

Pet Peeves Motivate Homeowners to Renovate Master Bathrooms

You're not alone if you've looked around your house and said, "Ugh!"

Home-related pet peeves are driving homeowners to overhaul their master bathrooms, says a new Houzz study.

If you're ready to jump on the renovation bandwagon, the "2020 U.S. Houzz Bathroom Trends Study" (<https://bit.ly/3iYKzEP>) shows you the latest design and materials trends.

Houzz found that pet peeves are driving homeowners to overhaul their master bathrooms. An old, outdated space tops homeowners' pet peeve list, according to the 2020 U.S. Houzz Bathroom Trends Study (<https://bit.ly/3iYKzEP>). That's followed by insufficient storage (34%), small showers (34%), poor lighting (29%), and limited counter space (25%).

Two in 5 homeowners (41%) look to a new master bathroom as a place for rest and relaxation. For more than half (55%) that means soaking in the tub to relax. Another 54% relax by taking long showers.

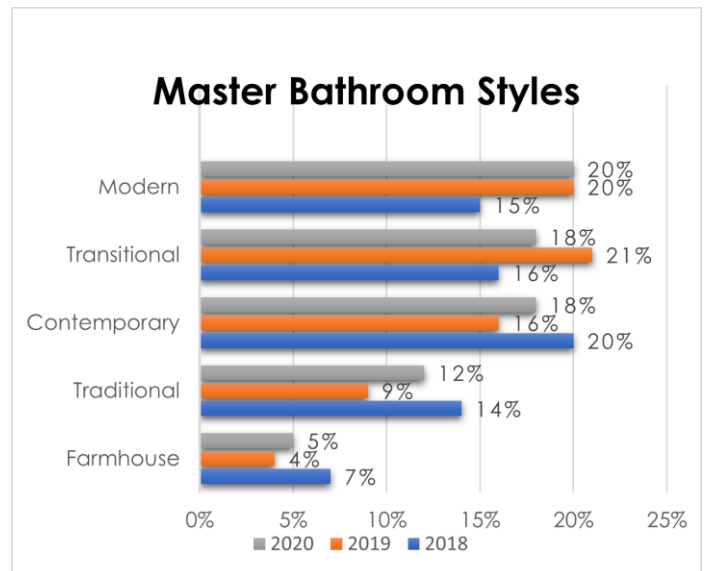
Still, tubs aren't a must-have, and 23% of homeowners remove them completely, and half of master bathrooms don't have tubs after they're remodeled.

Homeowners aren't skimping on extras and many renovations include premium features for bathtubs, showers, and toilets. Those include

soaking tubs, rainfall showerheads, and one-piece toilets. They're also incorporating high-tech features—faucets with touch-only or touch-free activation, self-cleaning toilets, mood lighting, and built-in sound in the shower.

With 69 percent saying that their top pet peeve is "an old and outdated look," it's not surprising that so many (89%) opt for a fresh design style.

The study also includes details about what homeowners spent on master bathroom renovations, the professional they hired, and favorite materials and colors. See more from the Houzz study on the SRES blog.



Rehoming Military Letters

If you're cleaning out a loved one's home after their death, the experience can be emotionally taxing, especially when you get to boxes containing personal papers—letters, postcards, and other written material.

What to do with such personal papers can be a unique source of angst. After all, sometimes you don't want to keep letters, but you feel guilty about throwing them out.

If some correspondence is related to a U.S. war, one option is donating the letters to the Center for American War Letters (<https://bit.ly/3iZVwGf>) at Chapman University in Orange, Calif.

It's a collection of war letters from every American conflict from the Revolutionary War on. It contains everything from handwritten notes from that war to emails sent from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Center is interested in the extraordinary and the mundane, whether a letter is a description of boot camp, a dramatic recollection about being under fire or reflections of vets long after a conflict has ended.

No topic—love, patriotism, homesickness, camaraderie, and so forth—is off limits, and the Center also accepts letters that were written by parents, spouses, kids, and siblings to troops serving in a war.

One of the Center's goals is to become the country's largest archive of personal wartime correspondences, and the letters may be used for live readings, documentaries, traveling exhibits.



Quick to-dos to save energy, boost comfort

Your to-do list has probably become pretty long to prepare your house as fall turns to winter in the coming weeks.

After you finish cleaning the gutters, putting the garden to bed, and getting your shovels ready, turn your attention to the interior of your home to be sure you're doing all the small winterizing tasks that can save money and make your home more comfortable.

Here are five DIY, no cost or low-cost changes you can make.

1. **Thermostat.** Program your thermostat so that it automatically reduces the temperature at night and when you're out during the day. By using a programmable thermostat correctly, you could save \$180 in energy costs each year.
2. **Water heater.** Dial back the temperature of your water heater to 120°F. By doing so, you could see annual energy savings between 4% and 22%, according to Energy Saver, a consumer-oriented resource by the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) designed to help consumers save energy.
3. **Fireplace.** When you're not using your fireplace, shut the chimney's damper tightly to stop warm air from flowing up and out.
4. **Ceiling fan.** Reverse your fan, so it rotates clockwise during the winter. That creates an updraft that forces warm air near the ceiling into your living space.
5. **Furnace.** Get your furnace cleaned and tuned up and change your filters monthly.
6. **Weatherize.** Look for places where air enters. Caulk and seal air leaks where there are small openings for plumbing, ducts, or electrical wiring that come through walls, floors, ceilings, and soffits over cabinets; caulk and weatherstrip doors and windows; add plastic film to your windows; and install foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on walls. For more information, see <https://bit.ly/2H4IGu2> and <https://bit.ly/2H4IGu2>

✓ 3 Ways to (Almost) Instantly Improve Your Mood

Right now, when social distancing makes a good hug hard to come by, try these other natural ways to boost your spirits!



1. Take a walk outside

A simple walk can provide a pleasant change of scenery while also stretching your muscles and improving your circulation. Brisk walking can make you feel better by releasing endorphins (the feel-good hormone) and boosting energy.

Walking in nature or other “green” spaces and basking in natural light has been proven to promote a calming, meditative mental state, improving mood.

Plus, studies show that exercise can have a positive impact on depression. Active people tend to experience lower depression rates, and exercise can be as effective as medication in alleviating long-term depression.



2. Look up and smile!

Even if smiling is the last thing you feel like doing, forcing a smile will make you feel better. How? The physical act of smiling sends messages to your brain to release “feel good” hormones. It also reduces stress, boosts your immune system, lowers blood pressure, improves digestion, and can even help you live longer!

Plus, when you smile, other people are more likely to smile back, which also lifts your mood.

The neurology of our “visual brain” is a bit complicated, but casting your eyes upwards can improve mood, creativity, and a sense of well-being. Builders of ornate cathedrals have known this for centuries. In the cell phone age, studies confirm that looking down damages mood, whereas looking up improves it.



3. Good foods and essential oils

Certain foods are proven mood-boosters, as well as some essential oils. Since up to 90% of your body’s production of the “feel-good” hormone serotonin is produced in your gut, foods matter. Mood-boosting foods include dark chocolate, salmon, oats, bananas, berries, nuts, seeds, coffee, and fermented foods. Overall, adding more fruits and vegetables to your diet has been shown to reduce depression.

Essential oils work by stimulating your sense of smell, which can discriminate between over a trillion different scents! Although the research is still limited, some essential oils have been used successfully to boost mood, including lemon oil, lavender, ylang-ylang, rosemary, basil, and clary sage.

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