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Dear Readers,

They say home is where the heart is and I agree. It's our safe haven, the place where we feel at ease, where we create lasting memories with loved ones every day. That's why we've decided to bring Staten Island a new e-magazine where you can find ideas for creating the perfect space to raise your family. Our first edition of *Fix Up My Home* offers home improvement tips for everyone – including the chance to **win a \$500 Home Depot gift card, click here to enter!**



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Making It Work



Create the Perfect Kids' Work Station at Home

By Lambeth Hochwald and Shana Liebman

As parents head into another season of remote learning, many are wondering how they can optimize the at-home schooling experience. One way to do this is to create a dedicated kids station for studying, school work, and homework. Parenting and education expert Karen

“..THE SPACE SHOULD BE AN INVITATION TO KIDS AND SHOULD COMBINE COMFORT, FUNCTION, AND INTEREST.”

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Making It Work

Aronian, Ed.D., a former NYC public school teacher with an education doctorate from Teachers College, shares some great ideas about how best to customize your home for your kids' learning.



PICKING A DESIGNATED HOMEWORK & SCHOOL WORK SPACE

Any room can be the designated study hall, Dr. Aronian says. However, it's very important to pick a quiet spot without any distractions like TV, devices of any sort, and toys. Dr. Aronian urges families in small apartments to consider unlikely spaces like an entryway or bathroom.

MAKE A UNIQUE STUDENT WORKSPACE

"Tell your kids that it's their spot to do their work," says Lisa Sugarman, a nationally syndicated opinion columnist and parenting expert. "Giving your kids ownership of their homework area is a really big deal to a kid. Next, always





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Making It Work

make sure to help them get invested in the space by encouraging them to help shop for the items they'd like and then set it up and get it organized together."

Another useful decoration: academic visuals—ask your kids' teachers for specifics about the curriculum and then hang up learning tools such as multiplication tables or word lists. Feel free to tack up some teacherly tips or uplifting quotes, too. A little positive reinforcement can go a long way.

Dr. Aronian also emphasizes the importance of natural daylight and recommends kids to sit near a window (preferably open to let in air). She also recommends headphones, noise machines, or focus music, and lots of fresh air. Hang up a corkboard for your kids to pin papers, reminders, and a calendar, so you're keeping important information within sight.



SELECT A GOOD DESK CHAIR

The goal here: to select a desk chair that's as

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Making It Work

comfortable as it is supportive. “You don’t want a lousy chair to be the reason that your kids are doing their homework in front of the TV,” Draddy says. “Ultimately, the goal is to get them to work in a proper set-up with a table and chair instead of doing their homework on the couch.”

Conversely, there is no one-size-fits-all model for studying. While all study spaces should have a desk and a seat, parents can get creative about what furniture to use. Desks can be on wheels, lap pillows, play-tables, or trays. Chairs can be floor cushion, balance balls, or wobble chairs.

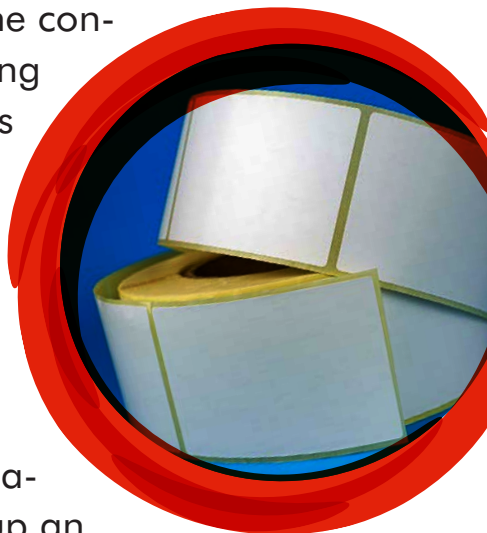
KEEP THE DESK ORGANIZED & CLEAN

Although it may seem obvious, keeping a trash or recycling can near your child’s desk is a win-win. “Not only will this encourage him to throw out old papers, but also—perhaps with a little coaxing—purge the garbage from his backpack on a regular basis,” Draddy says. Bonus points if you encourage your child to routinely empty that trash on her own as part of her chores.



“Label everything on your supply containers [or caddy,” Draddy suggests, adding that this includes recent tests, papers, and assignment sheets as well as bins containing supplies. “This will help teach your children how to maintain their space and hopefully put an end to the continuing cycle of them asking where to put their supplies when they are done with their homework,” she adds.

With school comes tons of assignments and papers that need to stay organized. “Consider setting up an ‘in’ and ‘out’ bin where your kids can put assignments that need to be done and others that are already completed,” Draddy says. “This makes it easier to remember that everything in the ‘out’ bin needs to be packed in their backpacks and returned to school the next day.” Consider keeping papers your kids want to keep for future nostalgia in bins. By doing this, your house will stay streamlined too.



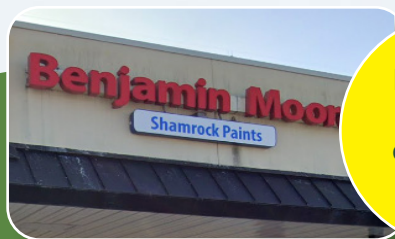
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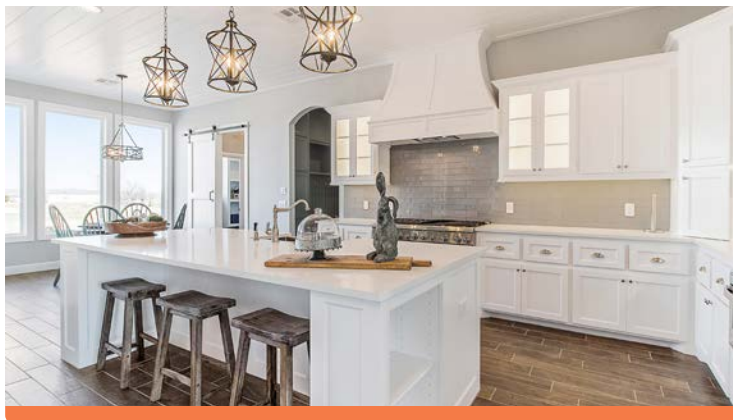
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Design Tips



On-Trend **Kitchen** and **Bath** Upgrades

Provided by National Association of the Remodeling Industry (via Family Features)

Kitchens and bathrooms remain among the top picks for homeowners looking to upgrade because their functional contributions to the household can't be overstated and they typically provide high return on investment.

**BIGGER
FUNCTIONAL
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If you're considering a renovation project for either in-demand space, consider some of these on-trend ideas from Doug King, CR, MBA, owner of King Contracting, Inc. and president of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

KITCHEN

Bigger functional spaces. Not only do many kitchen renovations result in added square footage, they also add practical features to make living and entertaining more comfortable and enjoyable. When it comes to physical space, a popular choice is removing or relocating walls to make the room larger.

This added space can be instrumental in adding an island or peninsula for bar seating, which many homeowners view as a necessity when it comes to entertaining. Other features like icemakers, tall wine refrigerators and walk-in pantries are high on the frequent request list. Another growing trend is a kitchen designed for two, complete with a second full-size sink, dishwasher and microwave drawer, along with a larger island.

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Design Tips

space has always been a top desire, and homeowners are getting increasingly clever about how to maximize their cabinetry. Drawer organizers are in high demand, along with pull-out waste baskets that hide recycling bins within. Another popular approach is large base cabinets with pivoting shelving mechanisms for storing large items like mixers and other taller countertop appliances. Making use of every inch of space is common; even the toe-kick area for drawers are proving useful to hold smaller items or put kid-friendly essentials in easy reach.

Feature-rich appliances. Appliance manufacturers are adding all kinds of bells and whistles, and those features are increasingly attractive to homeowners. Upper-end appliances are becoming more mainstream as homeowners discover features the more expensive models offer for ease of use and comfort. Larger freezer and column-style refrigerators are especially growing in popularity.



BATHROOM

Spa-like setting. One long-term trend that is still in top demand for the master bath is design that mimics a serene spa. This plays out in cooler colors

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Design Tips

like white, blues and grays. Glass tiles are taking on a bigger role with many homeowners using them as artistic focal points in showers or opting for pebble-like tiles that spill from walls onto the floor.

Upscale practicality. Little touches that may have once gone unnoticed are now trending as opportunities to add elements of style. For example, curbless showers with offset lineal drains are preferred to traditional centered circular versions. Similarly, homeowners are upping the ante with lighting such as fixtures integrated with fans and mirrors, and even below floating vanities for ambient light at night. One more place you might find lighting: on the bidet, which is also an increasingly hot addition in the master bath.

A splash of tech. Whether it's used to control smart features or simply add entertainment like TV or soothing music, technology has a permanent place on the list of bathroom trends. The available features make it easy to make a full escape from the daily grind of life.





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Going Green



Energy-Efficient Ideas to Upgrade Your Home

Provided by the National Association of the Remodeling Industry

Energy bills are likely among the largest expenses for homeowners, but you can take action to lower those costs. During a remodel, a certified contractor can help you make smart decisions when it comes to selecting appliances, windows and insulation for your projects.

**LONG-TERM
TIPS FOR
CUTTING
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HEFTY BILLS**

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Going Green

Though upgrades made with efficiency in mind can vary depending on the climate you live in, the biggest energy users are typically the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems and water heater, all of which make up about 60% of a typical home's energy budget.

Learn how you can reduce your home's energy reliance and environmental impact with these tips from the experts at the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

HEATING AND COOLING

Climate control is one of the largest home energy users. A programmable thermostat is a simple starting point and can save up to one-third of heating and cooling costs. Cutting-edge models can even learn your

family's behaviors and tweak usage for maximum savings. Additional ways to save energy include sealing leaky ducts, cleaning or changing air filters regularly and replacing your furnace or air conditioner with an energy-efficient model, particularly if your heating and cooling systems are more than 15 years old.



INSULATION

Studies show that only 20% of homes built before 1980 were well-insulated. Depending on when your home was built, adding insulation in the attic and walls can be one of the fastest and most cost-effective ways to reduce energy waste. Not only does better insulation reduce energy loss and improve comfort, it's an upgrade that generally adds to the value of your home with an estimated 95% return on your investment.



WINDOWS

High-performance windows not only lower heating and cooling bills, they also reduce heat gain during warmer months and add a layer of insulation when you need to keep the heat inside. Triple-pane, Low-E insulated frame windows can save 33% of the heating cost for a typical home in cooler climates, and in hotter environments, double-pane, low solar-gain windows can reduce cooling costs by up to 32%.

LIGHTING

The average house dedicates 5-10% of its energy budget to lighting. To cut your use, switch to LED lights, turn off unneeded lights and, where possible, use natural

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light. Other measures, like relying on task lights and installing motion detectors, can help further limit your lighting-related energy usage.

APPLIANCES

The refrigerator is a major energy drain, accounting for up to 15% of the energy bill in homes, particularly models that are 15 years old or older. Design plays a major role in a refrigerator's efficiency; it needs adequate air flow for optimal function. Be realistic about your needs and only buy as big

aware

as a unit as you require. Be that icemakers and dispensers not only add to the up-front cost, they're also less efficient. As with any appliance, shop for a model that offers as many energy-saving features as you can afford.



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LANDSCAPING

Trees positioned to reduce summer sun and winter wind can reduce a household's energy use by 25% or more. In summer, trees can lower air temperature as much as 9 F through shading and evapotranspiration. In winter, a well-designed landscape can cut heating bills by about one-third.

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