

MAKEOVER  
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# Hidden Beauty

A dazzling redo helps a Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, abode put its best face forward

The walls are painted Benjamin Moore's Morning Dew. The chair is from Noir. The painting is by local artist D'etta Murphree.

The sofas are by Hickory Chair. The chandelier is from Visual Comfort. The rug is by Rosecore.



AFTER

BEFORE



**C**all it women’s intuition, but when Jenny Cook walked over the threshold of an aging Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, home, she saw something her husband, Kevin, didn’t. “It had this terrible wallpaper, and he said, ‘No way!’ ” she says with a laugh. “I instantly loved it, though. I knew it was going to be a project, but it had a lot of potential. I could really see our family there.” Over seven years, they made minor adjustments to their house in bits and spurts until some cracks in their kitchen countertops prompted them to call designer Andrew Howard. “They just wanted help deciding which material to use to replace them,” says Howard, “but once I got there, I suggested that they consider reconfiguring the cabinets, and then one thing led to another, and we had a new plan for the whole house.” That plan involved raising the ceilings and painting the rooms with fresh, light colors to capture the clean, inviting look the Cooks desired. Here, Howard shares his wisdom on how to transform a sorely dated residence into a dream home for a modern family.

**L** **Raise the roof.** Creative ceilings are Howard’s go-to device for bringing an element of surprise and excitement to interiors. In the living room, he raised the ceiling and had it covered in pickled wood for an Old Florida feel. “I wanted the ceiling to be the first thing people saw when they came into the home,” he says. “It had to make a big impact.” ➔

**2 Blow it out.** The former kitchen was located in a one-window room, making it feel dark and cramped, so Howard moved it into a brighter area of the home with more natural light. “We spend most of our time in there now,” says Jenny. “Andrew truly opened it up, and the flow is excellent.”

**3 Get playful.** Howard designed the family room as a place where the Cook kids can let loose. He opted for color instead of neutrals on the sofa and walls to help camouflage the wear of daily use, and selected a durable, hand-scraped coffee table and a soft carpet great for bare feet.



The chairs are by Lee Industries. The pendants are from Visual Comfort.

The side tables and chairs are from Noir; the curtain fabric is by Kravet.



The custom built-in is painted Pale Gray from Ralph Lauren. The pillows are from Mrs. Howard.

**4 Designate a drop site.** With three active boys, and the extracurricular gear that comes with them, the Cooks needed a place to keep clutter in check. Howard added a built-in cabinet off the garage entrance with hooks, nooks, and plenty of shelving to stow backpacks, hats, and shoes. “We drop everything there,” says Jenny. “It’s a lifesaver.” ➔

## 5 Spend strategically.

The designer used all of the homeowners' original furniture to rework the master bedroom. "It was my favorite transformation because it cost next to nothing," Howard says. To create a sense of drama, he commissioned a decorative painter to apply multiple layers of varying color to the walls for a unique, nuanced look with lots of depth and found a statement-making sunburst mirror to hang above the bed.

## 6 Make it memorable.

To ensure the dining room leaves a lasting impression, Howard had the ceilings lacquered in gray and installed wainscoting to create architectural interest. Small, mantel-like shelving atop the paneling provides a practical perch for the homeowners to display their shell collection. **For more information, see Sources, page 119.**



The custom paint job is by Stephen Floyd Design. The bedding is by John Robshaw.



The walls are painted Sea Reflections by Benjamin Moore. The table runner is from Mrs. Howard.

## MAKEOVER MAGIC

Designer Andrew Howard shares his remodeling smarts.

**ADD ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST.** Whether it's decorative ceilings, wainscoting, molding, or trim, architectural touches make an instant difference.

**WEAR IT OUT.** Consider distressing and hand-scraping furniture before placing it in high-traffic areas in a kid-friendly home. This extra step provides character and cleverly masks future play-related imperfections.

**PICK A FOCAL POINT.** Choose just one thing to make a big statement in each room. If everything stands out, nothing does.

**REFINISH OLD FAVORITES.** If there's a piece you love, don't be afraid to sand it down and apply bright, fresh paint to give it new life.

**RETHINK YOUR PALETTE.** Go with darker colors for walls in windowless rooms; the depth of hue can make a closed-in space feel cozy instead of crowded.