

Paint is a major, low-cost way for me to bring '70s style into our remodeled home. The wide blue stripe in the living room creates a graphic focal point around the fireplace and TV. I filled white wall space with a closet shelving system I spray-painted to mimic the look of brass, and pine boards I stained a walnut tone have a high-end look for a fraction of the cost.

Second Act

As an editor, I love an “old house meets new owner” story. But mine was feeling less fairy tale and more “delusional woman buys crumbling box”—until I stumbled on shots of my own house in a 1974 issue of BHG. With a flood of new inspiration, I set about helping her flaunt, rather than hide, her age.

SMALL HOME IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS THAT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

"Home improvement" doesn't have to mean grandiose additions and lavish remodelings that cost an arm or a leg. In fact, the most successful projects are those that make the greatest improvement for the least outlay. Here are five such remodelings, varying in cost and complexity. In each case, the family considers they got a lot for their money.

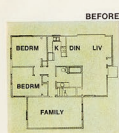


By Stephen Mead

The dining area in this 1950 builder's contemporary was practically nonexistent; most of the living room served as a traffic corridor, and neither area was conducive to conversation. One solution would have been to add another room or two, but the homeowners felt they could get what

they wanted with less effort and outlay by "bumping out" the living area four feet and nudging the kitchen six feet toward the other end of the house. But this meant the family had to

UNSCRAMBLE AND BUMP OUT



Buying information, page 164

make two trades: (1) the back bedroom for a new laundry room and a big chunk of the kitchen, and (2) the family room for a new bedroom (see plans). These decisions weren't easy, but the family had always preferred the living/dining/kitchen area to the family room

for entertaining guests, reading, and relaxing with stereo and TV. The kitchen, formerly open to the living zone, is now less conspicuous (photo opposite page), and the expanded dining area is roomier and more comfortable. Note how contrasting ceiling heights subtly

separate dining and living areas. Under the existing overhang the new living room bump-out (top photo) nestles neatly, as if it had always been there. New sliding glass doors open off that dining area onto a new deck. Inside (bottom photo), the furniture now sits well out of the flow of traffic.

The blue stripe that's front and center in the home's 1974 magazine feature, *left*, inspired our living room stripe color (Sherwin-Williams Marea Baja). Add some leather sling-back chairs to the mix? Absolutely. (Ours are camel-color, and we layered with sheepskin for a softer look.)

When we moved in, our contractor gave us a collection of vintage photos of the house from the 1950s. Now they make a nostalgic gallery wall behind the sofa, *below*.

It's one thing to love a home for its history. But discovering you and your home share a history in the BHG family? That's kismet.

I was scouring the *Better Homes & Gardens* archives one day looking for vintage shots of mushroom lamps (a day in the life of a market editor) when I found myself staring at my own living room. Some things looked different: The carpeted floors are now hardwood, and the original tongue-and-groove ceilings are painted white. But it was unmistakably ours—documented in the prime of its groovy '70s phase.

Take one look at the house now and you can probably tell my husband, Chris, and I are very much into the era—the fashion, the decor, the music—so stumbling upon the 1974 feature shortly after moving in was like finding a ready-made mood board filled with inspiration.

Chris usually lets me have free rein with decorating, so I'll jump on a project as soon as an idea strikes. It's not uncommon for him to come home from a weekend trip to find the kitchen completely wallpapered or a room painted an entirely new color. Case in

point: my spontaneous paint job on the living room wall. Inspired by the bold stripe between the living and dining rooms in the original story, I painted a graphic stripe around the fireplace in a similar tone. Then there was that weekend I decided all the happiest homes have quirky lights over their kitchen sinks and installed a domed pendant similar to one that hung over the dining table in the '70s. Chris takes it all in stride—though after my fourth Facebook Marketplace purchase of a "new" (to us) set of chairs, I've been lovingly forbidden from trying to squeeze any more seating into our 1,700-square-foot home. But it's not so much that I have an obsession with chairs; it's more an addiction to giving something preloved a new life—an addiction to the thrift.

A little backstory: We first toured this house when it was midflip with a local contractor who planned to renovate and sell it. I immediately fell in love with those tongue-and-groove ceilings. I paid no





Ribbon art
by Angela Chrusciaki
Blehm ties to the
bar area's orange
walls.

attention to the holes in the subflooring, the exposed studs, shredded insulation, nicotine-stained drywall, or Chris, who was looking at me like I was crazy. Built in 1956, the house had reached the point of disaster—a total gut. We made an offer the next day. I loved that we'd get the strong midcentury architecture but with a basically brand-new, updated interior.

As the story of an old neglected house often goes, right after we moved in, we found out the place needed even more work than expected: replacing the roof and skylights, installing new HVAC, evicting and relocating opossums—you name it. Those major repairs left us with less fun money for decorating, so shopping previously

The authentic Marcel Breuer Cesca chairs were a Facebook Marketplace steal at \$125 for the set, but they needed lots of TLC. I re-shined the chrome with aluminum foil and water, cleaned up the cane backs, and reupholstered seats in a durable bouclé fabric.

The tulip table and George Nelson saucer pendant add soft curvature.

owned became my solution. But somewhere along the way, secondhand stopped feeling like my only option and became my first choice. The pieces tend to be unique, affordable, well-made, and sustainable. Thrifted finds like the replica LC4 chaise and Wassily chairs in the living room—two iconic midcentury designs—are some of my favorite things. (Though my most cherished secondhand find is our rescued Staffordshire terrier, Milly.)

The entire house is a friendship of old and new: the mixed glassware in our kitchen, the clothes in my closet, the Joni Mitchell vinyls that have a home next to Kacey Musgraves. Oh, and the chairs—all 28 of them.



● **BAR AREA** Plug-in sconces with amber LED candelabra bulbs emit a moody glow that emphasizes the warmth of the orange wall (Benjamin Moore Baked Terra Cotta). The credenza was a free find on Facebook. ● **SHELVING** The living room shelves display my favorite local art, collections, and petite LED lamps controlled by timers. ● **PEGBOARD WALL** I borrowed the pegboard idea from Julia Child to organize cookware without hiding all their fun colors. Milly looks identical to one of the dogs in the peel-and-stick wallpaper, so I put it up just for her. ● **KITCHEN** I installed the '70s-inspired diamond geometric wallpaper above the backsplash to blend with the dark cabinets. Mismatched serveware adds personality.

Second-Hand, FIRST CHOICE

I've learned a lot in my young career of buying secondhand. These are the rules I try to stick to.

HAVE PATIENCE

The best part about secondhand is you can buy it right then and there, no supply chain delays. But if you don't love it, don't buy it. It's worth it to wait for the right thing, and there will always be another dresser or chair to consider. Nothing is worse than finding the piece you really love after buying one you feel "meh" about.

FACTOR IN TRANSPORTATION

Sure, that hutch is \$40, but you're going to need a U-Haul to get it home. Worth it? Maybe. I've rented my fair share of moving trucks (I never should have sold my pickup), but if the extra cost and logistics exceed the value, walk away.

KNOW YOUR SKILLS

Light wood scratches or bad hinges don't scare me. I know I can fix dings with a wood stain marker and easily replace hardware. But when it comes to intricate woodwork or a needle and thread, count me out. If fixing a piece will give you a headache or cost more than it's worth, it's likely not the one.



To help the two nightstands—one from my teenage bedroom and one a thrifted find—work together, I painted them the same olive green.



I had paint left over from the living room stripe, and it was the perfect hue for this accent wall in our bedroom. Velvet curtains in the same tone add dimension to the wall and create the illusion of a headboard. ■

“I love the thrill of the thrift. Every room in this house is a mix of new and secondhand, splurge and save.”

► Hover your smartphone camera over this code to follow BHG on TikTok and watch our behind-the-scenes tour with Lauren, plus more editor advice.

