

Media Outlet: MSN Money**Date:** 05.07.13**DUU:** 741,936**URL:** <http://money.uk.msn.com/mortgages-and-homes/how-can-you-boost-the-value-of-your-home#image=1>

How can you boost the value of your home?

Our tips on how to improve your home's value


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Our tips on how to improve your home's value

The good news is that if you don't want to sell your house just now, you can still add a significant amount to the value by sprucing it up.

Recent findings from RatedPeople.com, a tradesmen recommendation service, found that despite the recession, two thirds of people are undertaking renovations, with top cosmetic treatments including laying new floor or carpets, updating wallpaper or paintwork, re-plastering walls and ceilings, repainting the front door, and installing energy-saving measures.

Renovating your home means you get to enjoy the benefits now while also increasing the value of your home for when you do decide to sell; at that time, the changes you've made will also help you shift the place more quickly.

That said, you do need to weigh up the cost against the potential return.

"Ensure your expenditure on 'sprucing up' takes into account the impact improvements have on the value," says Paul Edginton from Connells estate agent. "Common sense must prevail."

If in doubt, get an established agent or other property expert in to look round to give you a steer on what is worth doing and what is essential to maximise value.

This is particularly important if you're considering a bigger project.

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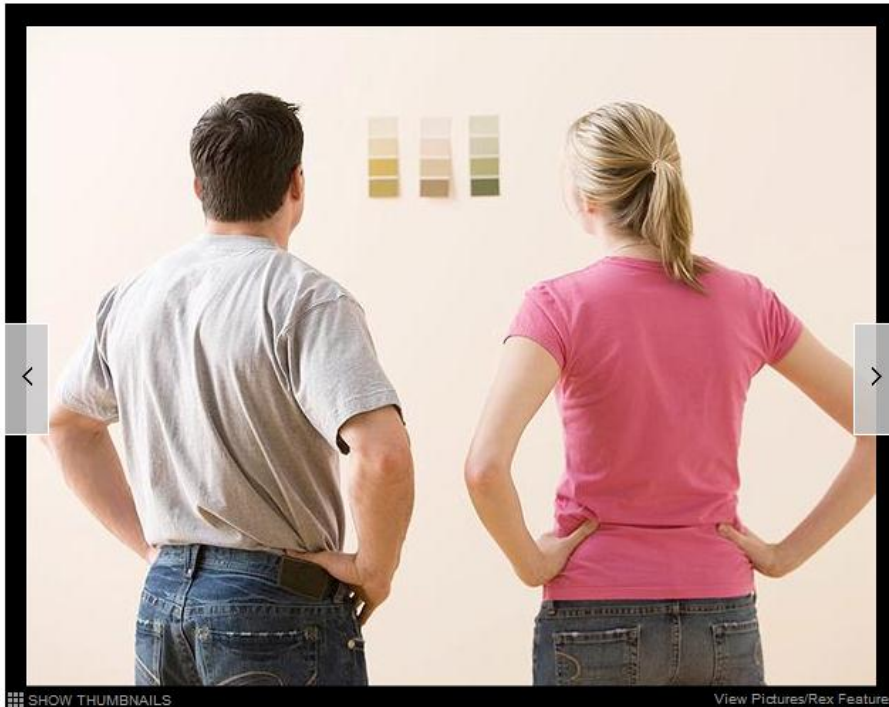
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Give your home a cosmetic makeover

A property that is run down, full of junk and clutter with outdated decoration and a worn-out kitchen and bathroom can be easily transformed for under £5,000, according to Michael Holmes, spokesman for The National Home Improvement Show (improveyourhomeshow.co.uk). "A clever cosmetic makeover can add between 5 and 10% to the value of a property – and even more in some instances."

Begin by stripping out old carpets, curtains, and as much junk as possible; remove any outdated or damaged fitted furniture and carry out a general de-cluttering.

Kate Faulkner from Propertychecklist.co.uk adds that one of the first priorities should be ensuring the property is freshly painted.

"Use neutral colours to help make rooms look spacious and light," she says. "Also repaint the woodwork, such as skirting and doors."

Sand and then stain or paint the original floorboards, or if they're in poor condition, lay laminate ones.

"Consider replacing curtains with shutters," says George Franks from estate agent Douglas & Gordon. "They can give that 'wow factor' even if everything else is a little bit shabby, and can make a room feel larger."

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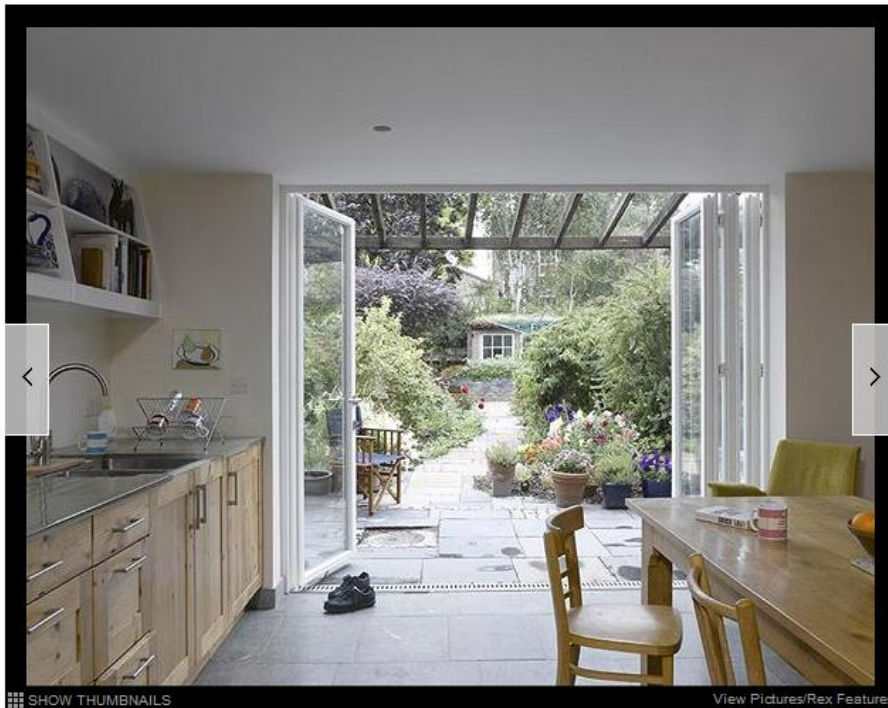
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Update the kitchen

A large well-designed kitchen is on most buyer wish-lists, and can add 15% to a property's value, according to Bidwell.

"Install the best you can afford," he says. "Don't let it get too dated either. Overhauling tiles, door handles or flooring to keep up with trends can really pay off."

Equally, if you're on a tight budget and like the existing layout and storage space, keep your main units and simply replace the doors, worktops, sink, taps and splash-backs for a fresh look.

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Consider an extra bathroom

Installing an extra bathroom could potentially add around 15% to your home's value, but not if it means you lose a bedroom.

One alternative might be an en-suite.

"This is a must for many buyers," says Holmes. "An old airing cupboard or storage area may be large enough to form a small shower room."

If the bathroom is out of date, replace it with a simple new white suite, and if you're not replacing it, give it a makeover with simple changes; this could include new taps, grouting and shower screens.

From a cosmetic perspective, the key is to keep the space simple.

"Today's buyers want luxury fittings, but steer clear of the fashion for removing a bath altogether, as many families still like a tub," adds Holmes.

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Give the exterior some TLC

There are plenty of simple ways you can improve your home's "kerb appeal" – while also adding value.

"Tidy up the exterior by clearing the front garden, re-painting the garage door and front door," says Dean Gowers at handyman service, 0800 Handyman. "Make sure drainpipes are secure and not leaking, and give them a coat of paint."

Clean moss off the roof with a pressure washer, and repair any cracks or damage to render, brick or stonework.

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Tidy the garden

Devoting a little time to the garden can make a property far easier to sell – and will also add to its value.

At the very least, carry out the basics such as cleaning up dead plants, mowing the lawn, and cutting back overgrown trees and shrubs.

"Pressure-wash the patio, decking and outside tiles to ensure they look fresh, and remove any moss or weeds," says Georgina Bowles from estate agent John D Wood & Co. "Plant up your pots with seasonal flowers to add some colour."

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Extra space

If you're looking to invest in bigger home improvements, a loft conversion, conservatory or extension can add more than 10% to your home's value.

"But this depends on the work being done well," says Declan Curran from Homefix Direct. "Speak to lots of estate agents and shop around thoroughly for highly-recommended and reasonably-priced builders. With a conservatory, for example, the key is to ensure it doesn't look like it's been 'tacked on.'"

Equally, if your garage is full of clutter, and not being used for your car, consider converting the space into something useful, such as a study or utility room.

"This will increase the useful space and could add as much as 5% to the value," says Guy Jenkinson from property consultant, Bidwells.

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Energy-saving measures

Double-glazing and central heating are expected in every home now, while new energy-efficient windows and heating systems can also add to its value.

New figures from the Department of Energy & Climate Change suggest energy-saving measures can boost the value of a property by an average of 14 per cent – although other industry estimates are a little more conservative.

"Energy-saving measures aren't necessarily on everyone's wish-list when buying," says Faulkner. "But it is worth installing energy-saving light-bulbs and insulating the roof as a matter of course, as this can increase the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating."

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If you're selling now...

If your home is on the market right now, the key is to try and imagine what you would see if you were look at it for the first time, says Carol Peett from The County Homeseach Company.

"Focus on the fact potential buyers make their decision in the first 30 seconds of entering," she says. "First impressions are vital to selling your home fast – and for the top price."

Begin by standing at the end of the drive and take a good look at what you see.

"Does the house look clean, tidy and welcoming?" says Peett. "If not, tackle the problems by adding a coat of paint, polishing the front door and doing some wedding."

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When it comes to the interior, your focus needs to be on de-cluttering, cleaning and organising all the rooms.

"Put away as much as you can," says Richard Patterson from Myonlineestateagent.com. "If you have nowhere to hide stuff, think about what you would be happy to sell, throw out, or put into storage."

Clean and tidy your wardrobes and drawers, thin out books in book-cases, clear kitchen worktops, and ensure beds are made with fresh, crisp linen, adds Preet.

Michelle Barnsley from Barratt Homes suggests "de-personalising" your home.

"Take down personal family photos and heirlooms," she says. "Also remove any reference to pets."

Set aside some time to repair cracked tiles, fix leaky taps, and replace dead light-bulbs.

Check that windows are shining and that the grout around baths and showers is bleached.

"Colours and bad smells are the worst turn-offs for any buyer," says James Wyatt from estate agent, Barton Wyatt.

"Baked bread or fresh coffee may sound corny, but are better than the smell of dog or cat litter trays."

Finally, if you have a garden, mow the lawn, prune the shrubs and scrub the patio; also be aware that in the summer, a table and chairs on the patio can help sell the dream of relaxing in the garden.