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DIY DECORATING

More than just a lick of paint

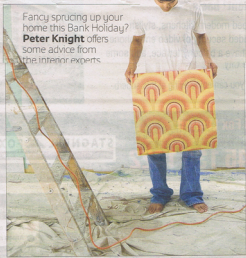
This Bank Holiday weekend is the last of the year to clog the aisles of Ikea and sandpaper yourselves silly. A three-day stretch of uninterrupted DIY is a dream for enthusiasts looking to give their four walls a facelift. But you don't have to be Handy Andy to make the most of the time off, say the experts. Just keep within your capabilities and plan ahead.

"People have a tendency to think they can redecorate an entire room or hallway in three days," says interior designer Marion Falchi.

"If you know what you're doing, you can, but most people should keep jobs small like painting a door or wallpapering one wall."

For example, says Falchi, masking one room with tape to protect the carpet, skirting board and window frames from leaking paint is an afternoon job all of its own.

So, here we've asked the experts what jobs are within reach and how to sidestep the pitfalls.



Fancy sprucing up your home this Bank Holiday? Peter Knight offers some advice from the interior experts.

Wonder wallpapering

Dress one large wall with intricately patterned wallpaper. After you've stripped the wall down, invest in lining paper. "In an old house a wall may well have undulating bumps, so lining paper gives a smoother finish," says Falchi. "If you've got cheaper, thinner wallpaper, a lining gives the impression of something of much better quality." Always leave a 3cm excess of paper at the ceiling and skirting board, which should be cut crisply with a Stanley knife.



Sand and deliver

Sanding furniture is a dusty job for the garden. If you're too tight to hire an electric sander, it's time to get rubbing with three thicknesses of sandpaper (end with the thinnest for a smoother finish). Then comes two undercoats, followed by two coats of oil-based paint or varnish. "One thing I find indispensable is a Poly-vinyl acrylic finish," says Falchi. "You can buy it at most DIY stores and it prevents the paint from stripping if it gets locked or scratched as a table would."

Paint the towel red

If you have a plain, neutral-coloured kitchen, try a bold colour like pillar-box red on one wall. Though make sure other items in the room, such as blinds or red tea towels, compliment the colour.



Interior designer Adrienne Chinn whitewashed her floorboards in a weekend. "Two thin coats and a satin varnish mean you can see the grain of the wood," Chinn says. Painted picture frames and mirror frames (above) can also rejuvenate a room, says house doctor Shelly Robinson. "White or stone emulsion on an ornate, gilt picture frame can be stunning in a neutrally coloured room."



Odd jobs and knobs

It's not the sexiest of DIY jobs but cleaning in between your tiles can give a bathroom a fresh facelift, says Robinson. "Getting rid of black sticky grout makes all the difference," she says. Also, if you're tired of your new kitchen tiles, DIY stores will stock stainless steel panels that can be bolted over tiles to act as a splashback. And have you ever thought of replacing your doorknobs? Perhaps with a star design (below)? Chinn picked up nine seashell handles to replace the scuffed brass knobs on her bedroom wardrobe. "But if you're replacing a vertical handle that is fixed with two screws," says Chinn, "then take the old one to the shop to make sure the new screws are the same length apart. It saves you going back."



NEW LOOK | A sanded and repainted dresser