

Home Decor: Save or Splurge? Interior Designers Weigh In

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Decorating a home can be lots of fun — until you see the price tags.

But while some home decor can be ridiculously expensive, there's a secret in interior design circles: Not every item is worth splurging on.

In fact, some interior designers swear by Ikea for certain items. It's all about knowing when to spend and when to save.

When to Save

Accent Seating

For furniture that you use daily – like your sofa – buy the best and most comfortable that you can afford. Your butt and back will thank you.

“But the upholstered armchair in your guest room that gets sat on just a couple of times per year?” asked [Lesley Myrick](#), an interior designer based in Atlanta. “That’s where you can go with the cheap and cheerful option.”

[World Market](#) has plenty of cheap, cheerful options in this category. You might also check out one of these 20 stores for [affordable and stylish home furnishings](#).

Decorations

Save your money when it comes to throw pillows, as you can change their color or pattern on a yearly basis to give your home a fresh new look, said Amy Hillary, content creator for [Wallsauce](#). She says the same goes for coffee table accessories.

“Saving money on the very Instagrammable stacked-book look means you can mix and match them as often as you like,” she said. “You can really find bargains in charity shops or on Ebay.”

Kitchen Cabinets

These can easily be the most expensive part of a kitchen renovation, but there are some really great inexpensive options for cabinetry, Thomas said. This is where Ikea shines.

Instead of spending the money on cabinets, Thomas suggested splurging on stone countertops, plumbing fittings and appliances.

“When those are high-end, the entire kitchen is elevated, and no one would suspect you went for less expensive cabinets,” he said.

Paint

Painting a room can dramatically change a space for a relatively small cost. When your walls aren’t in a great condition, use a paint that has a more muted sheen, said New York-based interior designer Phillip Thomas. Paint with muted sheens will hide some imperfections, while paint with higher sheen is less forgiving.

Plus, if you use a matte option, you'll have better coverage, which means using less paint. And if you're not looking to spend the money to smooth out your walls with skim coating, this is a less expensive option that will look great, Thomas said.

Rugs

This one may surprise you, as rugs can be an heirloom item. But if you've ever purchased an expensive rug, only for a child to spill grape juice or a dog to have an accident on it, you may understand.

"We tend to buy more inexpensive rugs that can easily be replaced after a few years so families with kids and dogs don't have to worry about spills on expensive rugs," said Shauna Glenn, principal designer and owner of Shauna Glenn Design in Fort Worth, Texas. Glenn recommends snagging inexpensive rugs from RugsUSA.com.

Side Tables

This is where Maria Martin, interior designer with Interior DesignWorks in Austin, Texas, always saves. That's because she purchases her side tables and wood furnishings from vintage and secondhand shops.

"You get better quality, and if you are good at searching for secondhand furniture, it will last forever," she said.

Here's what to look for when buying furniture from secondhand or vintage shops.

Wall Art

Most of us love art, but it can get incredibly expensive. But if you're not curating a collection of valuable masterpieces and you just want something of substance on your main wall, you don't need to spend a fortune, said Jennifer Lewicki of Judi Schwarz Interiors in Livingston, New Jersey.

"Many of our clients have invested in ready-made murals from suppliers like Magic Murals," Lewicki said. They have a wide range of subjects to choose from, and depending on the size of your wall, cost less than \$300.

“The result is something oversized and dramatic, and gives the appearance of a custom wall design,” she said.

If you go this route, Lewicki recommends working with an experienced wallpaper hanger to hang evenly without air pockets.

For an option that’s even less expensive than Magic Murals, look at Target’s Peel & Stick removable wallpaper, which starts at \$29.99.

Window Treatments

Since window treatments are always a huge part of any budget, one way to save on fabric window panels or curtains is to use an inexpensive solid linen fabric — which you can either make yourself or buy pre-made — for the main portion of the panels.

Then, embellish them by attaching 8” bands of a fancier fabric to the sides. This is a fairly easy DIY project for someone with basic sewing skills, and typically requires just two or three yards of fabric, said Terri Fiori, with [Fiori Interior Design](#) in Wyckoff, New Jersey.

You could also go ahead and buy some of that perfect yet expensive fabric, but instead of using it on the drapes (which could use as much as 36 yards) you could use the expensive fabric as a window shade, and use a less expensive fabric for the drapes, said Karen Topjian, founder and managing partner of [MCM Designs](#) in Englewood, New Jersey.

Topjian said she did this once and it worked very well. “The shade fabric was framed by the drapes and stood out – and used much less fabric, perhaps nine yards of fabric,” she said. “This approach can create a win-win.”

When to Splurge

Bedding

You should always invest in tactile items such as bedding, said Jaclyn Journey, co-owner of [Journey & Jacobs Design](#) in Louisville, Kentucky.

“We like to put a lot of money in tactile things you touch and feel on a regular basis: bedding should feel luxurious, soft and warm — and that means you will pay more for higher quality sheets,” Journey said.

You can still save some cash here, though. Top your bed with smaller, goose down-filled pillows you can snag at TJ Maxx for a bargain. “They look more expensive, even if they aren’t,” she said.

Kitchen Backsplash

You might experience sticker shock when seeing tile that costs \$100 per square foot, but when you only need it for the kitchen backsplash, it can make for a budget-friendly wow, according to Cozette Brown of [Cozette Brown Interior Design](#) in Ringwood, New Jersey.

Another budget-friendly option is to use the expensive tile just above the stove with a complementary tile that costs less.

Select Lighting

Invest in lights within areas that are important to you, said Colin Haentjens, a designer with The Knobs Company in Omaha.

“If you’re an apartment renter like I am, you know the built-in lighting that is provided is generally barebones and is just enough to be considered functional at best,” Haentjens said.

You’ll likely end up buying a few floor and table lamps to make up the difference. Most of the lighting doesn’t need to be expensive, as long as it provides enough light for tasks or the right type of light for relaxing.

However, you should invest in lights that are in areas which are important to you. For example, while most of the lighting in Haentjens’ apartment is very simple and functional, he’s also installed a Philips Hue Light inside an [Ikea Fado Table Lamp](#) to create relaxing, dramatic and dynamic environments in the living room.

When to Save *and* Splurge

The Dining Room

Keira Schultz, owner of [KSDesigns](#) in Arizona, said she mixes it up in her dining room. She puts her budget into a timeless higher quality dining room table, and saves on the chairs.

“There are so many great inexpensive new and used chair options out there in any price range,” Schultz said. “A high quality dining table can last through the years and withstand changing design styles, while saving money on chairs makes it easier to update with new trends without experiencing guilt.”

A favorite dining room chair trend at the moment is to snag all different chairs from garage sales and flea markets; the mix-matched look is very chic, and it will save you a small fortune.

Danielle Braff is a contributor to [The Penny Hoarder](#).

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