

YOUR HOME

JANUARY
2011

TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

Holiday Tidy-ings

The holidays are filled with traditions, but there's one you'd probably rather skip: the holiday cleanup. Consider these tips to make the daunting holiday purge seem as fleeting as the season.

Wondering what to do with all those leftover holiday catalogs? Rip 'em up and use the shredded pages to pack away delicate ornaments and other holiday decorations safely and securely. If the

tissue paper from all those gifts is too wrinkled to reuse, line boxes with it to keep your most precious items intact until next year.

Use clear plastic cases to store decorations, while the backsides of old greeting cards make good labels to identify what's in each box. And what

about storing all those extension cords and strings of lights? Wrap them around a gift wrap or paper towel roll to prevent tangling; bag and label with their corresponding extension cords so you know exactly what light goes where.

Do the same for garlands. Consider you avoid stuffing boxes with unrelated holiday knick-knacks.

And last, invest in a tree bag to keep pine needles from spilling onto your living room rug or foyer floor. Before taking the tree out of its stand, remove excess water with a turkey baster to ensure that the floor stays dry.



Baby Love

You want your nursery to be as special as the little one that's on the way, but choosing décor for the baby's room can be overwhelming. Here are a few tips to streamline the process.

First, choose your color palette. Experts recommend painting the room in a calming, cool color, such as deep blue, green or purple. And keep in mind that it's cost-effective to choose a color that older kids would like as well, which will cut down on future repainting costs.

Overall, experts suggest matching the décor of the nursery to the rest of your home. If you have a living room and kitchen that feature lots of vibrant greens and blues, consider softer tones in the same color family for the nursery. Try to avoid reds; this is the first color (aside from black and white) that babies can discern and might be too harsh on an infant's eyes.

Consider neutral walls — beige, white or taupe — accented with colorful furniture treatments that lend a youthful vibe without being too bold. Think painted doorknobs, dresser legs or even tabletops in primary colors.

Be sure to build in plenty of storage for extra diapers, toys and clothes. Experts recommend reserving open floor space to give your baby plenty of room to roam.

To add a personal touch, get creative and paint a scene from a favorite nursery rhyme on a blank wall — anything from Jack and Jill to Alice in Wonderland or Cinderella. Not so artistic? Simply frame some illustrations, or the pages of the books themselves, and hang them in groupings on the wall.

Another idea is to consider adding monograms to the room. By looking through design books, you might find a monogram that fits the mood of the nursery (contemporary rather than Victorian, for example) and paint it on the headboard of the crib, a tabletop or the wall to create an overarching motif for the room.



fast fact >> >> >>

One home structure fire was reported every 87 seconds in 2009. Cooking is the most common cause of home fires and injuries.





The Final Tally

Thinking about remodeling, but don't know which projects will give you the most bang for your buck? Check out the results of the latest "Cost vs. Value" report by *Remodeling* magazine.

One surprising — but fairly easy — change is to replace the garage door, which on average costs \$1,291. According to the report, more than 80 percent of the cost is recouped during a resale. Other renovations and remodels worth their price tag include a steel entry door replacement (102.1 percent cost recouped), a minor kitchen remodel (72.8 percent cost recouped) and replacing wooden windows (72.4 percent cost recouped).

For upscale projects, replacing fiber cement siding reaps 80 percent of the initial cost, while replacing vinyl

windows recoups just more than 70 percent of the initial cost. Big renovations you might think are worth it, but aren't: master suite additions (52.7 percent of cost recouped), an additional bathroom (53 percent cost recouped) and a home office remodel (45.8 percent cost recouped).

The data from the past seven years show a downward trend in the overall cost-to-value ratio, which began with eroding home prices and a rise in construction costs, but is now largely due to a drop in resale values.

So what's the bottom line? The report suggests that in terms of remodeling, it's most profitable to concentrate on the exterior of the home than the interior.

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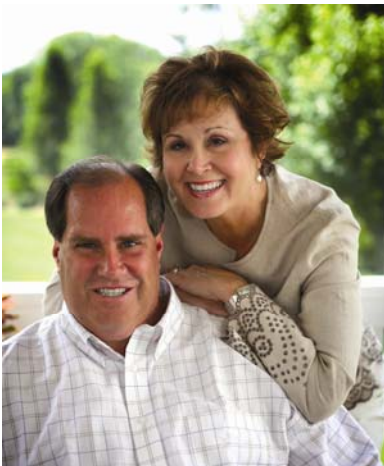
DID YOU KNOW

About 3 percent of pet owners give Valentine's Day gifts to their four-legged pals.



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? **Please mention my name.**

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