

YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS FOR HOMEOWNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS

UNIVERSAL APPEAL

As more homeowners choose to live in their homes longer as they age, many of them are improving their space with universal design features to help them live more comfortably. Before making any improvements, the National Aging in Place Council outlines the most common universal design modifications.

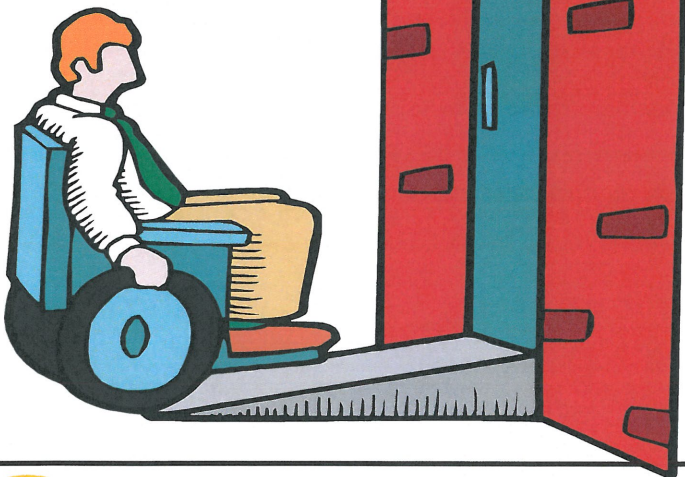
Are the entryways accessible? Adding a ramp or constructing no-step entries can help those confined to a wheelchair or who have trouble climbing stairs. Open floor plans and wider hallways make everyone feel less cramped and allow people to move around easily. Wider doorways provide easier access to other parts of the home and enable people to move large items in and out of the house.

To improve safety in bathrooms, install grab bars and elevated toilets. Make sure there's enough turnaround space for someone in a wheelchair, and consider lowering the bathroom sink and adding a roll-in shower with multiple showerheads. A non-slip floor and shower surface will help everyone stay on their feet. In the master bedroom, consider reconfiguring an existing walk-in closet or building a new one with storage at different heights.

In the kitchen, lower cooking surfaces and countertops built at varying heights will appeal to home cooks who have difficulty bending over or have height limitations. Wall ovens and microwaves should be mounted at reachable heights, and storage and shelf space should be abundant and accessible.

Well-placed skylights and ceiling lights will aid those with poor vision and make the home more personable and safe. Installing rocker switches and door lever handles can aid people with poor hand strength as well as those carrying groceries into the house.

A universally-designed home provides smart solutions for everyday living that everyone can enjoy.



SHAPING UP AT HOME

A home gym may be a practical alternative for people who can't afford a club membership, are short on time or don't have access to a health club. With so many types of equipment available, it might be overwhelming to know what to buy for a home gym. These simple steps from *Shape Magazine* and the American Council on Exercise can guide you in the right direction.

Start by finding a location for your home gym. If you don't have a spare bedroom, basement or back porch, designate a corner of the home, such as the living room. Make the space as light and airy as possible. Natural lighting from windows and doors work best, but if there are few windows, add recessed lighting or a few lamps with soft white bulbs to provide the light you need.

Full-length mirrors on one wall can not only make the space appear larger, they can be used to monitor proper form during workouts. Bring in a few plants, such as ferns, spider plants and bamboo palms, to boost oxygen levels and naturally purify the air.

Even equipment designed for home use can take more room than you have. Equipment can take up as little as 10 square feet for a bike or 30 square feet for a treadmill, while a multi-station gym may require up to 200 square feet. If the space doesn't allow for a treadmill and multi-gym, opt for a space-saving rack of dumbbells and several easily storable items such as a jump rope, resistance bands, stability ball and yoga mat.

Start by adding a few pieces of equipment and gradually build up the home gym over time. In no time, your body and bank account will thank you.

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OUT WITH THE OLD

Homeowners depend on their kitchen appliances to run smoothly every day. But when the washing machine begins to overflow and the fridge won't keep things cold, it might be tempting to replace the machines with newer models. Before shopping around, here are a few tips from retailers Lowe's and Kellum Appliances to determine whether to repair or replace, keeping in mind age, repair costs and energy efficiency.

First check the owner's manual. If the appliance is relatively new, the warranty should cover the cost of replacement parts. Contact the appliance manufacturer or retailer where the item was purchased. They may be able to diagnose the problem and offer solutions.

Next, figure the cost of repair and compare it to the cost of purchasing a new appliance. If the appliance is relatively new, replacing a part may be more practical than buying a new machine. But if the repair cost is more than half of the purchase price, replacement is a better option.

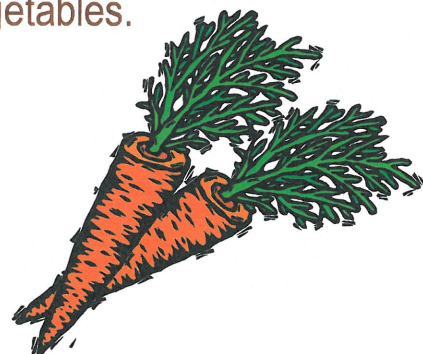
Many of today's models with the ENERGY

STAR label are more energy-efficient, so upgrading to a newer model will save more money in the long run. Replacing a dishwasher manufactured before 1994 will save more than 10 gallons of water per cycle and about \$30 to \$40 per year in utility bills, while ENERGY STAR washers use 37 percent less energy and more than 50 percent less water than standard models.

If finances dictate upgrading only one appliance, start with the refrigerator. Because it runs continuously every day, it uses more electricity than other appliances, so a replacement will see immediate savings in utility bills.

DID YOU KNOW?

Cool autumn temperatures are ideal for planting broccoli, turnips, beets, carrots and other vegetables.



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