

10 Home Improvement Projects That Actually Pay Off

Some home improvement projects are pure indulgences and have little to do with getting a return on an investment. Many homeowners would prefer to live out a personal dream or a desire to have a home “our way.” Despite this urge, many of those same homeowners know that they would never shell out extra for those marble dolphin sculptures in the bathroom - so, why should anyone else?

There are, however, some improvements you can make to your home that you may enjoy and that may also increase the value of your home when you're ready to sell. Here are a few home improvement investments that can actually pay off in the long run. Remember, keeping your home updated, keeps it in its most “marketable” state when it comes time to resell.

1. **Update Kitchens and Bathrooms:** Updating a kitchen or bathroom can be one of the most valuable investments you can make in your home. Kitchen and bathroom styles change over time, so if you own an older home chances are you're due for an update (if you own avocado appliances, that's one clue that your kitchen is outdated...). Of course the reason these updates come with a hefty payoff is because they often involve a substantial up-front investment. Total overhauls can easily run into thousands of dollars. If you can't afford to do it all at once, even small changes can make a big difference. New cabinet fronts, drawer pulls, paint, floor coverings, and fixtures are all inexpensive ways to update your kitchen or bathroom. Potential buyers will be attracted to the fresh look and you'll get to enjoy more attractive and updated surroundings at the same time.
2. **Remove Clutter:** While your overflowing disaster zone of a closet may not cause you much of a second thought, potential buyers will be turned off by this scenario. When you take time to clean and organize your home storage, you'll make these spaces seem newer and more spacious. If you can measure, cut, and use a screwdriver, you can install wire shelving systems. Other organizational supplies are available at local hardware or home stores, where you can purchase neat looking baskets and containers that won't break that budget and that will add dollars to your home's value. If you have too much clutter, rent a storage space to store that overflow until you've moved into a new home.
3. **Painting:** A new coat of paint can give your home a whole new look and feel. Painting the interior or exterior is one of the more inexpensive updates you can make to your home, and it can create a huge impact on your home's curb appeal. While neutral colors represent a classic selling choice, don't be afraid to highlight your home's nicest features with some well placed splashes of color. You might also consider brightening up a dark room by painting it white or another light color. Light colors will make a room appear larger and brighter, but darker colors

can hide imperfections. Finally, if you don't want to paint or replace that siding, clean it so that it appears fresh.

4. **Expand on that Curb Appeal:** You only have one chance to make a great first impression, so make sure your home puts its best face forward. While extremely labor intensive and expensive landscaping projects probably won't garner a huge return on your investment (they're more for your personal enjoyment), small changes can create a classier environment. Plant some inexpensive flowers around your mailbox or entranceway, and keep bushes and yard well manicured. Take care of those glaring bare spots in your lawn and remove dead plants.
5. **Repair Damages:** It's a fact of life - material items wear out and break. You may delay these projects because they are expensive or annoying to repair. If you're trying to sell your home or if you want to improve your lifestyle, repairs should become a priority. Fill in cracks in your foundation, or make sure that they're not something that makes your home structurally unsound. Replace discolored wood flooring or carpet, and fix any loose railings or fixtures around the house. Repairs to small details can seal a deal when selling, and you may discover other problems that represent health or safety problems in the process. While larger problems usually cost more to repair, the payoff to your well-being is as important as the value it will add to your home.
6. **Upgrade Flooring:** Your floors receive more wear and tear than any other part of your home. You have several options to choose from when you replace or update your floors. Perhaps you have a gorgeous wood floor hidden under that ratty carpet. Remove the carpet and enjoy the wood. Many potential buyers also fall for good-looking hardwood floors. You can also replace carpeting that is threadbare or irreparably stained by a pet, and replace bathroom or kitchen tiles with a more updated look. One of the parts of your home that gets the most wear and tear is the floor, and you can often improve the look of your home drastically by updating or replacing your flooring. If you have carpet that is looking threadbare or is irreparably stained by a pet, look into replacing it with new carpet or a hardwood floor. New flooring can be a considerable investment, but it can make your home look much better, eliminate some allergens, and make your home look more attractive.
7. **Build a Deck or Patio:** Adding an outdoor living space to your home can add value and enjoyment. Decks and patios get a great return on your initial investment, plus you get to enjoy them while you're living in the home. You can have your deck or patio professionally installed or you can learn to do it yourself with classes at a local hardware store. A private place to relax is a great pull for potential buyers who don't want to do the work.
8. **New Windows:** While windows don't always add dramatically to the value of your home, they can save you and future homeowners a bundle on utility bills. This alone is a great selling point. As long as you keep it simple (custom windows are very expensive) new windows for your home can be a great investment, not to mention making your home more comfortable in the more extreme months of summer and winter.
9. **Finish Your Basement or Attic:** There are few instances when adding more living space to your home is actually a bad investment. If you can turn your

basement or attic [audio included] into some additional living or work space you'll increase the value of your home. Adding an addition to your home can be a good investment as well, but is usually more costly than working within already constructed living space. You can add some extra bedrooms, a playroom, or an office in these spaces so that buyers can picture the potential. Dormers and skylights can help with an attic room to help it feel more spacious and well lit. Basements make ideal places for home theaters or a hide-away for the man of the house or even for the kids. However you choose to go, you would be hard pressed to lose out on improving those empty spaces in your home.

10. **Add a Bathroom:** Providing that your home isn't already chock-full of bathrooms, another full bathroom is usually an added investment. Those extra bathrooms serve both large families and guests, so the heads of household don't need to share. Hire professionals to take care of this job, as botched plumbing or tiling is something that will cost you more in the long run.

Not every improvement you'll want to make to your home is going to earn you a huge return, but with a little planning you can make the most of the money you put into your house. Not only will these improvements add buyer appeal, you'll enjoy the changes as well. While some improvements can be costly, others take little time and energy to accomplish. Tackle one project at a time, and before you know it you'll be ready to list your home "For Sale".