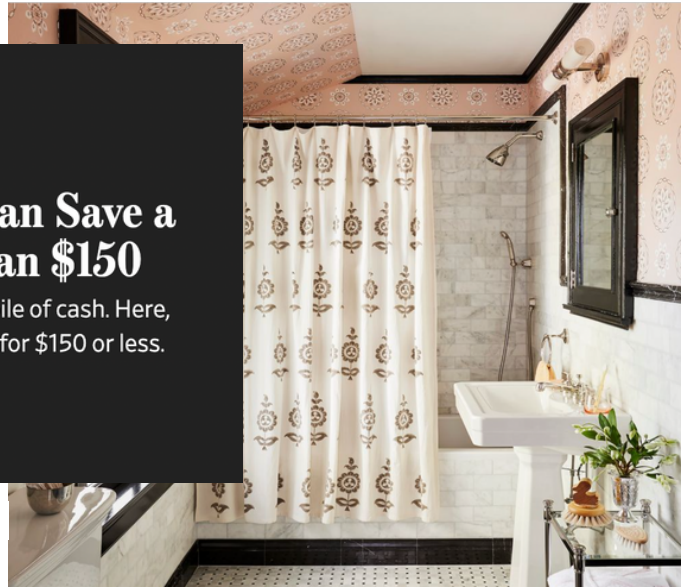


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5 Little Design Moves That Can Save a Boring Room—For Less Than \$150

Not all home makeovers require a contractor and a pile of cash. Here, designers share little upgrades with big impact—all for \$150 or less.

By Allison Duncan Nov. 3, 2023 2:00 pm ET



INSTANT SPLASH A whimsical black-printed shower curtain adds charm to a Bronxville, N.Y., bathroom by Story Street Studio. TIM WILLIAMS

SOMETIMES a room simply falls flat. Many villainous elements can leave a space feeling snoozy, from blah builder-grade “boob lights” on a rental’s ceiling to a dull blank wall in your forever home. “Not having a clear design direction, lacking color or texture or personal touches”—it can all be a factor, explains Toronto-based interior designer Ashley Montgomery.

What to do if you lack the energy, or budget, to jump into a complete design overhaul? “You don’t need to start from scratch,” assures Los Angeles-based interior designer Amber Lewis. Instead, find strategic ways to freshen up discreet parts of your home that have potential. To get you going, we asked a panel of interior pros to share the small, meaningful moves they return to repeatedly—plus, a few budget-friendly décor pieces that can de-blah your home.

1. Swap Shades



“Gem” shade in sunlight, \$145, TulipShades.com

If you’re contending with harsh overhead bulbs or dowdy recessed lighting, a new look can transform a lackluster room fast. It was the need to disguise bare bulbs and generic, big-box-store fixtures that drove Austin, Texas-based interior designer Lori Smyth to launch [Tulip](#), her line of

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stylish, low-cost, 100% cotton shades designed to conceal lame lighting and mount easily to any ceiling. Designer Leanne Ford of Pittsburgh points out that such styles can give a space a visual center. “And you don’t even need to wire anything,” she added. Just as easy: Endow hothouse table lamps with charm by swapping sad white shades for textured rattan or fabric toppers, says New York interior designer Emma Beryl. Chicago designer Leslie Martin of M+M Interior Design sings the praises of the [pleated shades from British brand OKA](#), which start at \$60 and come in patterns like ikat and polka dots.

2. Create Rough Edges



Faux Grasscloth Peel and Stick Wallpaper, \$50 a roll, [ShopSocietySocial.com](#)

If your room has a personality deficiency, here’s another prescription: Pile on texture, suggests New York-based interior designer Katie McPherson of the firm Meyer Davis. Her tools include [lime wash paints from Portola](#), which dry with a patina, and ring up at a wallet-friendly \$79 a gallon. “Even just painting the ceiling or one accent wall can have an

ceiling or one accent wall can have an immediate effect and is so cost effective,” she said. For something even less permanent, Martin recommends textured peel-and-stick wallpaper, such as [Society Social’s faux grasscloth](#), which faithfully mimics the look and feel of the real deal. At \$50 per roll, “it’s totally affordable,” she said. Line a wan powder room, dingy cabinet fronts or the interior of a plain bookshelf for less than the price of dinner and a movie.

3. Look in the Mirror



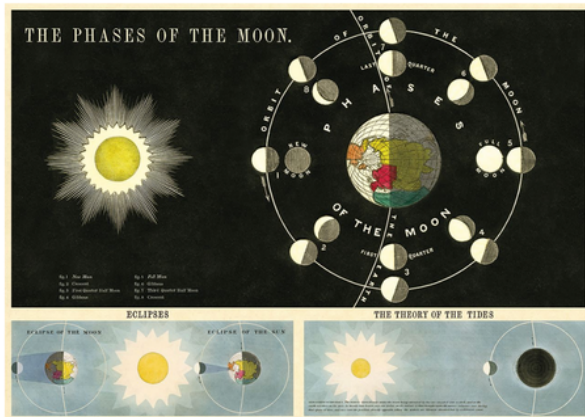
Azalea Park Filigree Floor Mirror, \$150, [SamsClub.com](#)

Whether oversize or petite, “mirrors can completely transform a room...by reflecting light and showcasing unexpected angles,” says New York-based designer Jacqueline Young. “Don’t be afraid to add a mirror to the bedroom,” she said. “Just try to avoid the ceiling.” Her bargain tip: The \$150 [Azalea mirror](#)

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Whether oversized or petite, “mirrors can completely transform a room...by reflecting light and showcasing unexpected angles,” says New York-based designer Jacqueline Young. “Don’t be afraid to add a mirror to the bedroom,” she said. “Just try to avoid the ceiling.” Her bargain tip: The \$150 [Azalea mirror from Sam’s Club](#) dupes [Anthropologie’s Gleaming Primrose mirror](#), a viral sensation, at roughly one third of its price. The arched design meshes with many décor schemes and, at six-feet tall, strikes a particularly dramatic silhouette in nooks, hallways or any other dim corner that would benefit from brightening.

4. Make Art Work



Cavallini Papers & Co. Wrap Phases of the Moon, \$6, StocklistGoods.com

You don’t need a bag of money to build a personal art collection—just a willingness to look beyond conventional sources. “A friend of mine framed the sugar packet on which her now-husband first gave her his phone number over 20 years ago,” said Nashville-based interior designer [Mary Kathryn Wells](#). To corral your own personal assemblages, Wells recommends

IKEA’s simple [Sannahed shadow box frames](#), which come in two sizes and start at a mere \$10. Mine stationery stores to find [photo postcards](#) for a gallery wall, or frame a striking sheet of wrapping paper, such as the high-quality reproductions of antique botanical prints or maps that San Francisco’s [Cavallini & Co.](#) sells for less than \$6 a sheet.

5. Hang It Up



Tulip Shower Curtain in Red, \$56, DusenDusen.com

If a bathroom feels sterile, “we’re a fan of adding...a patterned shower curtain,” said Montgomery. Ariel Kaye, a Los Angeles-based interior expert and the founder of lifestyle brand Parachute, concurred: “The right one can really showcase your design sensibility.” Reach for Dusen Dusen’s \$56 transparent [ruby tulip-dotted version](#) for instant pop or a scalloped-edged, begonia-bedecked option from [Rhode + West Elm](#) for “vintage charm.” When it comes to sprucing up a so-so bathroom that has never yielded joy, there are few easier ways to get your feet wet.