

# YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

## The Call of the Outdoors

If you think outdoor living simply requires a few folding chairs and a hibachi on your back porch, think again. According to the Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association (HPBA), homeowners can set up a basic outdoor living space consisting of a durable, high-performance grill, a dining area with table and chairs, lighting, a patio umbrella and a portable heater or fireplace for as little as \$2,500. For larger spaces and budgets, high-end landscaping, an in-ground swimming pool and a kitchen island with appliances create an ideal place to entertain family and friends.



To get you started on building your ideal outdoor room, here are a few tips:

- Decide how you will use the space. Will you entertain family and friends, or use it as a relaxing hideaway for yourself?
- Create a wish list of features you want your outdoor room to have. Clip photos from magazines or keep a notebook of ideas.
- Consider your home's architectural style, so your outdoor room design complements your indoor space.
- Work with a specialty retailer who can suggest products and guide you on your final plan.
- Sketch a layout of your outdoor room with the fireplace as the focal point. Then blend in the cooking and eating areas.
- Consider the foundation, such as retaining walls, fences and decks.
- For large-scale projects, implement your plan over a two- or three-year period, beginning with electrical and plumbing. Accessorize the space during the second year, and add landscaping last.

Once your outdoor room is complete, you won't want to spend time anywhere else.

## Get Some Space

Small spaces can be warm and intimate. But if a room in your home feels more cramped than cozy, there may be a simple way to improve it.

Odette Lueck, of Odette Lueck Interiors in Oakland, Md., says the best way to stretch the size of a room is to start from the ground up. "The thing I use most is diagonal lines on the floor," says Lueck, who suggests installing wood flooring or tiles in a diagonal line. "No matter which way you look, it's expanding the border."

If you're not ready for a major project, you'd be amazed at what you can accomplish with just a few decorating tricks. First and foremost is color. To make your room appear larger, stick with neutrals and keep backgrounds (wall, furniture, draperies) the same color, says Lueck. But neutral doesn't have to be boring. "Use your color in accessories," says Lueck. But beware of patterns. Too many patterns can make a space seem cluttered.

Furniture placement is also important. The number of pieces should be kept to minimum and positioned against a wall. "Use glass coffee tables," suggests Lueck. "It's one less thing to be a solid focus in the a room." Don't be afraid to use a little creativity. For example, a stack of coffee table books next to chair can serve as a unique end table.

Another option is to embrace the room's petite size. "More often than not clients make the mistake of thinking that room always has to be larger," says Lueck. "Small is not necessarily bad. A lot of times, what you're actually striving for is a more intimate space." To warm up a small room, include dark colors, lots of wood and plenty of cozy fabrics.





## Is Your Home **Baby-Ready?**

**M**ore than 2.5 million children are injured or killed each year in household accidents, according to the National Safety Commission (NSC). Fortunately, there are many things you can do at home to keep your child safe — just taking a moment to view your home from a child's perspective will help you identify many potential hazards.

Suffocation is the most common type of accident in the home for children under four years old and the most common cause of accidental death in children under one. To prevent these accidents, make sure that all pull cords are secured and out of reach of children. Also remember to put all small objects — coins, rings, batteries, etc. — out of children's reach. And in your child's bedroom, crib bars should be no more than two-and-three-eighths-inches apart. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has a list of approved cribs on its Web site, [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

Another hazard in your home is hot water, which can burn or scald young skin. An easy fix is to set your hot water thermostat to no more than 120 degrees. If you are unable to control your water heater, anti-scald devices for faucets and shower heads can help regulate water temperature. To prevent electrocution, cover all outlets with outlets covers, which can be purchased at any hardware store. Be sure that they cannot be removed easily and are not small enough to be a choking hazard.

To find information on other child safety products and related information, visit [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) and [www.nsc.org/library/facts/babyprf.htm](http://www.nsc.org/library/facts/babyprf.htm).



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