

Bath Makeovers

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Fixtures, finishes, and storage space are homeowners' main concerns when remodeling or adding a new bath. Regardless of size, a bath can be enhanced by adding storage space or changing bath fixtures. If you want to create a better atmosphere on a smaller budget—or even if the sky is the limit—here are several ideas that will help you turn your own bath into a comfortable retreat.

Lowe's is happy to provide this information as a service to you.

Storage

Cabinets are essential for bath storage. Material choices are laminate, softwood, and hardwood. Laminates, which can be easily wiped off, work best in small, nonventilated baths. Sealed wooden cabinets can be used in a well-ventilated bath.

To ensure adequate storage space when remodeling, make a list of items that need to be stored. Take these items into consideration when choosing between cabinet options. Glass doors on a wall-hung unit open up a small bath, while providing decorative space to display items such as candles, perfumes, and decorative towels. Drawers are used to hold smaller items, and you'll most likely want a closed area for concealing cleaning products.



A “garage door” is a unique addition to your bath storage. Glass cabinet doors open space and add display area.

Pedestal sinks are an elegant solution for smaller spaces. The colored tile border adds interest.



Finishes

Surfaces and countertops are important components in bath design. They must be durable and water resistant. Because this aspect can become quite expensive, be sure to consider all of your options and choose for permanency. Paint can always be redone, but tile may not be so easy or economical to change.

Surface selections include wood, laminate, stone, ceramic tile, and solid surfacing. Although solid surfacing and natural stone are expensive, if used in small quantities they can be affordable. Solid-surface veneer, such as Wilsonart, is a less expensive alternative to solid surfacing and can be sanded smooth if scratched. Laminate is an inexpensive choice for countertops, and it holds up well in the wet conditions of the bath. Ceramic tile can be used either for the countertops or for the walls and floors.



Select a garden tub with six jets or fewer if you are watching your budget.

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Because stone flooring becomes slippery when wet, use a rough-finished stone to keep this from becoming a problem. Tile can also become slippery in the bath, so use a slip-resistant rug. This will help prevent accidents and provide a soft cushion for your feet.

Wood, vinyl, composition vinyl, and carpet are additional flooring options. Vinyl and composition vinyl are relatively inexpensive and durable. Surfaces come in patterns that simulate natural stone. Avoid carpet in your bath. Although it is soft on your feet, it doesn't withstand moisture well. If you must use it, do so in a dressing area, not around a tub or shower.

Pros and Cons of Bath Fixtures

Bath fixture—Enameled cast iron

Pros

- Chip resistant
- Durable

Cons

- Cools rapidly
- Heavy
- Limited shapes

Bath fixture—Acrylic

Pros

- Good insulator
- Sun and scratch resistant
- Lightweight

Cons

- Needs sealant to protect finish

Bath fixture—Fiberglass

Pros

- Inexpensive
- Lightweight
- Can be molded
- Easily repaired

Cons

- Less durable
- Quality varies
- Shows scratches after 10 to 15 years

Bath fixture—Enameled steel

Pros

- Inexpensive
- Lightweight

Cons

- Chips easily
- Noisy



Dual sinks ease traffic jams on busy mornings. When selecting sinks, be sure to choose ones large enough for a variety of uses. The mirror with beveled border carried up to the ceiling visually opens up the room.

Fixtures: Sinks, Tubs & Showers

The number of sinks is an influencing factor for baths that will be shared. Try incorporating two sinks. Sink depth is important when considering the task. If the sink is used daily, consider a deeper bowl to limit splashing. Sink material choices include enameled metal and cultured stone, which are both economical and durable. Stainless steel, glass, and vitreous china are other more decorative options. Stainless steel and glass need considerably more attention to remain clean without watermarks. Vitreous china is durable but more expensive.

Sink types include above-counter, self-rimming, undermount, overhanging, and integral. Pedestal sinks do not provide cabinet storage, but they are useful in small baths or powder rooms. For storage try a medicine cabinet.

For a major overhaul of your bath, consider changing your tub to a whirlpool or adding a spa shower or sauna. Material options are the same for tubs and showers: fiberglass, acrylic, enameled cast iron, and enameled steel. Whirlpool tubs (usually made from fiberglass-reinforced acrylic) range in size from the standard 60" to very large custom corner units. The tub shown, has two sets of fixtures, one standard unit and one handheld sprayer that eliminates the need for a shower. Tub costs vary according to the shape, color, and number of jets. Whirlpool jets are adjustable and are easily maintained. A heater unit is an additional tub option if you like to soak.



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For the shower you might consider pampering yourself with tower faucets. They have body spray jets in addition to the showerhead and come in a variety of styles and price ranges. Saunas are another possibility if your space and budget allow. They come in prefabricated kits and require a minimum 4- x 4-foot area.

Additional fixtures

Smaller budgets might consider simply replacing faucets, adding specialty faucets, replacing cabinet hardware and bath accessories, or changing or adding lighting. For a special touch install a towel heating bar or a heat lamp to help keep the bath warm.

Tips for That Extra-Special Bath

- Paint a unique color.
- Accent with colored grout if using tile.
- Add a towel warmer.
- Add a bathroom heater or heat lamp.