

Before & After



Part I of III

young & fun

(and repainting again?!)

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We're John
and Sherry,
and we're 27.

Our house is so. It's old enough to be our parent, but we treat it like our baby. It's our first home, located in Richmond, Virginia. Armed with a lot of know-how and a lot of enthusiasm, we didn't waste a second transforming our little brick ranch and documenting every detail on our blog, theyoungandfun.com. To date we've added a slew of skills to our metaphorical toolbox and even some equipment to our literal toolbox. Now it's just a matter of finding enough hours in the day to keep up with our ever growing to-do list while keeping the world posted along the way.



Carving out curb appeal ...

Hidden among the oaks, it didn't even look like a house existed when we drove by to check out the "quaint brick home" listed in the newspaper. But where the previous owner saw privacy, we saw promise. After closing the deal, we quickly began thinning the forest and letting the light in.

Stage 1



Lost in the woods

Here's what we saw when we pulled up to our home for the first time. Uh, where's the house? Nothing a little tree trimming can't fix ...

Stage 2



Helping their

Clipping back the branches hiding the house provided instant gratification (and reminded the neighbors that a home existed behind all that brush).

Stage 3



Enjoying the view

We opened our front yard even more thanks to the help of a tree removal service (which gave us a great bulk rate). Then we sat around and waited for the grass to grow.



What we did ...

To create a welcoming front landscape, we trimmed the bushes around the porch (exposing the charming geometric railing), hung some lacy ferns, and placed a few petal plants on the front steps.

DIY tip:

The icing on the curb-appeal cake was removing the old yellow screen door and painting the solid wood black door behind it a cheerful red tone that says, "Well hello there!"



What we did ...

Without a formal entry like the front door opens into our living room, we decided to create one on the fly. A console table for dropping keys and mail certainly comes in handy. And accenting our entryway with graphic black-and-white art (which we now sell in our online shop) really draws people in from the moment they step through the door.

PAINT TIP

Tested prices is extremely helpful for establishing a rich, glossy tone when using vibrant colors. Apply two or three coats of semigloss paint to achieve a truly perfect scarlet.

A living room we could live with ...

It was dark and foreboding, complete with an oppressive floor-to-ceiling fireplace that sucked all the light out of the room—nothing that a coat of paint couldn't fix. And although it took us two tries to get the wall color right, it was worth the repeat performance.

Stage 1



Afraid of the dark

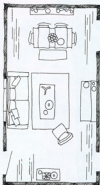
Our living room's fireplace was a fright, accented by a dark wooden mantel and a dated brass fireplace screen. *EEK!*

Stage 2



Still figuring out what works

The newly painted brick fireplace worked—the shiny brass surround didn't. The white trim and baseboards worked—the minty green walls didn't. The original wood floors worked—the cheap dorm furniture didn't.



What we did ...

Our rooms tried to evolve over time (especially since we love to learn as we go). By painting the brass fireplace screen, repainting the walls a neutral tan, and adding more grown-up furnishings like this coffee table that we snagged for 50 cents at a thrift store, we created a welcoming living room that we love to come home to.

DIY tip:

1. Cheerful yellows and greens ensure the neutral walls are anything but boring.
2. Punching out a much wider doorway that leads to the kitchen creates an open, spacious feeling.

PAINT TIP

When painting brick, use a nappy roller meant for textured surfaces and rely on a paintbrush for those particularly deep grooves.



What we did ...

Adding crown molding polished things off, and hanging the shades high and wide around our big picture window framed the view without blocking the light.

DIY tip:

Hang your curtain rods well above the top of your window—about 3 inches below your ceiling or crown molding. By hanging bamboo blinds right under the rod, you can create the illusion that the window is much taller than by adding height and drama to any space.



Y-ROCK IT OFF

Removing the wood divider (featuring a dated glass panel) in the middle was one of the first things we did. Then we discovered oak flooring beneath the entry linoleum—sweet!

Room To Live

We created a dining area off the kitchen at one end of our expansive living room for a truly multifunctional space. Floating shelves + a pendant lamp + a cozy table + an instant dining room.



What we did ...

Everything from bright green runners to white insatane pieces adds to the casual and cozy atmosphere in our dining area. We love hosting relaxed get-togethers and laying things out buffet style on the table. We even propped one of our favorite backyard wedding pictures nearby, which makes us smile every time we share a meal.

DIY tip:

Unifying the frames in your home can make rearranging your artwork a snap. Every room in our house features sleek white frames (many from inexpensive stores such as IKEA and Target), so when we want to move something into another room we don't have to worry if the frames will match.



Spiffin' the kitchen ...

We hit the trifecta with our 50-year-old knotty pine kitchen: dark, dingy, and dated. So we temporarily spruced it up just in time for our at-home wedding and saved our pennies until we could spring for a full-fledged renovation (which was oh-so-worth the wait).

Stage 1



What "wood" you do

Not many people would call this a dream kitchen, but something about it screamed "potential city" to us. We knew that a coat of paint would make all the difference.

Stage 2



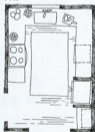
Toned-down tan

A neutral tone on the cabinets immediately lightened and brightened the room, and new stainless-steel appliances (purchased in bulk for a hefty rebate) brought the room up to date in a flash.

Before



After



What we did ...

White cabinetry and pale granite counters keep things looking light in our newly spiffed kitchen. And scoring deals where we could from our eBay faucet to a free dishwasher thanks to a generous rebate made renovating on the stone counters positively painless.

Diff tip

Small spaces benefit from light and bright cabinet and counter colors. Reflective surfaces such as stainless steel and glass keep the light bouncing around for an open and airy feel.



To check out more of Sherry and John's DIY home makeover ideas, visit their blog at theyounghouse.com.

Look for Part II in our Summer 2009 issue!

