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10 Easy Ways to Spruce Up Your Rental or Rehab

It's easy to fix up your properties if you have unlimited cash. However, you need to keep your repairs to a minimum to stay profitable. You also need to keep your properties in good shape to attract tenants or buyers. There are the basic improvements, such as carpet and paint, but these can still cost thousands of dollars. The following are some inexpensive ways to improve your properties with very little cash.

#1) New Electrical Switch Plates

This is such a minor, yet overlooked improvement. Most rental owners and rehabbers paint a unit and leave the old, ugly switch plates. Even worse, some even paint over them.

New switch plates cost about 50 cents each. You can replace the entire house with new switch plates for about \$20. For the foyer, living room and other obvious areas, spring for nice brass plates. They run about \$5 each - not much for added class.

#2) New or Improved Doors

Another overlooked, yet cheap replacement item is doors. If you have ugly brown doors, replace them with nice white doors (you can paint them, but unless you have a spray gun it will take you three coats by hand).

The basic hollow-core door is about \$20. It comes pre-primed and pre-hung. For about \$10 more, you can buy stylish six-panel doors. If you are doing a rehab, the extra \$10 per door is well worth-it. For rentals, consider at least changing the downstairs doors.



#3) New Door Handles

In addition to changing doors, consider changing the handles. An old door handle (especially with crusted paint on it) looks drab. For about \$10, you can replace them with new brass finished handles. Replace the guest bathroom and bedroom door handles with the fancy "S" handles (about \$20 each).

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#4) Paint/Replace Trim

If the entire interior of the house does not need a paint job, consider painting the trim. New, modern custom homes typically come with beige or off-white walls and bright-white trim. Use a semi-gloss bright white on all the trim in your houses.

If the floor trim is worn, cracked or just plain ugly, replace it! Home Depot carries a new foam trim that is pre-painted in several finishes and costs less than 50 cents per linear foot. Create a great first impression by adding crown molding in the entry way and living room.

#5) New Front Door

You only get one chance to make a first impression. A cheap front door makes a house look cheap. An old front door makes a house look old. If you have nice heavy door, paint it a bold color using a high-gloss paint. If your front door is old, consider replacing it with a new, stylish door. For about \$125, you can buy a very nice door.

#6) Tile Foyer Entry

After the front door, your next first impression is the foyer area. Most rental property foyers are graced with linoleum floors. Consider a nice 12" Mexican tile. An 8' x 8' area should cost about \$100 in materials.

#7) New Shower Curtains

It amazes me that many landlords and sellers show properties with either no shower curtain or any ugly old shower curtain in the bathroom. Don't be cheap - drop \$40 and buy a nice new rod and fancy curtain.

#8) Paint Kitchen Cabinets



Replacing kitchen cabinets is expensive, but painting them is cheap. If you have old 1970's style wooden cabinets in a lovely dark brown shade, paint them. Use a semi-gloss white and finish them with colorful plastic knobs. No need to paint the inside of them (unless you own a spray gun), since you are only trying to make an impression.

Americans spend 99% of their time in the kitchen (when they are not watching TV). A fancy modern faucet looks great in the kitchen. They can run as much as \$150, but not

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to worry - most retailers (Home Depot, Home Base, etc) often run clearance sales on overstocked and discontinued models. I have found nice Delta and Price Pfister faucets for about \$60 on sale.

#9) Add Window Shutters

If you have ugly aluminum framed windows, consider adding wooden shutters outside. They come pre-primed at most hardware retailers and are easy to install. Paint them an offset color from the outside of the house - (e.g., if the house is dark, paint the shutters white. If the house is light, paint them green, blue, etc.).

#10) Add a Nice Mailbox

Everyone on the block has the same black mailbox. Stand out. Be bold. For about \$35 you can buy a nice colorful mailbox. For about \$60 more, you can buy a nice wooden post for it. People notice these things....and they like them!