



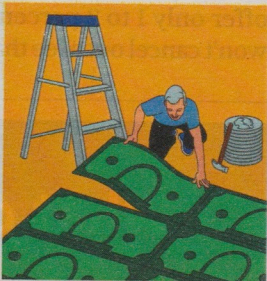
GREAT WAYS TO SAVE: HOME FIX-IT PROJECTS

BY BETH BRAVERMAN

Get creative with your contractors. Some may be more willing to negotiate during the winter months, which are typically a slower season for them, says Courtney Klosterman, home insights specialist with Hippo Home Insurance. In exchange for a discount, offer to do some of the prep work or purchase the materials yourself.

Go straight with countertops. Replacing your countertop can be a budget-friendly way to give a facelift to an older kitchen. In addition to going with lower-cost materials (think slate or quartz), opt for eased edges rather than more labor-intensive designs, such as bevel or bullnose, which can cost twice as much per linear foot of counter.

Small tasks with big impact. Painting an accent color on the back of a built-in bookcase, retiling a fireplace and painting the mantle, or replacing a light fixture are relatively small lifts that can make an out-size design difference. "Those kinds of things don't seem like a big deal, but they really are," says Lisa Cini, founder of Mosaic Design Studio in Columbus, Ohio.



Paper your powder room. Wallpaper is a major home decor trend now, especially in a small space such as a bathroom or laundry room. It's also a project you can do on your own.

Use pre-owned materials. From appliances to countertops and cabinets, you can purchase materials salvaged from construction sites or retail floor models for a fraction of the cost of purchasing such items new. Sites to check include TheReusePeople.org, AuroraCirc.com, and Habitat.org/restores.

Look for closeouts. For materials like flooring, tiles and lighting, watch for closeout sales. As long as you know exactly how much you need, you can save up to 90 percent. "They can be of incredible quality; it's just that they're discontinuing the line," Cini says.