

Be a sofa genius

It's the biggest piece of furniture in your house and command central for your family—you need to *love* your couch. Renew your romance with the one you've got by using this smart advice from designers, or start fresh with their gorgeous but affordable sofa picks. BY ASHLEY NIEDRINGHAUS

"Your living room is your family hub," says Jonathan Scott of HGTV's *Property Brothers*. "It's the place where you lounge, watch TV, play games. And your sofa is the center of it all." So true—and raise your hand if you're not exactly thrilled with what you have right now. That's why we enlisted top design gurus for low-cost ways to upgrade this crucial piece. Buying a new one is an option, but so is refurbishing a flea-market find, giving the couch you own a brand-new look with accessories, and rearranging furniture to show everything off more stylishly. Now you can take that one or two grand you'd spend on a new sofa and put it toward something even more important, like a vacation. (See page 116 for *that*.)

An ottoman makes a chic coffee table if you use a tray as your flat surface

Love this pattern pile-up? Here's why it works: The consistent use of red, blue, and white on the pillows, armchairs, ottoman, and rug ties everything together.

Old sofas are good sofas!

Follow these tips from HGTV star Cortney Novogratz to get a one-of-a-kind piece on a budget.



Cortney's not the only secondhand shopper: REDBOOK's Team Red columnist Emily Henderson gave the flea-market monstrosity below this fab makeover.

Study the bones

"Any part of the sofa that deals with comfort—the fabric, fill, or springs—is easy to fix, but avoid cracks in a wooden frame and arms that wiggle," Novogratz says. Those are big-budget repairs.

Learn to barter

"Politely point out a few flaws, like dings in the wood or stains, and ask for a lower price," she says. Other ways to strike a deal at a flea market: Shop at the end of the day, pay in cash, or offer to take the piece home now.

Get the best price on reupholstery

without hauling your sofa around. You'll want to collect a few quotes from upholsterers, so try a 21st-century way: Arrange a Skype call. And if you're re-covering the whole couch, ask the fabric store for a bulk rate.

Fix up some of it

If the original fabric is in good shape and you like it, just add accent piping to the cushions, Novogratz says—it's custom and inexpensive.

AFTER

...and here's how to keep it clean

Your enemies: muddy paws, grubby fingers, Magic Markers. Your weapons: these expert-tested and -approved products and tips.

- If your family is particularly spill-prone (you know who you are), make life easier by buying a microsuede couch or slipcover. "The tight-knit fabric prevents liquids from instantly soaking in, buying you an extra minute to grab a rag," says Rebecca Andrews, a senior furniture buyer for West Elm.
- Pretreat upholstery with a spray like Guardsman's Fabric Protector (\$9.99; shopguardsman.com), and reapply a few

times a year. *Property Brothers's* Jonathan and Drew Scott love that it's safe enough to use around kids and pets.

- One cheap pro cleaning weapon? Unscented baby wipes. "They're my right-hand man for little messes," says Novogratz.
- Jonathan Scott swears by Pink Solution (\$19.95; pinksolution.ca), an all-natural cleaner that mixes with water: "I saw it on an infomercial years ago. It's removed gum, soda, wine—even blood."

LAURIE JOLIET BEFORE COURTESY OF EMILY HENDERSON

Dress it up with accessories

Team Red's Emily Henderson loves these couches. We love her smart styling rules. Play paper dolls with the fun pillows and throws below.



Group pillows in odd numbers Henderson's formula: one pillow 20 inches or larger, one 16- or 18-inch square, and one smaller pillow in a fun shape.

Clean-lined

Kendall 77½-inch sofa, \$700; worldmarket.com. Pillows, from left: Puketti 20x20-inch cover, \$42; us.marimekko.com for stores. Shimmer 13x22-inch pillow, \$69; roomandboard.com. Cane 16x16-inch pillow, \$70; laylagrayce.com. Ombre throw, \$49; westelm.com.



Consider the throw "Use one to break up the color of the couch—unless you have printed upholstery," she says.

Bright and mod

Murphy 81-inch sofa in Vance fabric, \$1,399; roomandboard.com. Pillows, from left: Beads 16x16-inch pillow, \$95; hable construction.com. Bora Da 23½x12-inch pillow, \$102; shop horne.com. Cable knit throw, \$79; potterybarn.com.



Play with fabric Velvet, linen, cotton—mix it up, says Henderson. "A variety of textures gives the couch nice visual depth."

Traditional

Yanna 83-inch sofa in house viscose linen, \$1,580; sofa.com. Pillows, from left: Alford 15x35-inch pillow, \$66; pinecone hill.com. St. Germain 20x20-inch pillow, \$75; hedgehouseusa.com. Linen 18x18-inch cover, \$49; restoration hardware.com.



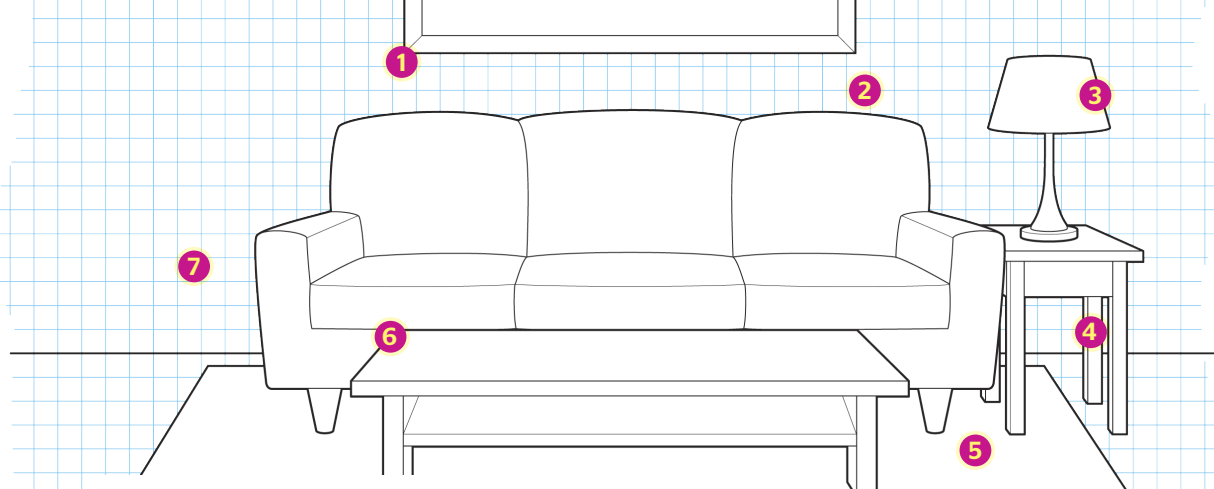
Be strategic with prints Henderson has a two-pattern limit on a sofa. "The large print goes on the large pillow, and busier designs go on a small one."

Roomy and luxe

Hunter 100-inch sofa in velvet, starting at \$2,295; mgbw home.com. Celine throw, \$90; sferra.com. Pillows, from left: Chevron 20x20-inch cover, \$44; westelm.com. Trellis 18x18-inch pillow, \$103; dwellstudio.com. Velvet 8x20-inch bolster cover, \$34; thecompany store.com.

COUCHES: COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS; PILLOWS, THROWS: ALISON GOOTE/STUDIO D; STYLIST: ELIZABETH OSBORNE/MALLEY RESOURCES

Couch rules designers swear by



1 “I hang most of my framed art five to nine inches above the top of a sofa. It looks best in that range,” says HGTV’s Cortney Novogratz.

2 “A couch against the wall creates a good visual anchor, but it should never be flush against it,” says Maxwell Ryan, founder of the website Apartment Therapy. “Pull it out three to five inches—that little bit of air makes all the difference.” *Property Brothers*’ Drew Scott adds: “Try not to have the sofa’s back face the

entrance of a room. The space will feel closed-off and unwelcoming.”

3 A great way to torture people is to shine light in their eyes. This is why the bottom of lamp shades next to sofas should always be eye level or lower, Scott says.

4 Side tables should also be a few inches lower than the arm of your sofa, he says.

5 “A good area rug adds warmth to a room, but it looks

awkward if it’s too small,” says Ryan. “Place two feet of the rug under your couch and have a minimum of one foot on each side.”

6 “Ottomans and coffee tables should be no more than five inches higher or lower than the couch seat,” Novogratz says.

7 “Negative space keeps a room from looking too cluttered,” Ryan says. “Place your couch so it has two to three feet of clearance on either side.”

The fastest sofa makeover

If you’re ready for an update but not prepared to pony up for a new couch, may we suggest a slipcover?



Bemz.com is a Swedish retailer that specializes in pretty slipcovers for almost any upholstered Ikea item, including sofas. Basic solids start as low as \$129, while graphic patterns (like the one shown at left) from designers like Marimekko can be several hundred dollars more. Not cheap, but reasonable for an amazing custom look.

Surefit.com carries dozens of ready-made options in neutral hues. The sizing isn’t custom-made for specific models, but the site offers a handy measurement tool. The stretchy suedes cost less than \$150 and will cling to your couch kind of like panty hose. We also like the grain sack stripes, which have more structure, for a cottage-y look.

Retailers like **Ballard Designs** and **Pottery Barn** sell exclusive slipcovers for their models starting at around \$300. Consider buying an extra slipcover when you purchase a new couch—your future self will be very grateful.



GET STARTED: From January 14 through February 14, head over to onekingslane.com/redbook, where you’ll find deals on great-looking decor pieces like pillows, throws, rugs, and (of course!) couches—everything you need to transform your living room on a budget.

ILLUSTRATION: BROWN BIRD DESIGN. SLIPCOVER: BEMZ.COM.