

Is your bedroom a nightmare? Wake it up with a few good tips

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I hate to admit it, but I have no love for my bedroom.

The furniture is dreary and mismatched. The closet is dark and messy. The room lacks light, organization and even a headboard for the bed. It's so uninviting that I use it only for sleeping and paying bills.

My husband and I bought our house seven years ago. Since then, we've gutted the kitchen, screened in a porch, renovated a basement playroom and decorated bedrooms for our two children. But our own room — why bother? No one sees it but us, so it ranks dead last on the list of home improvement priorities, after any first-floor room seen by visitors.

"Everyone always seems to put it off," says Karen Bengel, a Washington area designer who did no such thing. Her bedroom has warm beige walls, a modern four-poster bed, linen and cotton sheets and a jolt of color from red pillows. It's a mistake, she and others say, to give short shrift to a space intended for relaxation and comfort.

So why not give some thought to the room in the house that, really, should inspire affection?



Keep paper and pencil handy for jotting down big thoughts in the middle of the night.

Washington Post / Julia Ewan

Home staffers asked designers, color pros, organizers, shop owners and others for advice on quick ways to perk up a bedroom. It turns out it really doesn't take much — paint the walls, change the lighting, rearrange the furniture or commit to 10 minutes of daily tidying — to create a room you will love.

Decorating tips

- Ultimate indulgence: an armoire turned into a bedside kitchenette. In her home, designer and author Chris Madden outfitted a JCPenney armoire of her own design with a small fridge, microwave and coffee maker.
- A throw blanket adds color and an instant sense of cozy. Cashmere is lovely, but affordable fleece can be just as comforting. All-cotton charmers from Dash and Albert Rug Co. are \$58. See www.dashandalbert.com for retailers.
- Fresh flowers are even nicer than candles. Place a bud vase on a nightstand and fill it with a single red rose. Or two, or three.
- A breakfast tray can brighten much more than breakfast. A sturdy one will hold your laptop, the newspaper and a midnight snack. They're especially handy if the tray lifts off.
- Clear off the nightstand, leaving just a lamp, clock radio, water and something to read on top. Stow tissues and other necessities in a drawer or nearby basket. A Moonbeam clock (\$39.50) is from L.L. Bean (www.llbean.com).
- Wall-mounted swing-arm lamps foster reading in bed but take up zero table space.
- Rearrange your furniture. Consider, for example, the sensible advice that a shared bed should not be pushed against a wall but positioned so it can be approached from each side. This makes for a "nourishing relationship," according to The Feng Shui Doctor, by Paul Darby.
- The Cadillac of bedside water jugs: Alfi's Opal chrome wicker-covered thermal carafe, modeled after those used in 1918 Pullman railroad cars, keeps water chilled all night. It's \$216 at www.allmodern.com.
- Don't skimp on bedding basics: mattress cover, sheets, blankets, bed skirt. Pillows should be replaced every few years. You'll sleep better for it. Treat yourself to a new laundry basket, too, like a collapsible Square Crunch Can, \$19.99 at Container Store (www.containerstore.com).
- Fresh paint makes the most impact for the money. Designer favorites for bedrooms include Benjamin Moore's whisper-soft Palladian Blue, Farrow & Ball's Hound Lemon and New Age, a pale purple-gray, also by Benjamin Moore.