

Little (Budget!) Ways to Make Your Space Comfy

It's subtle changes—not big design-y effects—that create a relaxed, inviting vibe, says interior designer Christopher Lowell, host of Work That Room on the Fine Living Network. He shares his favorite must-haves.

A Chic Digital Frame

Photos get the conversation flowing when you have people over. These days, digital frames are being designed so they're actually pretty, so put one on display in your living room. The real beauty: Since the pictures change frequently, you can stock it with tons of shots of your vacations, your friends—you name it.

A Mini Rug for Your Bedroom

Stepping onto the cold floor first thing in the morning is not a great way for you (or a "friend") to start the day. Plus, the bareness makes your room look as cold as it feels. Put a small area rug right beside your bed so that your feet are greeted by the plush material when you wake up.



Go neutral if you already have lots of color. Go bold if you don't.



A Lamp With a Dimmer

No one wants to hang out in a room with bright, glaring lighting. Frankly, it makes you look bad, and it can be jarring. By plugging dimmers into your lamps (you can get them cheap at home stores), you'll keep the atmosphere more flattering.

A Warm Paint Color

Lowell swears the neutral shade Surprise Amber by Sherwin-Williams (in the photo above) is the most awesome, cozy tone out there. It flatters every skin tone, and light, warm colors like this one have actually been shown to soothe. Use it or something similar to paint the room in which people tend to hang out the most—think the kitchen or living room. You can even paint just one accent wall.

Fresh-Smelling Candles

Everyone feels more at ease in a clean home. And if your pad isn't exactly spotless, there's a simple way to make it at

least seem like it is: People automatically associate the smell of linen with cleanliness. So light a few linen-scented candles or use a diffuser and ta-da!

Natural materials—like rattan—are hot right now.



A Pretty Basket for Your Nightstand

You should think of your bedroom as your calm zone, and a nightstand cluttered with various items (your glasses, the TV remote, books, tubes of lip balm, etc.) makes it feel chaotic and not relaxing at all. Buy an inexpensive basket or a pretty bowl, and keep all your random stuff in it. Your bedside area will look much more organized and, yes, Zen.

