



Mini Space, Major Impact

The powder room gets more visitors than almost any space in your house. Make yours pop.

By Beth Ann Shepherd

One of the first signs of a designer-caliber home, whether professionally designed or styled by a savvy homeowner, is the powder room. That's why it pays to give it some serious thought.

Whether provincial, preppy, dramatic, colorful, eclectic, locally sourced, or international in appeal, powder rooms add more than their fair share to a home's personality.

Once you've established the overall design of the home, it's time to select the elements for the powder room. Even though the powder room is usually the smallest space in the house, it's the one most visited by guests. So don't be afraid to make this little chamber pop. Its small scale allows you to step far outside of your design box. Guests know that these spaces invite creativity, and appreciate a visual, tactile experience on the other side of the powder room door.

The wall finish, whether wallpaper or paint selection, is step one. Fixture finishes are step two. Sconces or a vanity light bar is step three. Sink and stone selection are a vital

step four, followed by the mirror. The final step involves all-important hooks and cabinet handles, which carry major visual impact. Decorating firms such as Dressed Design have powder room handles custom-made and imported from all over the world.

A powder room says a lot about the homeowners. A clever interior designer can view a powder room and draw some surprisingly accurate conclusions about the people who live there. They may be fashionable jet-setters with cutting-edge sconces and dramatic wallpaper. They may lean toward an organic style, preferring natural woods and stone elements, or be traditionalists drawn to classic lines and details. They may be well-traveled collectors with a global attitude. Or they may have overlooked the importance of this room



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entirely, letting it say just one word: blah.

If you want to upgrade and enhance your powder room without a full renovation—or a designer-sized budget—here are some tips for a speedy makeover:

Choose your colors. Enamel, lacquer, and high-gloss paint in bold jewel-tone colors are the most popular choices right now, but keep in mind that the glossier the paint, the more important it is to employ a professional. Alternatively, you could go the DIY route and paint one wall—or even three—with stripes, then paint the ceiling one of the colors in the stripe pattern. This chic and budget-friendly option requires blue painters' tape, a pencil, and a yardstick for straight lines—and, of course, a lot of patience.

Select new lighting. Scones provide good lighting and are aesthetically pleasing. However, if there's already a vanity bar light in place, it's easy to upgrade it to something fresh and dramatic.

Add a ceiling chandelier or a flush-mount fixture, both for additional lighting and dramatic appeal. Installing recessed can lighting over the commode is always a smart idea. All bathroom lighting should be on dimmers.

Search the web for a new one-piece vanity, which often includes a countertop and sink, for an easy upgrade without a big investment of time or money. If you need to go the custom route, a designer can select a quality millwork provider. Tile and bath shop associates can help you select stone slabs.

Consider the mirror. Under-vanity storage means you can eschew a medicine cabinet and choose a statement piece, whether sleekly modernist or a gilded Italian showstopper.

Go green, whenever you can. A dual-flush toilet is a smart and efficient call. Nowadays they come in very attractive styles and also save considerable water.

If you are feeling more ambitious than just a weekend enhancement, change the floor tile. Patterned tiles look chic in small spaces. If you're using pattern or texture on the walls, choose solid porcelain floor tiles in the largest size possible to create the perception of more space.

So go big, go bold, or go to a professional design group, which can make all your dreams come true. And, of course, be sure to have fun with this wee washroom, which holds a multitude of imaginative possibilities.

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From far left: Details that add major impact: a striking panel of wallpaper; marble and shiny metal; unexpected pattern; crisp graphics; the hunkiest wall in the home.