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Tips for modernizing your home and your routine

By Michael J. Solender

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Here's the challenge: Pick at least one room in your home, and think of a way to make it do more for you. Give yourself points for ideas that add comfort, convenience, fun or the cool factor.

Updating one room will surely inspire you to refresh and modernize your home and your routine in other ways, big or small. No excuses, because we're giving you a head start right here.

Pick any one of these home upgrades, and you may find yourself wondering why you didn't do it sooner.

The **Modern Sprout Windowsill Planter Box** is for those who want to enhance the spaces inside the home naturally with small houseplants, kitchen herbs, veggies and all manner of decorative plantings. The hydroponic planter also is designed to make year-round growing easier on a tabletop, windowsill or other well-lit area. The soilless planter has a 3/4-gallon reservoir that only needs refilling every 2 to 3 weeks for most plants. The hydroponic system provides nutrients that your plants will need to thrive – as well as solar light with some models. The box's exterior is weathered wood or chalkboard. \$129-\$249 at <http://modernsproutplanter.com>.

PIXI Flatlight luminaire from PIXI Lighting is an energy-efficient LED light source for the space under the kitchen cabinets or other areas of the home. They come in a variety of sizes and are expected to use 80 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs. Do the plug-and-mount installation yourself, or bring in an electrician for a quick job. Available at homedepot.com, starting at \$80.

The new **Brondell H2O+ Cypress Countertop Water**

- Rethink, refresh, update
 - Make a plan. Look carefully at your daily routine and decide what slows you down or taps out your inner gladiator. Figure out what would work better and go after it.
 - An attempt at a fresh start – even in one room – has to begin with getting rid of things that perform poorly or don't work at all. Toss the radio with the broken clock and the lamp that never was bright enough.
 - Technology is often available to add convenience and efficiency to routine tasks. Take advantage of it when it makes sense.

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Filtration System takes tap water through three separate filters and delivers your drink without a storage tank or complex setup. Triple filtering reduces industrial chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, volatile organic compounds, microorganisms, and bad tastes and odors. A screw-on attachment connects the unit to a faucet. \$180 at Home Depot, Overstock and Newegg.
<http://brondell.com>

Honeywell's **EnergySmart Infrared Heater** uses technology that produces heat quickly and ultimately puts out 5,200 BTUs without burning oxygen or humidity. That means the air won't feel dry. There are two heat modes and a programmable thermostat for steady comfort. The unit also has programmable on/off settings for energy savings. It shuts off automatically if accidentally tipped over. Six separate quartz elements are designed to give even heat distribution. The digital interface and controls are on top. \$150 at amazon.com.

Technogel Sleeping Pillows are covered with up to 1 inch of gel that gives a cooling sensation. The pillows are designed to deliver support with less pressure on the neck and shoulders. Prices start at \$169. Several sizes are available at www.technogelsleeping.com and at Relax the Back stores.

Singing in the shower? It's expected with **Kohler's Moxie Showerhead with Wireless Speakers**. It syncs to a mobile device using Bluetooth to play tunes, podcasts and other content. Available at Wayfair.com for \$149.

When the doorbell rings, **DoorBot** streams live video to a smartphone or tablet using your home's Wi-Fi network. The audio/video components allow you to see and speak with the guests. Battery operates for up to one year without additional charge. Add-ons allow for keyless entry for children or guests with your OK. Available at Staples, Amazon and www.getdoorbot.com for \$199, or \$349 with Lockitron add-on.

SmartCode by Kwikset features a twist on keyless entry, allowing for the assignment of temporary pass codes that are good for one-time or repeat use. Assign codes to family members and guests and remotely monitor their entries and exits using the system's reports. Children no longer require keys, which can get lost. Codes can also be tied into home automation systems to automatically switch on lights and turn off security systems upon entry.



\$99 to \$199, depending on system access features, at www.kwikset.com.



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