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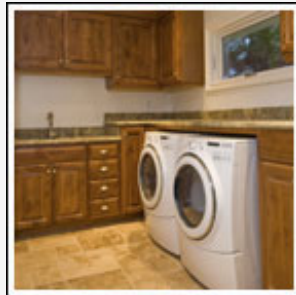


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Laundry Rooms Go Upscale

Laundry rooms of old were small, dimly lit spaces with room for little more than the washer and dryer. Not anymore, and no wonder. Americans do, on average, 400 loads of laundry a year, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Families spend a lot of time in this room.



One of the first things to consider in a renovation is location. Laundry rooms traditionally have been located either in basements or near the kitchen or garage – the complete opposite end of the house from where the dirty clothes tend to accumulate and the clean clothes need to be put away.

It can take a lot of work to relocate a laundry room; there's soundproofing and waterproofing, new supply and drain lines to run and probably some upgraded wiring to accommodate a dryer's power needs. But your legs and back will thank you in the long run and you'll have a nice selling point at resale. If relocating the laundry room isn't practical, you may want to consider installing a laundry chute in a location that is central to the bedrooms, which would go a long way towards making life easier.

You'll also want ample lighting to help you match socks and to puzzle out just exactly what those stains are on your kids' T-shirts and jeans. It's always preferable to have a window in a laundry room. If that's not an option, consider installing a skylight or sun tube.

For flooring, tile is the preference. If your budget is tighter, a good quality vinyl will do just fine.

Cabinetry and countertops in upscale laundry rooms often play off what's used in other parts of the house, but in less expensive versions. If the laundry room is near the kitchen, for example, it's common to use the same finish and style of cabinets as in the kitchen, but in complementary stock units instead of custom pieces.

Once you have the basics covered, think about your family's specific needs. Built-in cabinets or cubbies are the perfect place to store sports equipment, backpacks and gardening gear. If you have a family pet, consider adding a dog-washing station or a place for your cat to curl up and watch you do your chores.

If you tend to fold your laundry right out of the dryer, include a folding station by extending a countertop along one wall with rods overhead to hang up the delicates you can't toss in the dryer. A flat screen TV on the wall will keep you entertained as you sort, fluff and fold. With the addition of a few dowels and pegs on the wall, that folding area can double as a gift-wrapping station.

In This Issue

- Laundry Rooms Go Upscale
- Popular Countertop Options
- Remodeling Projects for Empty Nesters

You May Change the Course of History

Samuel Morse was a talented painter, but when he was not chosen from the finalists being considered to paint a portion of the Capitol rotunda in the mid-1800's, he gave up painting, turning his attention to the development of the telegraph and an efficient communication code. The man for whom Morse code was named changed history in ways he could not have foreseen.

Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein were considered by their schoolmasters to be too addled to learn. Marie Curie stepped into a laboratory in an era when women were considered unfit for occupations outside the home except perhaps nursing or teaching. However, they too changed the world in ways they could not have foreseen.

A baby was born over 2,000 years ago into a poor family in an obscure village under enemy occupation. Yeshua, as he was called, never founded a hospital, a university or a business empire. In the last three years of his life, he was homeless, depending on the kindness of friends and followers. When he died, he was buried in a borrowed tomb. Yet he surprised everyone, changing the course of history in ways his friends and family could not have foreseen.

Although these visionaries had folk around them who disparaged their mission, others *did* believe in and encourage them.

Challenging times – economic, political, social – can be discouraging. So, let's keep an eye on the unseen. A smile, an encouraging word or a helping

If there's room, consider including a utility sink. You'll be amazed how often it comes in handy. If you really have the luxury of space, an island offers tremendous functionality for folding clothes, doing a craft, wrapping gifts or grooming the dog.

You don't need to live in a mansion to create a designer laundry room that's custom-tailored to the needs of your family. It's likely to require a financial investment (especially if you're relocating it), but the end product is well worth it. You might even be tempted to keep the laundry room door open the next time company is over.

If you have questions or would like more information call 720.468.3225 or email us at jim@amastershands.com

back to top ↑

Popular Countertop Options

Countertops are a big part of a kitchen remodel. Here are five popular choices, with some pros and cons of each:

Wood

Pros: Sustainable, functional, economical
Cons: Easily damaged, high-maintenance

Laminate (Formica, Wilsonart)

Pros: Inexpensive, easy to clean, reproduces a more expensive look (especially in the high-definition lines)
Cons: Damages easier than solid surface tops, tough to repair

Solid surface (Corian, LG Hi-Macs)

Pros: Very versatile, lots of color choices, easy to clean, repairable
Cons: Prone to stains, burn marks and scratches

Granite

Pros: Chip and scratch resistant, fits into any decor, considered an upgrade, its natural beauty is hard to duplicate (especially in the higher end tiers), very durable
Cons: Expensive, prone to staining, needs to be sealed periodically

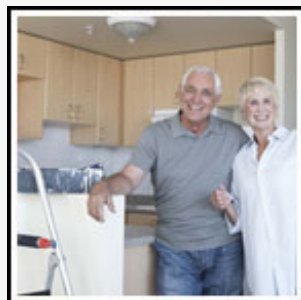
Engineered stone (Silestone, Caesarstone, Cambria, Zodiaq, Hanstone)

Pros: Very durable, scratch resistant, stain resistant, maintenance-free
Cons: Expensive

back to top ↑

Remodeling Projects for Empty Nesters

Adjusting to a quiet house after the kids set out on their own can be a challenge. The good news for empty nesters is that you have more time, extra space and (for the first time in a couple of decades) a disposable income at your fingertips – perfect for a remodeling project!



A popular trend is to turn two small adjoining bedrooms into a guest suite. More than just a simple guest room, a guest suite includes a private bathroom, much like the master suite. It also may include room for a king-sized

hand can change the course of someone's life – and thus, perhaps, even of history.

Quick Tips: Home Tip

One of the best ways to keep your range clean is to get in the habit of cleaning up spills immediately. Because of the extreme heat, leaving them can cause them to adhere to the cooktop, making it much harder to clean. This is especially true for sugary spills, as they are much harder to remove when cooled down and hardened.

Gift Wrapping 101

Shopping for gifts can be an enjoyable activity, but wrapping them all is another story. Figuring out how to wrap all of your gifts, especially odd-shaped or large gifts, can be a holiday hassle. Before you pull out the paper, tape, and bows, read through these tips to make gift wrapping as easy as possible.

Have all of your supplies in one place. Keep a good stock of tape, ribbons, gift bags, tags, tissue paper, and bows. Purchase a new pair of scissors to leave with your gift wrapping supplies, to save you the chore of hunting down scissors each time you need to wrap a present.

Purchase a good container to hold all of your gift wrapping supplies. A long rectangular plastic container that can fit under a bed is a good solution. Fill it with supplies you can purchase at a discount during the after holiday sales. Then next year, you will not be hunting for materials or having to pay full price.

To avoid those instances when you've cut paper and find that it doesn't quite fit around the box, measure it before you cut. You don't have to pull out the measuring tape, however. Just keep a long piece of string handy and wrap it around your box first. Overlap the ends an inch or two and then use this length to measure the correct amount of wrapping paper.

Wrapping oddly shaped or large gifts can be vexing. Gift bags come in all sizes from very small to very large and can accommodate those items that are difficult to wrap. Other gifts may not fit into a gift bag. These require creativity to successfully wrap. Plastic storage boxes, tablecloths, sheets, blankets, or decorative garbage cans can be used to hold gifts and end up becoming additional gifts in themselves. Long, skinny gifts

bed and a sitting room with a flat screen TV or a ventless fireplace. It's a place adult children would be thrilled to stay when they come home to visit – and wish they'd had when they were teenagers!

Another frequent makeover is to convert a spare bedroom into a game or hobby room. Playing cards may sound like something couples did in the 1950s, but getting together for cards or other games, such as mah-jongg, is popular again. The perfect game room will have wood floors and shelving or cabinets. A wet bar with a mini-fridge and a microwave would keep drinks and snacks handy. The same set-up could accommodate a hobby room. Whether it's crocheting, building miniature ships in bottles, or belly dancing, a hobby room is a great place to spend time doing what you love.

Looking for something a little more high-tech? An unused room could be converted to a home theater or even a room for video games. Today's interactive gaming systems, such as the Wii and Xbox Kinect, work best with lots of open space. Put down a hard-surface floor (wood, vinyl, hardwood laminate or tile), hang a flat-screen on the wall and get ready to take on the world.

back to top ↑

themselves. Long, skinny gifts can be contained in dryer vent tubing that can be purchased at your local home improvement center.

If your gift is particularly large, like a bicycle, you can often get an oversized refrigerator, oven, or dishwasher box from an appliance store. Remove one end of the box, gift wrap the box, and then simply place the box over the gift. Rather than unwrapping the gift, your recipient will lift the box to reveal the present.

Questions?

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