

# home style

DESIGN



## Drastic Measures

Watch six rooms go from dreary to dreamy—and pick up some great makeover ideas along the way BY LISA YAKOMIN

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF DECORATING DEN INTERIORS

### Challenge #1

The new owners of this home wanted to use a neutral color palette in the family room but felt their choices were limited because of the bright blue countertops visible from the adjacent kitchen.

**The solution** As interior designer Rina Hanna says, “Never feel that you have to be locked into any one color.” To prove her point, Hanna started by choosing a bright, large-scale floral sofa; it anchors the room’s

color scheme and provides a focal point. She then “divided” the space with paint: a periwinkle blue on one side helps define the breakfast area, and a soft taupe on the opposite wall indicates the family room.

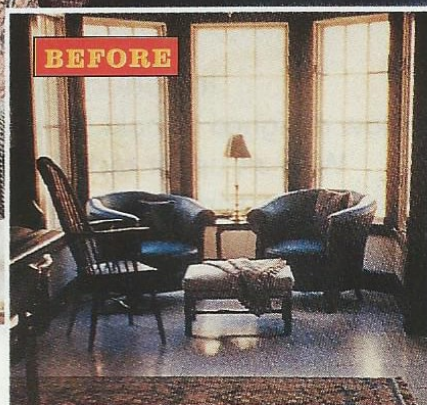
**Nice touches** Throw pillows tie the two spaces together. Cornice boards in a neutral taupe stripe adorn the windows, with blue denim cording accenting the edges.

**TOTAL COST \$9,000\***

*\*Approximate cost includes construction, fabric, and furnishings.*







## Challenge #2

Lovers of all things British, the home owners wanted a sitting room to resemble their favorite pub in England. Thing was, everything about the space was new: They had just remodeled their one-car garage to add this additional room to the house.

**The solution** Finding the right draperies in a russet, floral fabric was the first step. Beautiful wood

paneling was added to the high walls and ceiling beams. An existing couch was stuffed and reupholstered in a dressy plaid with green bullion fringe to coordinate with two green leather chairs. "We also re-covered an old ottoman in a tapestry fabric, adding the same fringe at the bottom to tie it all together," interior designer Connie Thompson says. "That helped invoke the mix-and-

match style of decorating the English are known for."

**Nice touches** Gilded rods and rings for the draperies sparkle when sunlight filters through the windows, an antique area rug (not shown) warms up the look of the limestone floor, and the ottoman is perfect for tea.

**TOTAL COST \$5,300**





### Challenge #3

Because every other room of their house is formal and dramatic, the home owners wanted an indifferent rear hallway to have the same elegant feel, but they didn't want to spend a lot of money.

**The solution** The home owners discovered a rich wallcovering in a deep, lush red and wanted to use it in the room. (Red on the walls gives a room a formal feel.) Designer Thompson then selected a soft, muted fabric (to tone down the red) for a dressy window treatment. But instead of hanging the fabric at the traditional height along the top of the window, Thompson placed it about a foot lower. Her thinking? Let natural light in while offsetting the room's high ceiling. The plush pillows and a coordinating seat cushion add to the hallway's drama.

**Nice touches** Because the area receives a lot of traffic, the durable polypropylene throw rug and handsome wicker storage baskets are both great choices. "The rug is easy to clean, with a pattern that hides dirt well," Thompson says, "and the baskets are great catchalls that don't take up much room. Additional storage space for larger items is cleverly hidden inside the window seat, under the easily removable seat cushion.

**TOTAL COST \$1,240**







#### Challenge #4

The owner of this vintage 1930s home wanted the look of the kitchen to reflect the age of the house. But he also wanted a place to store his digital television and modern stainless-steel appliances.

**The Solution** After the room was gutted, a faux-stone-look laminate—

which immediately gave the kitchen an older feel—was installed directly on top of the old flooring. Then interior designer Judith Slaughter added custom cabinets in a creamy sandstone color with classic crown moldings, as well as traditional bead-board wainscoting. The result is a warm and inviting room—and who would guess

that the deep cabinets hide a TV, wine collection, and pantry items? Because the storage is more thoughtfully planned, the room feels bigger as well. **Nice touches** Café curtains in a textured sheer fabric and pewter hardware help complete the kitchen's retro-modern makeover.

**TOTAL COST \$35,000**





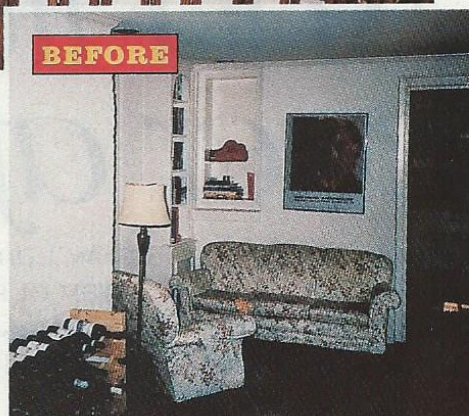
### Challenge #5

Although the home owner often used this sunroom for entertaining, its awkward size (9 feet by 24 feet) made furniture placement difficult. "The old arrangement had people crowded over in one end of the room," designer Slaughter says.

**The solution** Slaughter's work was made easier by a lucky discovery: Underneath the tattered teal carpeting was the home's original flagstone floor—all cool grays and browns. She then turned one of the room's biggest problems into an asset: The fireplace

in the adjacent room caused one wall to jut out into the center of the space, so she used it as a natural divider and created two distinct seating areas. She centered a love seat against the main wall, then added chairs at both ends of the room. A serving bar was used to link the seating areas.

**Nice touches** To incorporate the home owner's love of all things historical, Slaughter chose antique reproductions of rattan furniture used on Franklin D. Roosevelt's yacht, the U.S.S. *Potomac*. "The reproductions help the room retain a vintage,



1930s feel," she says. And by choosing scaled-down pictures and accessories, she created the illusion of greater wall space.

**TOTAL COST \$10,000**



## Challenge #6

The family room in designer Melanie Jakab's 1922 home was—by her own admission—"dingy and cavelike, with an awful, rusted potbellied stove, dark

paneling, and bricked-up windows." She dreamed of a light and airy room the whole family could relax in after a long day.

**The solution** Accompanied by their teenage son, Jakab and her husband ditched the stove and tore down the bricks one by one to reveal four large windows. Next, she brightened the woodwork with several coats of white paint and added decorative moldings around the ceiling (she chose colors found throughout her home: green, purple, yellow, and red).

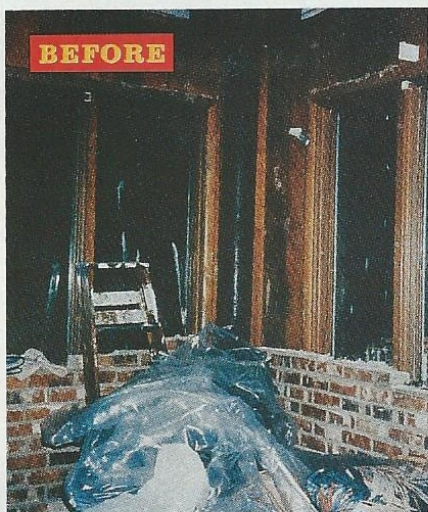
To give the room more depth, she primed the paneling and painted it using three shades of soft yellow, applied in a random pattern throughout the room. Simple window treat-

ments—just a checked valance and white wood blinds—soften the room and let in just enough sunlight.

**Nice touches** Because the family room is only 19 feet by 11 feet, the furniture is minimal, with some pieces performing double duty. "The large ottoman serves the dual function of footrest and coffee table," Jakab says, "and when topped with a piece of Plexiglas, it does a great job of holding our Friday night pizza!"

**TOTAL COST \$5,800**

*The dramatic transformations shown here are all winners from this year's International Dream Room Contest, sponsored by Decorating Den Interiors, a shop-at-home design service. For more information, call 800-DEC-DENS (332-3367), ext. 1491, or visit the company's Web site at [www.decden.com](http://www.decden.com).*





## Designer Secrets

Some tricks of the trade from the professional designers at Decorating Den Interiors

**Get organized** Come up with a game plan. Write down all the things you want to do in the room, in the order that you plan to tackle them. Keep all pertinent information such as sketches, color samples, and cutout magazine pictures in a folder for easy reference.

**Choose your focal point** Decide what your main focus is—a sofa, for example—and pick that fabric first. Then you can select complementary colors to use on the walls and for window treatments as well as in other room accents.

**Tote your samples** When shopping for furniture or accessories, be sure to carry paint chips, wallpaper

samples, and fabric or carpet swatches with you to eliminate guesswork.

**Color checkup** It's important to examine sample paint chips and fabrics in your home before you make a final selection, because that color you love at ten in the morning may look muddy and drab in the evening hours. Try taping a bit of wallpaper to the wall or painting a panel in your chosen color, then check on it throughout the day to see how it looks.

**Mix and match** Sticking with only solid fabrics can get boring; don't be afraid to mix patterns, such as a plaid and a floral or a stripe with a tapestry. Just remember to follow the Two-Color Rule: As long as the fabrics share



at least two of the same colors, you should be able to pair them up.

**When in doubt, consult a pro**

Sometimes the help of a trained interior designer can make the difference between makeover success and decorating disaster. If you have a decorating problem that you're really stuck on, ask for a free consultation from a designer in your area. Many discount home centers and department stores also offer complimentary design services.

THE ONLY TOOL YOU'LL  
EVER NEED TO INSTALL  
A GARAGE DOOR OPENER.

