

# Blog: Easy Furniture Transformations

2020

Limited in the places we can go right now as well as the things we can do, we often find ourselves looking for ways to improve the spaces we live in. This includes our furnishings. When we are forced to look more closely at our surroundings, we start to notice things like, 'that table really doesn't go in this room anymore' or 'this chair has seen better days.' For some, that means getting rid of old furniture and bringing in new. But before you just haul that chair or table to the curb, I invite you to consider a few alternatives first.

**Update.** Before you get rid of a piece of furniture, figure out why you don't want it anymore. Is it dated? Does it look worn or have some damage? Any of these things can be fixed with a little bit of work, paint and hardware. Need convincing? Visit a shabby chic or vintage store and you will likely see similar pieces which have been repainted and/or given new hardware that are now selling for good money. This gives hope to your old piece – it's not done, it just needs an update!

- Worried you don't know how to update your piece? – There are tons of resources online for painting and updating furniture nowadays, both from paint manufacturers and from people who do it for a hobby.
- Concerned about cost? Don't be. Some furniture paint is expensive, but you can update furniture with latex paint. Use paint you already have, or visit the 'oops' section of your hardware store. Do your research to understand the proper steps, but it is very doable.
- Don't have the time or patience? I won't lie, it takes a little of both. But realize that most of the time involved in a project is waiting for pieces to dry, not actual hands-on time. Give it a try, you may find the process relaxing. And don't forget to take a 'before' photo– you will be surprised at the transformation and have a great conversation piece!
- A word of caution – don't paint a true antique! You will diminish its value and chances are, it will be difficult or even impossible to restore in the future. Find a restoration expert to bring your piece back to life!

## Repurpose

So this is a fun one. Let's say your piece doesn't work in its current place - could it work elsewhere with a completely different function? In my house, I have a desk that used to be a piano, a plant stand that used to be a shower bench and a bath stand that used to be a kids' step stool. I have seen youth chairs turned into plant stands and entertainment centers converted to play kitchens. The possibilities are endless – it just

takes some imagination. A simple Internet or Pinterest search will give you great ideas for repurposing what you already have.

## **Donate**

Okay, let's say you can't update or repurpose your furniture piece - don't trash it yet! The chances are really good that someone else can still use it. ReStore has a great [list of items they accept](#) and they make the donation process extremely easy. If it fits their criteria, drop it off for donation – they can resell your piece and further their mission. But what if you have an item that they are not currently accepting? Try a website or social media site designed for free items, reach out to non-profits who may need office furniture or theatre groups who are sometimes looking for stage props. As this is the last step before the trash, do everything you can to find a home for your piece.

## **So why is this even important? If I get rid of my table, it will just be recycled, right?**

Furniture is the least recycled household item. When you think about the space furniture takes up, you can easily see the impact on a landfill. Some estimates say that nearly 10 million tons of furniture goes into US landfills every year.

Buying something new is fun. And furniture is super cheap these days - which is part of the problem. Spending \$20 on a mass produced end table seems like a budget friendly solution – until it scratches when you slide a lamp across the top, or bump it with the vacuum. Cheap, mass-produced furniture is not easily fixable and the way it is treated makes it unrecyclable – so it does in fact, end up in the landfill.

Here's an alternative: [Visit Habitat's ReStore](#) and buy something used. You still get a great price, but the pieces they sell are unique and of better quality. You avoid buying something brand new, the money benefits Habitat and you've played a key part in furniture recycling! Plus, you can easily update or repurpose the piece to exactly fit your home and style.

I believe that anyone CAN transform a piece of furniture into something that works better in their space. But if transformations aren't for you, *donate* to avoid one more piece in the landfill. Who knows, someone else might use your donation for their own transformation.