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Make Your Home look Like a Million Bucks

9 Cheap Ways

By Frances Bailey

New York-based home stager, **Cheryl Eisen**, shares her best ideas for creating stylish interiors. After years of designing spaces for high-end real estate companies, she's spilling the beans on how you can spruce up your home decor without draining your wallet.

1: *Three is the Magic Number*

Eisen swears by a triptych to instantly up any room's wow factor. The trio of paneled art, which has been rising in popularity in recent years, can set you back a pretty penny. But you can make your own! Rather than commission a custom piece, Eisen downloaded free art from the web, printed an extra large image at a local printer, and cut the image into three parts to fit into Ikea frames.

Design your own triptych using these inexpensive frames.

2: *Create an Illusion*

"The bigger the area rug, the bigger the room will feel," says Eisen. She likes to make spaces feel larger by taping together rugs, like these flokatis. The neutral palette, mirrors behind the sofa, and giant rug work together to make the small room appear bigger (and better!).

Fasten together several smaller rugs to expand a cramped space.

3: *Less is More*

Rather than jamming shelves full of knickknacks, Eisen opted for a minimalist look: Several books stand upright along with tall vases that fill the space without overcrowding it. She also added objects of various height and color to give the bookcase personality. Her favorite part about decorating this home? "Turning wasted, unused space into a functional reading nook that can be enjoyed by many by simply adding a chair."

Steal this look with clusters of tall, affordable vases.

4: *Go Bold or Go Home*

"Every room needs a focal point," says Eisen. If you don't already have one, center the room using eye-catching wall art. To cut costs, Eisen created her own and painted three giant canvases, saving hundreds or even thousands of dollars. The key is to hang the panels so that they appear as one oversized piece for the greatest effect.

Hit up your local art supply store or DickBlick.com for large blank canvases to make your own creations. Not an artist? Check out nearby art schools to find good talent on a shoestring budget.



5: Flair for Drama

Eisen banishes boring boudoirs with a simple trick: Paint one wall a dark color or cover it with grass cloth. The textured accent wall behind the bed adds warmth to the room and gives it a polished look. Redoing only one wall is perfect for a budget makeover, because you'll save a ton of money (and time).

Wallpaper can quickly add up, but check out these finds for a fraction of the cost. And when you're done, discover surprising ways to decorate with leftover wallpaper.

6: Natural Wonder

"If you are lucky enough to have a home that bathes in sunlight and has beautifully natural bones, then let those elements be the star," says Eisen. She stuck with neutral colors to let the home's best asset — natural light — shine. To prevent the room from becoming boring, she threw in one zing by way of a chevron pillow. The trendy zigzag adds just the right graphic touch.

Find your favorite budget-friendly pattern on Etsy.

7: Elements of Surprise

Eisen often calls on "unexpected touches" when she's styling a home. Here, she created a dramatic headboard with inexpensive Ikea desktops propped against the wall. The headboard's dark hue really pops against the light wall. For another decorating twist, she rotated pillow shams to show off diamonds instead of squares.

Fashion your own headboard with these Ikea desks.

“Every room needs a focal point”

8: Room with a View

Don't be afraid to put window treatments around a breathtaking view. Just avoid bright colors and "frame the view with neutral curtains so the eye is drawn toward the windows," says Eisen. And if you face the "problem" of too much space, steal this page from her playbook: Buy two wooden dining room tables and cut the legs to make the table cocktail height. "Pushing them together fills up the space and gives the room instant function," she says.

To construct your own cocktail table from a dining room table shop local thrift stores and snag a great value. Or, head to your neighborhood super store.w

9: Eclectic Mix

Eisen likes to decorate rooms with natural palettes, adding pops of color and texture with accessories. Her favorite color schemes incorporate shades of white, gray, and beige. She also likes to mix and match design from different eras, such as the two white chairs. The Ming-style chair in the left corner (purchased from Craigslist.org) "makes the whole room feel less cookie cutter but painting it white keeps it in the palette."

If your city doesn't have a Craigslist, search eBay.com to find eclectic pieces to add to your own mix.

