

Spruce Up Your Home for the Holidays

Make holiday decorating easier this year

Follow a few strategies to make easy work of holiday decorating.

It is not the holiday season until homes, stores and town centers are decorated in lights and tinsel. When entire neighborhoods are enhanced by bows and animated figurines, the celebratory tone is set and decorations can trigger happy feelings associated with holiday gatherings.

Some people find holiday decorating enjoyable and eagerly anticipate taking out storage containers and sorting through all of their memory-laden trinkets, while others are less enthusiastic about readying their homes for the season. No matter which group you fall into, the following are some simple tips to make holiday decorating easier.

- **Plan to decorate on a day when you do not have any other responsibilities.** Choose to decorate on a day when you can devote your full attention to decorating, avoiding a day when you might be distracted by other things. If you prefer to decorate alone, ask a friend to watch the kids or have a spouse take them out of the house for a few hours. If decorating is a family event, find a day when everyone's schedules are clear.
- **Take out the decorations the day prior.** Hauling boxes and containers from the attic or basement can take a while. Take some time to move all of the decorating items to a main floor of the



house the day or night before your decorating marathon. This way you won't get discouraged or tired by the task even before the real decorating has begun.

- **Put the tree up first.** The Christmas tree is the a focal point of holiday decorations, so set up the tree and decorate it before you get started on decorating the rest of the house. If you do not get to all of your other decorating, at least the tree will be ready and your home will still have some holiday appeal. Once the lights are on, decorating the tree is a great activity for keeping the kids busy while you handle other jobs.



- **Divide and conquer.** Nothing makes holiday decorating go faster than delegating decorating tasks. Assign specific tasks to your helpers. Put one

person in charge of decorating the living room while another handles the outside lights, wreaths and inflatable items.

- **Turn on the tunes.** Working to music frequently takes your mind off of the work and will help pass the time more quickly. Have your favorite holiday playlist at the ready and turn up the volume. Sing along to the carols or contemporary songs while you are elbow-deep in decorations.
- **Take some breaks.** Working hungry or tired may lead to sloppy work or frustration. There's little chance of untangling a knot in the lights with your patience in tact if you haven't eaten for hours. Plan some time for lunch while you sit and rest. Survey the work you've done and make a list of the next steps.

After the hard work of decorating, you'll likely have a sense of accomplishment. Now it's time to enjoy the holiday scene and prepare for the excitement of the weeks ahead.

Ready your home for holiday guests

The song may say, "there's no place like home for the holidays," yet many people find their holidays are just as well spent in someone else's abode. The popular AAA motor club federation AAA says that more than 90 million Americans journey 50 miles or more from home during the year-end holiday season, and each year the number of travelers increases.

When opening their homes to loved ones and friends, hosts want to make their guests feel welcome. Fortunately, there are many ways to do just that.

Establish a cozy nook

Determine where your guests will be sleeping. Do not worry if you do not have a separate guest room. There are other things you can do, such as giving up your own bedroom for the duration of their stay. Otherwise, turn another spot into a guest area. A den or living room with a pullout sofa also might work. Children's rooms also are another idea. Let young children camp out in the living room or the basement while you turn their rooms into spots for your guests. The kids will appreciate the novelty of setting up sleeping bags, and guests will get some measure of privacy.

Have separate guest amenities

Invest in some lush towels and wash cloths reserved for guests. Also, have comfortable sheets on hand. Be sure all linens are freshly washed, and have a drawer or two available in case guests want to unpack their suitcases. Keep some toiletries stocked as well. A few extra toothbrush-

es, mouthwash, soap, and other personal items may be needed to accommodate forgetful guests.

Provide creature comforts

Guests won't be used to the rooms in your house, so be sure that you offer a light for a nightstand and an alarm clock. Nightlights placed in the bathroom or hallway can illuminate unfamiliar surroundings. Keep a fan on hand so that guests can adjust the temperature in their rooms and also if they need a little white noise while they sleep. A tray with books, magazines and the Wi-Fi code also may be appreciated.

Separate bathroom facilities

If possible, devote one bathroom in the house for guests' use. This way they will have all the privacy they need. Ask if there are any special products they like to use in the bathroom, helping to cut down on the items guests need to bring with them.

Stock favorite foods



Make a list of the foods that your guests enjoy and plan a shopping trip to stock up on these items. Encourage guests to have free reign of the kitchen, helping themselves to snacks or whatever is desired. Remember to ask about any dietary restrictions, including allergies.

Deep clean your home

Clear away unnecessary clutter and give floors a fresh wash or vacuuming, especially if you have pets. Pay special attention to showers and the bathroom itself. You don't want guests tripping over your belongings.

A few special and simple touches can quickly prepare a home for holiday hosting and entertaining.



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