



Romy Alwill is an interior designer and host of Domestic Blitz.

Domestic blitz...on a budget

Making your home look and feel great doesn't have to cost a fortune! In this edition of Smile, Romy Alwill from Channel Nine's Domestic Blitz gives us some hints on how to update your home without breaking the budget.

Bathroom

White is always good in a bathroom and great for refreshing the whole room. Small tiles make a space feel smaller because your view is broken by the smaller pieces – so go for bigger sizes to enhance the space.

Kitchen

Small things can make a big impact, like changing the handles on your cupboard, or putting a new finish over the top of what's already there.

Living Floors

Flooring is a big element in the house, so keep it up to date and fresh. Red and pink colours in timbers are out, grey washes and oak colours are in. If you use vinyl flooring, steer clear of 'fake grains' – go for plain or cork and add a great rug.

Save the planet - and your wallet!
To fix or not to fix?

Living Walls

For an instant lift, clad walls with panels of fabric or wallpaper. Fix to MDF boards if they can't be directly applied.

Bedroom

Accessorise with scatter cushions and throws for accents of colour. Feature panels are great above a bed or as a bed head.

Kids Rooms

Sand back, prime and seal timber bunk beds in fresh colours for a new look.

Outdoors

Woven acrylics are contemporary and lasting and always look good on timber decks. Remember stainless steel and timber will weather by the coast.

Window Furnishings

Update old pinch pleat curtains with S folds. Replace vertical blinds or metal venetians with wide blade acrylic venetians or plantation shutters.

Paint

Choose wash-n-wear low sheen for walls, semi gloss acrylic for windows, skirtings and cornices, and trim

with white. Keep in mind that matt finishes are harder to clean. Paint your ceiling ½ or ¼ strength of the walls or use white to make the space feel taller.

Furniture

Update old furniture with a lick of fresh paint (you'll need to prime it first). Take your metal furniture to the powder-coaters for a new lease on life or paint it with gloss paint. Freshen up old chairs and sofas with slip covers that are easy to clean. Buy sofas with a good frame so you just need to re-upholster.

Rugs

Sew two rugs together to create one big rug. It will make the space feel bigger and scale the room to the right proportion. In the living room make sure the rug sits under the legs of the sofa and TV unit on two sides.

Lighting

Use different types of lighting to create a mood, for example overhead light, side light, ambient light, wall sconces and lamps. Use bulbs with a warm yellow light rather than cool blue.

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Save the planet – and your wallet!



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Ecolateral is on Magill Road in St Morris



Reusable eco friendly shopping bags

Climate change is a hot topic in more ways than one, and while it's great to think about how we can help save the planet for our children, it helps if we can save our spare change too!

There are lots of little things you can do that are environmentally friendly and can help keep the money in your pocket at the same time. We've had a chat to the experts at Ecolateral to come up with a few green tips you can try at home.

Can you use your water twice?

'Grey' water, which is water that has been used in sinks, baths, showers or washing machine – can be used again to flush toilets or to water the garden if it contains only biodegradable soaps.

The average bath uses 80 litres of water, the average shower about 40 litres. Save baths for those special occasions and try to keep your showering time to under five minutes. An egg-timer suction-capped onto the shower wall is a fun way to 'race the clock' while showering and save litres at the same time.

Change a light bulb and see what you can save

An energy saving light bulb might not seem cheap but over its lifetime it could save up to 75% of electricity consumption and a lot more – like the planet for example.

Turn the iron off

Irons stay hot after they've been switched off, and so it will still be hot enough to iron the last item very well. Although this might seem a very small thing, it gets us into the habit of making small energy-saving actions that, collectively, can make a much bigger difference.

A gift that goes on giving

Give a gift of reusable bags. Purchase several eco friendly shopping bags to keep on hand to give as gifts for all occasions. Fold up the bags and place them inside one opened bag, recycle a colourful ribbon from home and give a gift that makes errands easier and helps the environment. You can also get fabric bags that fold into small,

easily transportable sizes to carry in your handbag or backpack.

Get composting

Compost bins are easy to get hold of at garden centres, but even better, make your own from old tyres, scrap timber, bricks or wire mesh. By building your own bin you can recycle materials which might otherwise find their way to land fill.

Stock your stockpot

Water used for cooking vegetables makes great stock for soups and sauces. If you're not planning to cook again soon, you can still use these nutrients and avoid wasting that water by pouring it into plants rather than down the drain.

For more eco-friendly tips and information on products and services that could help you live greener, see www.ecolateralshop.com.au or contact the Ecolateral shop at St Morris SA on 08 8333 3478.

WIN an eco-friendly gift pack worth \$250 from Ecolateral – turn to page 4 for details.



To fix or not to fix?

In this edition of Smile, HomeStart CEO Gary Storkey talks about your options when it comes to fixing the interest rate on your loan...or choosing to break a fixed term.

Gary Storkey, HomeStart CEO

As interest rates decrease, we're receiving lots of calls from customers wondering whether now is a good time to fix, or if they're already on a fixed rate, whether it's worth 'breaking' their fixed term and switching back to variable.

Like many decisions, there are pros and cons to both options, and it's worth weighing up what works best for your situation.

Thinking about fixing?

Fixed interest rates have dropped substantially over the last six months. If you chose to fix, you'll have complete certainty about your interest rate during your fixed term.

However, if interest rates continue to fall, and you decide you want to 'break' your fixed rate contract - that is, switch to a variable rate or split before your nominated fixed term is up - break costs may apply.

Here's some things to consider before you fix:

- Do you plan to move house in the next 1-5 years?
If you do move and break your fixed term, break costs may apply

- Is redraw an important feature to you? Redraw is not available during a fixed term unless you have a split loan, in which case you may be able to redraw on the variable portion of your loan
- How important is it to know what your interest rate will be? Fixing means that your rate won't change, no matter what happens in the market
- How will you feel if variable rates fall below fixed rates? During your fixed term, the variable interest rate may be higher or lower than your fixed rate
- Will you want to make more than \$10,000 of extra repayments in any one year? Penalties may apply if you exceed this amount.

Thinking about breaking your fixed term?

If you decide to switch from a fixed to a variable interest rate before your fixed term is up, you may need to pay a break cost to cover HomeStart's economic loss. Break costs can vary depending on a number of factors. In some circumstances the break cost may be significant.

HomeStart calculates break costs according to a whole range of factors, including:

- Your current fixed loan balance
- Your fixed rate
- How long you have left on your fixed term
- Market interest rates until the end of your fixed term.

Break costs can also apply if you pay out your loan balance in full, you pay more than \$10,000 p.a. in voluntary repayments, or you are in default on your loan repayments.

If you're considering breaking a fixed term, it's worth being aware that break costs might apply which equal or outweigh the benefit of an interest rate reduction, plus there's no guarantee rates will stay low over the remainder of your fixed term.

Find out more

If you're thinking of fixing, switching or repaying your loan, contact your Loan Manager to discuss your options. We can also give you an indication of what break costs you'd need to pay if you decide to change.

Top tips

Be on time and save...

If you've changed jobs and get paid on a different day, make sure your loan repayment date is direct debited in-line with your pay cycle. That way, you can avoid fees for missing a repayment or not having enough in your account to cover it. Visit eHomeStart, or call your Loan Manager to update your details.

Free finance tips

Want to find out more about budgeting, financial services, or how to avoid scams? FIDO is a website created by the Australian Securities and Investment Commission to give financial tips and safety checks to the Australian public. Visit www.fido.asic.gov.au to find out more.

Refer a friend and be rewarded

If you're happy with your HomeStart Loan and know people who might benefit from coming to see us, why not refer them on? Your friend can find out if HomeStart has the right solution for them, and you could be rewarded with a \$50 Coles Myer voucher. Call HomeStart on 8203 4081.



Our customers show how it is possible



The Burns family



The Gordon family

At HomeStart we love to show off our best feature – our customers! Our latest advertising campaign is no exception – while Linus the hound and Lulu the piglet proved the old saying about working with children and animals, our featured families the Gordons and the Burns brought

real star quality to the shoot.

Both families gave us their time and smiles to be filmed and photographed for a whole range of advertisements, and we couldn't be happier with the results. A big thank you to everyone involved for helping to make the campaign possible!



Linus and Lulu on You Tube

Are you a piglet fan, or do you think dogs rule? By now you might have seen the new stars of our advertising campaign – Lulu the piglet and Linus the hound dog – as they help show how it is possible to get into home ownership, even if it isn't possible to get animals to behave! Now you can check out more of their antics on 'You Tube' – search for 'HomeStart dog' and 'HomeStart pig' to see Lulu and Linus do their thing.

Win a clean, green goodie basket worth \$250!

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Enter our 'Green is the new Black' competition and you could win one of two gift packs filled with environmentally friendly products from homeware to gardening goods from Ecolateral. Ecolateral is a South Australian company dedicated to providing great quality, affordable and green products.

To enter, just fill in this entry form and send it to HomeStart Finance 'Green is the new Black' competition, GPO Box 1266, Adelaide SA 5001, by 22 May 2009.

You must be an existing HomeStart customer to enter, and you will need to include your current loan number to be eligible.

Name: _____ Loan number: _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____

Email: _____ Daytime phone: _____

You can find your loan number on your HomeStart loan statement.

Conditions of entry: The competition commences on 6 April 2009 and ends on 22 May 2009. Total prize value is a maximum of \$500. The draw will be conducted at HomeStart Finance, 153 Flinders Street, Adelaide on 25 May 2009 at 12 noon. There will be two winners and they will be notified by phone.



HomeStart
FINANCE