

YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS FOR HOMEOWNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS



KITCHEN LIFT

Are you ready for a kitchen upgrade but lacking an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink kind of budget? Plenty of low-cost improvements can revive a kitchen without the need to rip out cabinets and rewire appliances. Consider these tips from *This Old House* and HGTV.

Color Splash: With a new coat of paint and some other accents, you might not even recognize your own kitchen. Make over dark wood or white cabinets with a cool hue, such as pale sage green, or create visual impact by painting a focal point, such as your island, a bold color. A tile backsplash, graphic prints and new hardware are also inexpensive ways to add personality. Consider a new and easy-to-clean linoleum floor in a shade such as Red Amaranth.

See the Light: A kitchen needs light to be functional, of course, but oversized task lights can also improve the vibe and tie other details together. Track or recessed lighting can be pricey, so look for pendants that can go above a kitchen island and mirror the style of hardware on your faucet and cabinets. Try under-counter lighting, too.

Store More: Short on storage? Try hanging pot racks overhead. Position them close to the range and away from where you'd hit your head. Built-ins can be expensive, so look at your local hardware stores for pull-out storage kits and organizers to fit your current cabinetry.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCE

Summertime, and the living is easy? It may not seem that way when you're entertaining guests, but hosting friends and family doesn't have to be stressful, especially if you choose to do it outside using these simple ideas from Martha Stewart.



Even before prime outdoor entertaining season gets underway, stay ahead of the game with built-in decorations. Hanging brightly patterned or monogrammed dishes on the side of your house can make a fun and personal statement. A graphic-print umbrella on the patio can tie the space together. Create storage space and seating (and add another pop of color) by painting wooden chests and topping them with custom cushions made of waterproof foam and fabric.

Food and drink will probably be at the center of your get together. Raise the bar at your next gathering by creating a beverage station. Use a shelf made of metal or another material and brackets to affix the flat surface to the side of your house. Secure the ledge so it can be folded down out of the way when it's not in use.

And although the weather is warm, a campfire is a great way to host a gathering when temperatures cool off at night. Create a firepit in your yard: Start with wood framing (the kind used to edge garden beds) to construct the perimeter. Fill the confined area with sand, which will level the surface and absorb charcoal and flyaway sparks. Don't forget the seating around the main attraction. Folding deck chairs are easy to store in the off-season.



fast fact >>

Guinness World Record holder "The Big Hot Dog" weighs 7 pounds and is 16 inches long and 4 inches in diameter. The \$40 dog amounts to 40 regular-sized servings.



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IT'S YOUR MOVE

The days of bribing friends and family to help you move are probably long gone. But getting help isn't necessarily any easier — finding a good, reliable moving company that can get the job done right takes careful research. Before you hire any moving company, do a little legwork to make sure it's legit, in your price range and offers the services you need. USA.gov, Relocation.com and ApartmentGuide.com offer the following tips.

First, find out some details about the company. Does it have an operating license? Check with your local state authority or the Department of Transportation, depending on whether it's an in-state or interstate move. Does the company carry insurance, and what are the limits?

Also investigate the company's track record. Check with the Better Business Bureau for complaints, and ask the company for references you can contact. Repeat customers who do business with the company can be some of the best referrals.

Get estimates from several companies to get a feel for the going rate, and only consider those estimates that fall within the appropriate range. Also, find out exactly what's included in the quote (packing materials such as tape and extra boxes aren't always included). Low quotes could ultimately mean paying more money after the move, since some companies don't itemize what others include in the estimate.

Be prepared for questions moving companies will ask you. What is your time frame? How far will you be moving? If you rent, do you have renter's insurance, and what does it cover? Will you need moving insurance or packaging services? Where will the moving truck park? Are there stairs or elevators? By preparing yourself ahead of time, you can make that stressful move go a lot smoother.

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DID YOU KNOW?

June 14 is Flag Day. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson established the national holiday to commemorate the adoption of the Stars and Stripes as the flag of the United States.



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

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