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# Style Secrets Revealed

[the nest]

**Celeste Perron resolves six common home-décor dilemmas****1. Help! My bedroom is not sexy. What can I do to spice it up?**

Before you add any sexy touches to the space, first think about what you can remove. Bedrooms should be a sanctuary where we can retreat for relaxation, sleep, and sex, but they too often wind up serving as dumping grounds for excess stuff. Here are five things you can do this weekend:

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- **Get rid of clutter.** Banish bills, magazines, and decorative doodads by either investing in storage containers ([containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com)) or moving them to other rooms.
- **Limit photographs.** Put a few romantic photos of the two of you around your bed, but move all friends and family to the living room. Having photos of other people surrounding your bed is bad for your sex life (it can feel like all those faces are watching you), and who wants to risk that?
- **Upgrade the bedding.** It's amazing how much better quality sheets feel against your skin -- look for ones made of Egyptian cotton, with a thread count of 400 or more. Also add some lush pillows to make the bed more inviting. Try two Euro pillows (the large square ones), two standard pillows, and a decorative little boudoir pillow (maybe with your new married monogram on it?) or a bolster.
- **Think color.** Decorate in soft, calming hues -- sage, light blue, lavender -- which are relaxing and nurturing, and will surely lead to lots of cuddling.
- **Add excitement.** Stock the drawer of your bedside table with some sexy accessories. A candle, a book of erotic short stories, a copy of the Kama Sutra, and any naughty toys you want close at hand.

**2. I love pink. He hates pink. How do we compromise?**

It's not unreasonable for your husband to balk at a pink color scheme for your home -- right or wrong, pink is simply not seen as being masculine. But you can sneak in touches of your favorite color through accessories like pillows and throws. Look for items that mix pink with less-girly hues like brown, charcoal gray, or bright orange, in stripes or a graphic print. Men often prefer clean-lined patterns to delicate florals and swirly paisleys, so more graphic designs might make pink more palatable to him.

Also ask if he would be open to some bright fuchsia accents -- it could be the pastel factor of pale pink that he finds objectionable. But if he simply can't stomach the slightest hint of pink in your shared possessions, you'll have to accept that and express your passion for it with things like pink personal stationery and pale rose toenail polish.

**3. A nice couch just isn't in our budget right now. What should we do?**

Beg, borrow, or steal an old sofa from a parent or another relative (even if it's a total eyesore), then just slipcover it. And don't think slipcovers have to look sloppy and makeshift; sleek versions are now made in a wide variety of materials for about \$79 to \$169 (check out [Surefit.net](http://Surefit.net) for options). If you don't have a hand-me-down sofa to work with, you may be able to afford a nicer new one than you think. Check out [CB2.com](http://CB2.com) and [RoomandBoard.com](http://RoomandBoard.com), both of which sell very stylish designs for less than \$1,000; and at [Ikea.com](http://Ikea.com), you can find ones in the \$400 range. One note: Don't try to save dough by buying a loveseat -- two people almost never fit in them, and it will wind up functioning as an oversize chair. Put the money toward a sofa instead.

**4. New shoes or a new shower?**

Make a list of the all new things you'd like to buy or get done around the house, as well as the goodies you each want for yourselves, like shoes for you and gadgets for him. Then take a hard look at how much discretionary income you have and decide how you want to spend it. A simple way to divvy it up: Spend at least 50 percent of your extra money on your home, and divide the remainder between your wish lists. You may want to consider allocating a bit more to fixing up your pad, though, since you can enjoy home improvements together, and for years to come (those trendy clothes and PS2 games may wind up in the Salvation Army pile by 2006).

**5. How can I keep the house clean without spending every minute cleaning it?**

Keep cleaning from being a dreadful ordeal by making sure nothing gets too dirty in the first place. If you do a little bit every day, you'll only need a serious cleaning session every two weeks, maybe even longer. To stay on top of it on a day-to-day basis, keep the right tools close at hand. Here are two tips you'll swear by:

Double Up. Store all-purpose cleaner and a roll of paper towels or a sponge under each sink so you can wipe down any surface as soon as it gets icky.

Multitask. Before calling your mom or a friend who loves to gab, grab a Swiffer cloth and get ready for double duty. Just swipe one over the surfaces of furniture while you're catching up -- it'll make the cleaning process almost pain-free.

**6. I can't be bothered with buying fresh flowers every week. How else can I bring some life and color into the house?**

Try hitting the florist once a month instead, and ask what they have in stock that will last longer than week or two. Many florists sell beautiful branches (when in season)-- like pussy willow and flowering quince -- and those will generally last longer than cut flowers and will look very chic. Or invest in a potted orchid, which will brighten up your pad for at least a month (much longer if you're lucky), or an easy-to-care-for plant like a cactus or jade plant.

Celeste Perron is the former Lifestyle Director of *Cosmopolitan* and author of "Playing House."



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