

## Biggest tip from TV host: Start small

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Sabrina Soto

HGTV's Sabrina Soto has spent years walking up and down the aisles of home and garden stores, looking for the best bargains to renovate and fix up houses.

With every house she fixes up on her HGTV show, *Get It Sold*, and with every person to whom she gives advice on *Bang for Your Buck*, Soto learns -- and demonstrates -- how to redecorate and do it cheaply.

Soto, a Miami native, will be a featured speaker at the Miami Home Design & Remodeling Show Saturday and March 28, when she will offer tips on home remodeling projects for under \$1,000.

Her key recommendation: Start small. Choose one item that you love -- a pillow, for example -- and gradually build the decor of the room around that item. "Then find another pillow and then a piece of artwork," Soto said.

There are four things that Soto suggests you fix or throw in the trash: "I get rid of wall bordering, I paint over wooden panels and I get rid of the bathroom rug and toilet lid cover," Soto said. "I've never seen a toilet cover I liked."

After that, fix up the major aspects of a room, like flooring and paint color. Wash dirty carpets.

Then it is time to declutter. "If [an item] hasn't been touched in six months, it's about time you let it go," Soto said. After you clear out things you don't need, Soto recommends purchasing inexpensive accessories such as curtains or a duvet.

She also recommends:

- If you have a leopard throw pillow, add a few neutral pillows, then add wall art.
- If you want to revive a hardwood floor, use a product that will penetrate the wood finish and restore original color while blending out blemishes and scratches. Soto likes Howard Restor-A-Finish. "I use it on anything that's scuffed up -- it works wonders," she said.
- Don't spend thousands on new carpeting if it's just dirty and tired-looking. Instead, get it professionally steam cleaned, which will restore and revitalize it.
- If you're apprehensive about the cost of painting your walls, use high-quality paint that will require fewer coats than a cheaper brand. "You have to put so many coats with cheap paint -- sooner or later, that old color will seep through and it actually ends up being less costly to use better paint," Soto said. She also recommends a neutral color like Benjamin Moore's Shaker Beige. "The color works in every room," she said.
- Purchase curtains. "I used some really beautiful faux silk curtains last week," Soto said. "Target and IKEA have some great curtains from \$14.99 to \$19.99." If you want to make your ceilings appear higher and expand your room, buy longer curtains and place them above your windows. "IKEA has some great 84-inch curtains," Soto said.
- For the bedroom, instead of new bedding, get a new duvet cover, which is a cheaper way to bring color and order to the bedroom.