

# Make the most of small bathrooms

Renovating bathrooms is commonly at the top of home improvement to-do lists. Though some rooms around the house may remain timeless, bathrooms, like kitchens, show their age (and era) much more easily, which could be why homeowners are always on the lookout for new ideas.

Although many people may dream about creating a spa-type oasis in their homes, not everyone is lucky enough to have a large bathroom, much less a large budget for a full-scale renovation. Small bathrooms are common, particularly in older homes, but they needn't force homeowners to compromise on style when renovating.

Small bathrooms may be a half-bath on a main home level or even a full bath, depending on the home. By thinking creatively, homeowners can maximize their spaces and redo bathrooms in ways that bring out their best assets.

\* When space is at a premium, it's best to look for fixtures and items that fit with the scale of the bath-

room. Although you may want a large vanity and cabinet in which to hide all of your toiletries, this simply may not be practical — taking up most of the bathroom real estate. Instead, look for elegant pedestal sinks that have a much smaller profile. They'll also help you control the clutter in the bathroom because there won't be anywhere to hide it.

\* Use optical illusions to make the bathroom appear more roomy. For example, lay tile diagonally to create the impression of space. A large mirror will reflect the room back and make it appear much larger than it really is.

\* Select lighter hues in paint colors and accessories. Dark paints and fixtures could make the room feel cramped. Dark colors are generally used to make spaces feel more cozy. In a small bathroom, it may make the space feel claustrophobic. Instead, think light and bright and the room will instantly feel more airy.

\* Minimize wall hangings and keep fixtures smaller.

Filling the walls with knick-knacks may contribute to clutter and make the space appear closed in. Use decorative items sparingly.

\* If possible, store towels in a closet outside of the bathroom. This way you won't have to devote space inside the bathroom to a closet, leaving more room for other things.

\* While some people like the thought of a separate bath and shower, in smaller bathrooms this may not be possible. Instead, look for a combined shower and bath, or select a walk-in shower with a much smaller profile.

\* Windows are often welcome in bathrooms because of the ventilation they provide, but they could be a hindrance in smaller bathrooms because they take up prime wall space. Cover a window in a shower stall to free up space. Just be sure to install a venting fan to reduce moisture in the bathroom.

\* Maximize wall space if you need storage. Find cabinets that will fit beneath windows or be able to fit in

thin areas between sinks and toilets. Over the toilet is prime area for cabinetry.

\* Consider a frameless shower. This is a partitioned area of the bathroom that's set aside for the shower and is typically only cordoned off by a thin wall or piece of glass. Or a shower with no walls at all is the ultimate in space-saving. The entire bathroom floor is decked out in tile, and a portion is sloped toward a shower drain.

\* Think about installing a skylight if you prefer natural light, but there is no room for a traditional window.

Thinking creatively can help turn a cramped bathroom into a space-saving and well-designed room homeowners desire.

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A frameless shower can take up less space in a small bathroom.

## Did you know?

According to TGB Enterprises in Burlington, Ontario, kitchen renovations are the most popular home improvement projects. Renovating a kitchen is a great way to increase the value and also the functionality of a home. The National Kitchen & Bath Association's latest market report says that, in the first three months of 2012, the number of homeowners who started a kitchen renovation was up more than 50 percent from the previous quarter. A kitchen is a central gathering place and is one of the most popular family gathering spots in the house. With traditional dining rooms being eliminated in favor of open, eat-in kitchens and entertaining spaces, more attention than ever is now placed on a well-designed kitchen. The average remodeling budget for a kitchen renovation exceeds \$30,000. But there are ways to keep budgets in check.

\* Do some of the work yourself to reduce money spent on labor costs.

\* Consider laminate flooring and counters, which will look like real stone but at a fraction of the cost.

\* Skip custom cabinetry in lieu of stock units. They're more attractive than ever before and don't require the wait time of custom-ordered cabinets.

\* Choose less expensive, mid-range appliances that may function better than or equal to high-end models.

\* Plan layout accurately and spend time reviewing your designs. Late changes in a remodel can quickly eat up a budget.

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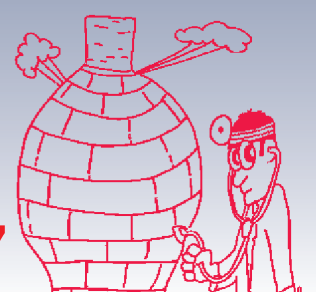
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