



FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT



PAINTING

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around doorways and trim, use a damp cloth to wipe it away before adding any new paint.

* Apply primer. Primer can serve many functions, not the least of which is its role as a bonding agent between the wall and the top coat of paint. Primer can also help conceal dark colors, prevent stains and increase the life expectancy of the paint job you are about to undertake.

* Prepare your paint. Preparing the paint is a simple task, but one novice painters may not be aware of. When opening a new can of paint, stir the paint before using it. In addition, even if you don't plan to use a roller when painting, do not paint straight from the can, which can be heavier to hold than a small bowl, and a light bowl is less likely to be spilled than a potentially heavy can of paint. In addition, once paint has been removed from the can, replace the lid so dust and other impurities do not settle in the can.

* Purchase painter's tape. Painter's tape can be especially valuable to novice painters. Painter's tape makes it easier to paint smooth and clean paint lines, giving a room a more professional looking coat of paint without the cost of hiring a professional painter.

Painting can be an inexpensive and fun way to upgrade a home's interior. But even though painting does not require the technical know-how of more large-scale home improvement projects, it still requires some prep work and attention to detail to ensure the job is done right. ■ Metro Creative Connection

How to Make a Home Handicap Accessible



Many homeowners have found themselves scrambling to make their homes handicap accessible after a sudden injury or illness. In addition, some homeowners have found themselves looking to make adjustments to their homes in anticipation of welcoming elderly, less mobile relatives into their homes.

Converting a home into a handicap-accessible space can seem like a daunting task that requires adjustments to nearly every part of the house. While the extent of those adjustments depends on the individual who needs to be accommodated, some of the areas homeowners must address when making their homes handicap accessible are universal regardless of the individual's condition.

Entryways

A home's entryways often must be addressed when making the home more handicap accessible. Portable ramps can be an affordable option and are often an ideal for those who only need to make temporary adjustments, such as when a resident suf-

fers an injury that requires he or she spend some time in a wheelchair. When the adjustments will just be temporary, a folding wheelchair might be necessary, as the doorways might not be able to fit a standard wheelchair that doesn't fold.

When adjustments figure to be permanent, homeowners might need to expand the doorways in their homes. Contractors typically recommend expanding doorways to at least 32 inches, which provides some maneuverability when wheelchairs, which are typically between 24 and 27 inches wide, are entering the home.

Doorways at the most commonly used entryways, including front doors and doors to the bathrooms as well as the individual's bedroom, will likely need to be widened.

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Bathroom

The bathroom might be the area of the home that needs the most attention. Slippery conditions common to bathrooms can make things especially difficult for people in wheelchairs or with disabilities. Grab bars should be installed in bath tubs and shower stalls and next to toilets.

But grab bars aren't the only adjustment homeowners should make in the bathroom as they attempt to make a home more handicap accessible. Safety treads, which can provide a secure, slip-free surface on the floors of showers and tubs, can be installed. Add a hand-held shower head to the shower stall to make it easier for those with a disability to shower.

Portable transfer seats, which enable wheelchair-bound men and women to transition from their chairs to showers and bathtubs, can be purchased and kept in or near the bathroom.

Water fixtures

An often overlooked adjustment homeowners must make when transforming their homes into handicap-accessible spaces concerns the sinks throughout the home. Disabled persons may find it difficult to access faucets on sinks throughout the home, especially when there

are vanity cabinets beneath the sinks. Replacing such sinks with pedestal sinks can improve maneuverability, but make sure such sinks are lower to the ground than standard pedestal sinks. A sink that's just a few inches lower than a standard sink is considerably more accessible to people in wheelchairs.

Closets

Closets are rarely handicap accessible.

Homeowners can address this issue by creating multi-level closet spaces so individuals can place their clothes at accessible heights.

Closet shelves can be lowered and doors can be widened so disabled persons can easily manage their wardrobes.

In addition, consider installing a light inside the closet and make sure the light switch can be easily reached from a wheelchair.

Making a home more handicap accessible can be a significant undertaking, but many of the adjustments homeowners must make are small in scale and won't take long to complete.

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Easy Bathroom Renovations

Bathroom renovations are second to kitchen renovations on the list of the top remodeling projects to increase home value.

The popularity of bathroom renovations and their ability to transform a space has left many homeowners wondering if there are any easy and affordable ways to change the look of their bathrooms.

While "easy" is a relative term, there are ways homeowners willing to make certain concessions can keep the work and cost of a bathroom renovation to a minimum.

Resurface

When possible, covering up what you have in the bathroom is much less expensive and less labor-intensive than tearing out existing fixtures and floors and replacing them anew.

Resurfacing can extend to refinishing bathtubs to installing shower liners. Those who have unsightly walls or wallpaper that they're just not ready to remove may consider using wainscoting to cover a portion of the room or even tiling entire walls.

It is important to note that resurfacing and covering up items in the bathroom

should only be reserved for cosmetic fixes. If something needs to be replaced because it is damaged or mildew-covered, then covering it up is only hiding the problem and asking for more work in the long run.

Scale back on materials

One way to save money on a bathroom renovation project is to choose less expensive materials. For example, you may not need to install travertine or marble flooring in a space where less expensive flooring like vinyl is adequate. Advancements in vinyl flooring have enabled this affordable material to mimic the look of more expensive materials at a fraction of the cost.

When redoing tile on walls and shower enclosures, many domestically-produced tiles rival the looks of more expensive imported alternatives. You may be able to save more by buying tile in bulk and using the remainder in other applications around the house.

Paint

Do not underestimate the power of a fresh coat of paint on any room in the house, including the bath-

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