

21 easy home projects to tackle while you're hunkered down

Level up your spaces without buying anything new

[Megan Barber](#) Mar 25, 2020, 1:17pm EDT

As the U.S. confronts the spread of the novel coronavirus, [more and more places are](#) implementing [stay-at-home orders](#). And while we grapple with how [to pay rent](#), what the [future of transit](#) will look like, and how the virus is [impacting the housing market](#), we're also left with a more basic question: What should we do while we're stuck at home?

There's only so much TV to binge-watch before restlessness kicks in, so this extended time indoors is a good opportunity to tackle those long-avoided home projects. Of course, now is also [not the time to flock to the stores for nonessential items](#), so we've gathered a list of ways you can upgrade your space with things you probably already have at home.

From restyling your bookshelves to prepping your planters

for spring, here are 21 easy projects you can do while social distancing at home.

Rearrange things for a fresh perspective

Renovating your living room or splurging on a new bedroom set likely isn't in the cards at the moment, but that doesn't mean you can't make some changes.

Winnie Au

Try a new furniture layout: It's easy to get in a rut with the same ol' furniture setup, but what if you tried something new? Move the couch to a different wall, adjust where your armchair sits, or mix things up by swapping rugs from one room to another. Even switching a lamp from a side table to another spot in your house could brighten up a space in new ways.

Restyle your bookshelves: Even avid readers don't change up their bookshelves all that often, so now is the time to rethink them. If you're focused on the literature, arrange your books by alphabetical order or by theme. If aesthetics are the priority, remember [these three tips](#) from designer Emily Henderson: Declutter, use neutral colors, and focus on a few standout pieces.

Bring out the "special occasion" dinnerware: There's no

better time to add a bit of drama to your table, so bust out the china, special silverware, or fancy wine glasses. Now that we're all eating at home, it's the perfect chance to sip and savor at the dinner table using our favorite pieces.

Cleaning projects

There's a lot of talk about cleaning these days, and rightly so. But beyond disinfecting all of your high-touch surfaces, it's also past time to buckle down on the tasks you avoid doing.

Clean your vents and baseboards: Heating and vent covers accumulate dust over time, and cleaning them can help reduce allergens in your home and increase the efficiency of your air conditioning or heating unit. Vacuum the vents with a dusting brush attachment or wipe with a dry microfiber cloth—avoid using water or other cleaning products, because they can smear the dust.

You can also unscrew the vent covers and place them in a sink filled with hot, soapy water. But don't rub them too hard or paint may come off. And while you're at it, turn your HVAC unit off and change the air filter on your furnace.

Go under your bed: Vacuuming and cleaning the toilets are usually on the weekly to-do list, but when was the last time you cleaned underneath your bed? Don't wait until the next

time you move to clear out the dirt—move the bed, empty out any storage boxes you might have underneath, and vacuum the dust. Plus: You might be surprised at the things you'll find (hello, missing phone charger).

Clean out your bathroom drawers: This is another task we put off when we don't have the time. Our bathroom drawers take a lot of daily abuse; after emptying the drawers you'll likely find hair, spilled makeup, toothpaste, and so on. Once the insides are free of gunk, toss the junk and reorganize what's left.

Organizing

Where to begin? There's no shortage of home organization projects that can yield big results, but the options below won't require a trip to the store.

Heidi's Bridge

Tackle the closets: Face it: Even the most organized among us can have a messy closet, and now is the time to make it right. Start by taking everything out of the closet, purging what's no longer used, and cleaning the interior. If it's a clothes closet, sort your clothes by category and be sure to hang delicate items and stack thicker things like denim. Put your most-used items at the front, while seasonal or rarely used pieces can go up higher or in the

back.

Tidy up the entryway: Whether you have a spacious mudroom or a tiny coat stand, things accumulate in our daily life. Reevaluate your hooks: Are they helpful? Hanging at the right height? Do you need more or fewer of them? Vacuum or shake out any door mats you have, then purge any knick knacks or unused items hanging around.

Label your supplies: A few labels can go a long way in creating a more organized household. Have storage bins or containers in your kitchen pantry, under the bed, or in a linen closet? A label maker works great if you have it, but you can also write on regular paper and tape the labels on.

Pay attention to your walls

Walls may not be the first thing you think of when it comes to home projects, but a few updates can make a big difference.

Jake Stangel

Straighten—or redo—your wall hangings: From photos to artwork to TVs, the items on our walls become crooked over time. Take a stroll through your house and straighten everything—you'll be surprised at the difference it makes. Alternatively, take down all of your photos or artwork and

make a new gallery, perhaps moving items to a new room to keep things fresh.

Touch up your paint: Many of us have a few cans of paint tucked away in our homes, from the last time we did a project or from when we moved in. Make sure it matches your current walls and then walk through the house and touch up the high-use areas, especially door frames, baseboards, and doors.

Put empty frames to use: Photo projects require a ton of time and energy to complete, which means they sometimes never make it off of your to-do list. Go through the house and add photos to any frames you're not using; alternatively, you could also swap out older photos for new ones.

Evaluate your lighting

Lighting is one of the most important elements in design, and our homes can go from stark and unwelcoming to cozy and warm just by swapping out a few bulbs.

Paul Craig

Replace bulbs: Have a few extra lightbulbs lying around? Go through the house and replace any that have gone out.

Clean your lamps: Sometimes the culprit to bad lighting

isn't a dead lightbulb, it's dirt. Unplug lamps and clean the lampshades with a dry microfiber cloth or vacuum cleaner attachment. For other types of lamps, clean the bulbs and use a cloth to dust off the hardware. Note that you should always do this when the light bulbs are cool to the touch.

Clean your curtains: Clean curtains can make a room feel much brighter. Most drapery stores advise cleaning your curtains a few times each year, but it's a task many of us neglect. First, look at your care instructions to determine whether you can wash your curtains or whether they have to be dry cleaned. Velvet drapes can be washed with a chamois cloth dipped in hot water, while silk curtains sometimes call for hand-washing. If you can machine-wash your curtains, use the gentle cycle, cool water, and mild detergent, and hang them to dry.

In the kitchen

The kitchen is another area of the home that benefits from special attention; we spend so much time cooking and eating that it can become disorganized quick. Beyond the regular duties of washing dishes or cleaning out the fridge, the tasks below will help your kitchen look better and function more smoothly.

Moisturize your wooden cutting boards: Remember that gorgeous wooden cutting board that you use as a cheese and charcuterie plate? When was the last time you moisturized it? In order to prevent warping or cracking, both wooden cutting boards and spoons should be oiled about once per month. Start by cleaning your boards and letting them dry. Then apply a food-grade oil like mineral oil or beeswax and let it soak in overnight.

Take stock of the essentials: Clean out your liquor cabinet or spice shelf and figure out what you have and what you might be missing. There's no way to know if you have three bottles of cumin or a few versions of Cointreau until you take stock.

Finally clean your small appliances: Most of us probably clean out the refrigerator and wipe down the stove on a regular basis, but small appliances are often neglected. Hand-wash all of the removable parts of your coffee maker and run a few brewing cycles with distilled water. Empty out your toaster oven or toaster trap door and then shake the appliance over the sink to remove loose crumbs. Deep-clean your Instant Pot by wiping down the inner cooking chamber with a damp dishcloth; washing the silicone sealing ring in hot, soapy water; and running a cycle of water, distilled white vinegar, and a few lemon peels to remove odors.

In your yard

Spring has sprung in much of the country, and it's an ideal time to prep our spaces for summer. Whether you have a small outdoor balcony or a sprawling yard, here are a few places to start.

Sam Frost

Clean up from winter: If you have a small patio or balcony, grab a broom and sweep off the dirt and dust of the past few months. Larger yards will need a bigger cleanup—start by getting rid of any leaves and pine cones that might have fallen during winter storms, and then prune away dead or damaged branches. Now is also the time to clean up around your perennial plants or shrubs and remove damaged grass areas for spring seeding.

Prep your planters: Gather your empty planters—big and small—and clean them so they are ready for planting. Discard any that might have broken at the end of last season, then check for drainage holes.

Scrub your outdoor furniture: You'd be surprised how much dirt can accumulate on outdoor furniture, even if it's been in storage. For wood and wicker furniture, use a mild oil-base soap like Murphy Oil mixed with warm water. Other types of furniture do fine with dishwashing liquid mixed in a

large bucket of warm water, and many patio cushions can either be wiped down or thrown in the washing machine.

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