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AD IT YOURSELF

7 Home-Improvement Projects You Shouldn't Put Off Any Longer

This is your sign to reconsider that update you put on the back burner

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It can be easy to procrastinate when it comes to home-improvement projects, especially when the projects you're considering don't seem super urgent or necessary. But there's a shortlist of updates that you can, and should, consider making, even if you're able to convince yourself you can live without them.

"Think of it like going to the gym," says Bruce Irving, a home-renovation consultant and real estate agent based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "It's about looking good, but it's also about enabling your body to do some jumping quickly, should it need to." That is: No one wants to be caught wishing they'd made a specific improvement already.

Proactively addressing a home-improvement punch list will not only bring future resale value to your home, but it will also increase your enjoyment of your home while you're in it. Read on for a short list of projects you really (really) shouldn't put off any longer.

Upgrade your window treatments

Window treatments often get shelved, but they shouldn't be, says Portland, Maine-based interior designer Heidi Lachappelle. "That's because they're typically measured for and ordered towards the end of a renovation or new build, and their costs can be overwhelming at that point in the project," she explains. "That said, they are an absolute must for adding the finishing touch. They bring so much style, but also function, especially if a home has strong sun exposure. Drapery can help protect your floors and furniture from fading over time."

Install air-conditioning

This is imperative, says Irving. "From a real estate point of view, AC is something that people expect," he says. The upside: You'll love it too. Plus, you don't need a major central-air install: Split-system units that both heat and cool are a non-invasive and not incredibly difficult undertaking, says Irving, who recently installed units in his own older home. "Yes, you have [to live with] appliances hanging on your walls, but for most people that's a small sacrifice for comfort and cost-efficiency," he says. "Split units don't burn fossil fuels, require far less work from the boiler—so you'll see a drop in your gas bill—and depending on where you live, your local power company may offer incentives to underwrite their purchase price too."

Upgrade your water heater

While aesthetic changes are definitely more fun to plan and execute, their value is subjective, points out Ricardo Rodriguez, a New England-based real estate agent and the principal of Ricardo Rodriguez and Associates at Coldwell Banker Realty. "Sometimes we pay attention to the prettier and flashier projects and forget about the core infrastructure elements that are going to both allow you to stay in a home longer and make it more marketable," he says. "No one wants to change their water heater, but it will go a long way in terms of increasing the value of your house." Plus, it will spare you from having to deal with the headache of leaks, no hot water, or other problems that arise when your water heater is past its prime.

Just redo your kitchen already

Putting in a new kitchen may seem like a huge effort, but if yours is getting to the point of feeling tired, and you have at least a few more years of living in the house, just do it. "The joy of a crisp, fun, clean modern kitchen is worth a lot," says Irving. "Just keep it calm and neutral and not too idiosyncratic and you'll do yourself no harm in resale." Supply chain and labor cost issues of the past few years are fewer, so now's a good time to go for it. And, of course, a kitchen redo needn't be all-or-nothing. "A sliding scale might go from new sink and door hardware and painting cabinetry to new countertops or appliances to replacing everything," says Irving.

Make the switch from gas to induction

If you need to choose just one change to make in the kitchen, says Manhattan-based architect Drew Lang, [swap out your stovetop from gas to induction](#). “It’s environmentally progressive, visually clean, and a simple change for homeowners that will increasingly become standard, if not required,” says Lang, who’s currently planning his own apartment renovation, which includes transitioning from gas to induction cooking. “Our clients who swap out gas for induction have been pleased with the cooking performance and the environmental significance.”

Paint the exterior

Keeping the [exterior of your home](#) well-painted offers several benefits. “You’ll love looking at your house, and if you need to sell quickly, it’s ready to go,” says Irving, who adds that you should never let your exterior paint go to the point where the protection it’s providing the house is compromised. Plus, having eyes and hands on the exterior can lead to uncovering—and fixing—rot or other issues.

Keep your roof in good shape

Every potential buyer will ask how old your roof is. “A good roof is doing two things: one is giving you a quick answer for that buyer, and the second is protecting your house,” says Irving. “Roofs can be daunting, but fixing up or even replacing a roof is not particularly expensive if you’re using fiberglass or [shingles](#).”