

6 secrets

Designer Tara Dennis of *Better Homes & Gardens* shares her tips for a stylish DIY interior makeover. By Pip Harry

1 Kit yourself out

I couldn't be without my tool kit. My essentials are a sewing machine, staple and glue guns, and my paints, brushes and pencils. With a sewing machine you can make your own napkins and curtains. With a staple gun you can re-upholster a footstool. A hot-glue gun is great for sticking decorations onto shop-bought things to make them your own. And with paintbrushes you can personalise pretty much anything and whip up art.



2 Buy neutral

I'm constantly educating people to shop for good, well-shaped furniture in neutral fabrics you can update. Neutrals can be in any of the natural, stony shades like charcoal, soft grey, beige, off-white. You can jazz it up with brighter colours like purple, green or yellow.

3 Layer up

When furnishing, I'm a big fan of layering – start with a good foundation like classic white sheets, polished floorboards, a nice tile or a good sofa and build on it. Add a vase of flowers, a rug for the floor in winter, or a new set of pillows or cushions for the bed. It's like the little black dress – you can change the accessories as much as you like, but that dress will always be in fashion.



4 Shop around

If you can't afford a statement piece of furniture, head down to your local op-shop and hunt around. They have some really cool items. A lot of people chuck stuff out that's really retro and well-made. A 1970s cabinet looks amazing after a bit of elbow grease!

5 Colour in

If you're having a radical moment in terms of colour, do it with things you can change easily like paint, cushions and accessories. You can paint over a wall in half an hour, but if you go for bright red tiles, you're stuck with them.



6 Art on a budget

I'm a big advocate of stretching fabric over a canvas to hang on a wall. It's cheap – just pick up a \$9 length of fabric, a staple gun and whip off down to Bunnings and pick up canvases. You can cover a lot of wall with a lot of colour without having to be particularly artistic.

Queen of the stylish budget makeover, Tara is never without her hot-glue gun.

