

BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE



At the time of year when staying in is definitely in, *Hayley Spencer* has a trick or two up her sleeve: 50 ways to transform your home this winter, from cushions, candles, coat racks and ceramics to paint, backplates and more

The end of the year is drawing close, which means chilly weather and, if you're in the hosting mood, a flurry of visitors (respect to anyone who has signed up to host a Christmas, and even more if you have in-laws coming). And then there's all that tidying ...

It's also the season for hunkering down and getting cosy. But making home feel like a sanctuary needn't cost a lot at this already wallet-wounding time of year. There are plenty of tricks and affordable buys to give where you live a lift. Practical changes can be as good for the soul as looking at something beautiful. After slowly renovating my flat for the past five years, I have a lot of ideas up my sleeve. From easy DIY to choice accessories, here are 50 ways to breathe new life into your home this winter.

1 Invest in a future design classic

Dutch brand Jochen Holz's Hay glass jug (£49, [selfridges.com](#)), with its unusually shaped rim, is a cocktail receptacle, vase and centrepiece in one - a modern design classic.

2 Go with the grain

Natural textures make your home feel grounded. To maintain the lustre of your wood-top tables and furniture, you need to oil them once in a while. Around once a year is a good rule of thumb for occasionally used items, so now is the perfect time to tackle the job. A quality oil, such as this Superior Wood Finishing Danish Oil

(from £10.95, [littlefairs.shop](#)), will help prevent cracking and bring out the grain's beauty. Choose a water-resistant option for added protection.

3 Spend more time in bed

Lazy mornings reading the paper in bed during the Christmas holidays call for an extra cushion on which to prop yourself. Toast's super soft velvet, ginger-hued bolster (£89, [toa.st](#)) is long enough to jazz up the whole bed with just one addition and provides the perfect amount of support.

4 Style up your ceramics

Ceramics are now as collectible as handbags for homeware lovers. Case in point: Henry Holland Studio's covetable Hackney-thrown collection. This art deco-inspired stripey design from Holland, a former fashion designer, will be your new favourite vessel for brews and will look chic on display (£55, [henryhollandstudio.com](#)).

5 Upgrade your cutlery

Cutlery with a little weight to it instantly feels as if you're eating somewhere classy. And in a season of celebratory meals, upgrading it is a lovely touch. I like the Scandi aesthetic of this set (£29, [ikea.com](#)) and the handles will age beautifully.

6 Help your radiators do their job

Not all rooms are blessed with great layouts that make it easy to put your furniture in plum position, but in

winter at least, try to put your sofa on a different wall from the radiator. Having your couch in front of one can obstruct heat distribution and reduce the efficiency of your heating system.

7 Pick the perfect pillow

A good night's rest can be hard to get during party season - give yourself a head start with a high-quality pillow such as Simba's Stratos (£60, [simbasleep.com](#)). It has breathable cotton covers with cool-touch technology, so you won't overheat in the night (16 to 18 degrees is optimal sleeping temperature).

8 Make your home smell like a hotel

Bring that hotel feeling home with the scent collection of boutique Cotswolds hotel Thyme. Made with essential oils from water mint, English apple blossom and thyme, this double-win 300g candle (£55, [bertioli.co.uk](#)) is calming and will make your home smell like a countryside idyll.

9 Do that big book clear-out

Books look lovely on shelves, but they can take over. Decide which of your tomes you might enjoy a second or third time (or are yet to read), the ones you need for reference or that are a good prop - and donate the rest. If they're good as new, Book Aid International is a great charity to give to, or Oxfam will take more thumbled novels. Consider keeping a single mini shelf above the bed, such as this

small folded one from Muuto (£84.90, [nordicnest.com](#)), for the few books you want to delve into next, so you can grab them with ease and see your reading list at a glance.

10 Up your hot-water bottle game

If you're anything like me, you'll spend way more time cosied up to your hot-water bottle in these chilly months than you will in a statement party dress, so it's worth investing in one that sparks joy. Choose a designer winter warmer from London favourite Shrimps which comes in the brand's signature cable knit with embroidered flowers (£85, [shrimps.com](#)).

11 Wallpaper a tiny room

Add some personality to the smallest spaces in your home - box room, coat cupboard and downstairs loo - with a splashy wallpaper such as this jungle print (£80 a roll, [lick.com/uk](#)).

12 Refill your hand wash

The Real Housewives of Clapton account on Instagram has outed all the thirtysomethings out there for refilling Aesop containers with supermarket own-brand hand soap. No shame! But if you want to up your soap game, Somerset-based Commune's zesty botanical hand wash has a divine scent, is skin-loving and comes with a reusable pump (£55 for 500ml, [commune.cc](#)). And look how gorgeous the bottles are ...





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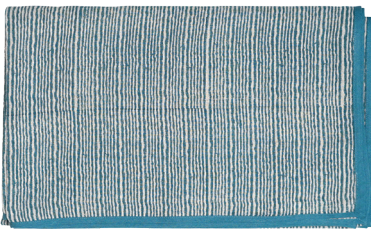
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13 Screw in a warm lightbulb
Do away with that harsh white bulb in favour of one with an orange-yellow tinge: they're softer on the eye and create a more relaxing atmosphere. For a statement look, opt for a vintage-style globe with a visible filament, such as this Calex 3.8W ES LED dimmable bulb (£16.99, johnlewis.com).

14 Bring out a basket
A wicker basket is a bit of a storage solve-all for cosy season: line the bottom with something waterproof and you can keep it in the hall to chuck muddy boots in, so dirt isn't dragged through the house; you can put spare blankets or linens in there in your bedroom; or go full country house fantasy and store logs in the living room. Choose a willow one like this for that traditional look (£50, johnlewis.com).

15 Frame a picture properly
A cheap frame devalues even the best piece of art, so make friends with your local framer. Mine, FRMD, offers a free quote, then a consultation, and has plenty of choices of colours for the mount and frame.

16 Rock the roast
Whether you're cooking dinner for the big day or not, a good roasting dish is a kitchen staple, particularly at this time of year. Pro Cook does a great one with a rack for resting meat (£40, procook.co.uk) - and it's dishwasher safe, to make life easier.

17 Tart up your table
There's something ceremonial about adding a tablecloth. Make it linen because ironing as well as cooking, when you're hosting, is too much to ask. A special occasion deserves something special: splash out on this blue striped beauty (£159, birdiefortescue.co.uk) or go for La Redoute's Menorca (£50, laredoute.co.uk).

18 Show your curtains some love
Like shirts, curtains look a whole lot smarter when they hang properly minus creases. So while it might feel laborious, you'll be rewarded if you give yours a steam. Take them down first, get to work with this Steam Genie 2 in 1 Steamer (£59.99, uk.russellhobbs.com), then rehang and tackle any remaining wrinkles from the back.

19 Wake up to (faux) sunlight
Even the best-lit house can't make up for these dark mornings, so it's time to call in some back-up in the shape of a Sad (seasonal affective disorder) lamp. We need sunlight to feel awake in the morning, because it suppresses the sleepiness chemical adenosine. So if you can't get the real stuff, then waking up to gradually brightening light from this Lumie Sunrise Alarm (£49, johnlewis.com) will help you feel ready to face the day.

20 Save on your shop-bought latte
If you're over-spending on coffee pods or shop-bought flat whites, then it's time to get a decent espresso maker, such as this three-cup model from Italian brand Bialetti (£35, johnlewis.com). No one does them better, though if you really want to push the boat out, you might want to consider the Magnifica Evo bean to cup machine (£579, johnlewis.com).

21 Switch your switches
Changing light switches can instantly lift your home. Brands such as Pooky and Corston sell

highly covetable switches in matte and metal, but buying just a few can add up in cost. So if you want to do the whole house on a budget, head to Screwfix. Traditional-looking toggle switches are having a moment and there are decent dupes from LAP, including this, in black nickel (£5.19, screwfix.com).

22 Make your room look bigger
Sounds obvious, but a well-placed mirror can both make a space feel bigger and fill it with more light, particularly if it's placed opposite or next to windows. This playful pond shape (£50, dunelm.com) will work well in most rooms and schemes to break up a blank wall.

23 Enhance your hall
A clever interiors designer friend of mine advised mounting a little ledge in the hallway with a hook beneath it, like this one (£9.28, sostrenegrene.com), which will do double the work for a single outlay. Hang your keys or umbrella below and put a candle on top, with a scent that will both greet visitors and waft up through the house.

			as keeping your home healthier. Kärcher's Window Vac WV 5 Plus (£89, amazon.co.uk) is an investment but it will leave your panes sparkling. 32 Say cheers to new glasses Raising a toast will feel all the merrier with some stylish new glasses. I love Our Place's chunky amber-stemmed coupes (£90 for four, fromourplace.co.uk) for a retro, festive feel. They're also deep enough for cocktails and desserts, giving you more bang for your buck.
			33 Sharpen up your sheets I know, I know, it's laborious, but giving your sheets an inside-out iron will give you - and any incoming guests - that nice hotel-at-home, crisp-sheets vibe. It's a 10-minute job, max. Try Egyptian cotton sateen bedding (from £18 for a pillowcase, johnlewis.com). Or, if you really can't be bothered, buy linen sheets and embrace the creases. Secret Linen Store sells natural linen bedding in a breadth of stylishly muted colours, including this Vintage Rose (from £25 for a pillowcase, secretlinenstore.com).
			34 Add some down-lighting It's a truth widely acknowledged that only heathens use the harsh "big light", especially in autumn and winter. If you're short on softer options, it's time to invest in some moodier down-lighting. Swerve the need for new electrics with a light that screws into the wall, such as this adjustable metal version (£85, laredoute.co.uk). It can be repositioned on the arm to cast light exactly where you want it.
			35 Match your ceiling to your walls "Colour-drenching" a room with same-coloured skirting or coving has become a popular trick in decoration, but in a larger room, why not go the whole hog and do the ceiling, too? Architectural designer Alex Glover says, "If you're confident enough to go bold, I recently decorated a drawing room using dark purple, which has a lovely richness and depth to it, and a cocooning effect when used on ceilings, too." Go for Famous (from £28.80, grahambrown.com/uk).
24 Go eco in the sink Make doing the dishes less of a chore with an attractive wooden brush: it's biodegradable, more hardwearing and much more attractive. This one, from Wild & Stone (£6.50, wildandstone.com), is made of beechwood, with compostable bristles, and comes with a metal holder that allows you to switch the head and keep the handle once the scourer has come to the end of its life. 25 Stop putting off touch-ups Nothing makes your home feel more tired than scuffed paint (hallways are particularly prone), so get to work on touching up the paintwork. Alex Glover, founder and director of fine decorating and colour consultancy Austin James, says, "Use a small brush or roller to begin as small touch-ups are more likely to go unnoticed when dry." Paint must be well stirred, and you should use the same pile of roller as previously to make it undetectable, using a non-uniform painting pattern. Try a Purdy Monarch Elite 1in brush (£12.49, screwfix.com) or this GoodHome medium pile fixed roller (£3.50, diy.com).	26 Add an on-trend cushion You're bound to be spending a lot of time cosied up on the sofa this winter, so why not freshen it up with a new cushion? Go for autumnal shades to add warmth. I like Quinn Says's organic linen Greek-inspired print in cacao (£75, quinnsays.store) - a fringe edge is very 2024. 27 Nurture a winter plant While some of your plants will go dormant in winter or have flowers that fade in the colder season, a peace lily (£29, bloomandwild.com) will thrive in low light and will bring your room to life. Its white spathes are periodical and might not show themselves when there's less than medium light, though their foliage should thrive all year round. They're also easy to care for: they just need moist soil. 28 Make a statement with a mat It's the first thing visitors see when they arrive, and a tired, muddy one isn't going to impress anybody. Anthropologie's Sardines mat is just the right side of novelty (£48, anthropologie.com), and it's my favourite on the high street.	29 Organise your kitchen clutter In a dream world, we'd all have clean, hidden storage and magazine-worthy, clutter-free counters - but we all live in the real world. Some caddies will make things feel less crowded on your worktops. H&M's wooden mini crates (£14.99, hm.com) are ideal for stashing herbs and spices, oils or utensils in to make things look more streamlined. 30 Make dormant plants happy If you upgraded your houseplants to bigger pots in spring, kudos to you. But if they're now looking a bit sad and sleepy out of season, with drooping leaves, darkened stems and no new flowers, give them a helping hand by placing them in a smart ceramic pot that shows off some personality. I love Louise Mazdia's playful designs for small greenery (£70, louisemazdia.com). 31 Keep windows dry with a vac Condensation on windows is not only unsightly, but could also affect air quality and damage frames and sills if it drips on to them. Investing in a sucker, AKA an electric squeegee, will help things look clearer as well	36 Tidy that drawer of doom Tidy drawer, tidy mind, right? And over the festive period, who knows what random device or piece of stationery you'll need at a moment's notice? So now is the time to clear out and organise the chaos, wherever you're stashing all that miscellaneous stuff. Joseph Joseph makes the best practical gear and its drawer organisers - including this 10-piece set (£30, johnlewis.com) - are like a puzzle so you can fit them to the space you're using and the number of item categories you have.



