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