

Make the Old New Again

How to reuse your home's materials

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Photo courtesy of Kandrac & Kole Interior Designs Inc., www.kandrac-kole.com
Kandrac & Kole Interior Designs Inc. repurposed this table, which now serves as decorative and functional wall art.

Some people hold the opinion that new is always better, especially when making upgrades to their homes. But that's not always the case. Often, materials or home furnishings made in the past are higher quality than many of the items around today. And, reusing is a less costly, more convenient and more eco-friendly way to update your home.

Reusing building materials

Building materials such as wood frames, brick, molding, doors or windows can all be reused as long as they are in good shape. Just make sure the materials are taken from the home carefully so they stay intact. This method of disassembling the home is known as "deconstruction" and is the opposite of demolition, which is where

everything is crushed and tossed into a landfill. With deconstruction, the home is taken apart piece by piece, as if you are building the home in reverse.

Reusing items within the home

A basic kitchen remodel includes updated cabinets, floors and appliances. If they're in working condition, there may be other places in your home that could benefit from the old materials. For example, many homeowners choose to convert old kitchen cabinets into storage and shelving units in a garage or basement. Or, they reuse the countertops in bathrooms or other places in the home.

Flooring, believe it or not, has multiple uses. It can be reused for its intended purpose or be transformed into doors or decorative ceiling design. Bricks, stone and granite can all be crushed and reused as a backsplash or a fireplace mantel display.

Reused materials as design elements

Be creative—the intended purpose for something is not always the best use. For example, with a little disassembly and repainting, wood tables can become a headboard for your bed. Reusing materials makes your home a one-of-a-kind creation that no one could replicate in the same way. 🏠

where to donate take your used materials

- ▶ Habitat ReStore: www.habitat.org
- ▶ Salvation Army: www.salvationarmyusa.org
- ▶ Appliance Recycling Centers of America: www.arcainc.com
- ▶ Rebuilding Together: www.rebuildingtogether.org
- ▶ Earth911.org (search by materials and ZIP code): www.earth911.org
- ▶ Local churches and city departments

the deconstruction process

Deconstruction is another form of recycling. In the same way that consumers separate plastics, glass and paper, homes also have valuable materials that are worthy of being recycled. Non-structural components, which include windows, doors, plumbing fixtures, home appliances, cabinetry or furniture are easy to separate and preserve.

The structural components, which are much more difficult to retain but equally important, require effort to break down. These include wood beams and rafters, framing materials, floor joists, bricks and stones.

Keep in mind, however, that it is important to identify hazardous materials that cannot be recycled. These include lead paint, asbestos and mercury. Professional deconstruction specialists are qualified to work in homes that may contain these hazardous materials and can dispose of them safely.

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