



▲ before

after



to add the furniture. Both Sotka and Murray recommend investing in a good quality sofa to anchor the room. If you want to play it safe, buy a neutral-colored sofa and add color by replacing the pillows and throws on a seasonal basis, or purchase a slipcover for a quick pick-me-up.

"A classic sofa with clean lines is always a smart investment," Murray says. "It looks just as good in a traditional setting as it does in a more contemporary one."

If your budget is large enough to absorb the cost of more than one piece of furniture, Sotka encourages homeowners to mix and match style with color. For example, if you purchase a simple sofa with a linear feel and neutral fabric, consider pairing it with a plush leather club chair in a deep brown or caramel color. Or, scout around until you find an antique chair, such as a Louis XVI armchair, to complete the room.

"The furniture in a room doesn't have to be perfectly coordinated," says Sotka. "In fact, mixing and matching pieces from different styles and time periods can create a very trendy look."

Sotka also suggests repurposing furniture and using it in a different room. For example, change the hardware on an old dresser and move it to your living or dining room. Or cut the legs shorter on an old end table, sew a custom cushion, and use it as an ottoman. "By painting or staining a piece of furniture, you can give it a completely new look," Murray says. And if you're feeling really daring, paint the base of your lamps with metallic paint and add decorative shades to give old lighting fixtures fresh appeal.

Last, but not least, are the accessories. According to Anne Bridges, an advertising director with Cleveland's Frames

Sotka uses stacked Chinese trunks and an antique Chinese table as nightstands. The trunks also provide needed storage space. Photos hung low on the wall and propped on the window sill balance the asymmetrical appearance of the wall. The upholstered cubes at the foot of the bed can be used for seating or to hold a bedspread. The Oriental rug for the hardwood floor adds the finishing touch.



PHOTOS / HARC GOLUB

Unlimited, one of the most popular ways to personalize a room is to displaying photos and other personal mementoes. Bridges recommends using shadow boxes to show off photos, postcards, children's artwork, sports jerseys, wedding memorabilia, or souvenirs from a family vacation.

If you'd rather stick with a display of framed photos, Bridges suggests grouping them by theme and arranging them on a mantle or side table. "As long as the photos are united by a common theme, you can mix and match frames of different colors, shapes, sizes, or materials," she says. "Or, you can group together a collection of similar frames and display an assortment of different photos in the same room."

For a trendier look, she adds, create a funky piece of pop art based on your favorite photo. "When you compare it to the price of an original painting, it's relatively inexpensive."

If you prefer fine art, Sotka says not to despair.

By patronizing local art galleries and festivals, you can find affordable accents for your home, while supporting up-and-coming artists. "If you shop locally, you'll be able to find a painting or sculpture that is the right size and right color for your new room without breaking the bank," says Sotka.

The most important thing to remember is that redecorating a room can take time. "Forget everything you see on TV," Sotka adds. "You're not going to finish a room in one week. Take your time with it, and have fun. Set a budget and buy only quality pieces that you love. The results will be well worth it." ▲

"Focus on what you need in the room and get rid of the rest. You need to start with the basics."

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