

# 'We added value with our DIY SKILLS'



## COME ON IN!



**ABOUT ME** I'm Becca Larkin, 27, a digital strategy manager for beauty brands. I live here with my partner, Jordan Sutton, 28, a carpenter. You can find me at @renovationliving.

**MY HOME** A two-bedroom semi-detached bungalow in Peacehaven, which we bought in December 2019. When we moved in the bungalow was stuck in a time warp with Artex ceilings, a run-down kitchen and dated bathrooms.

**AND NOW** Our mix of darks and neutrals with subtle muted colours create a calming scheme that's very much us - with a lovely open-plan space for entertaining.

**STYLE TIP** Don't forget to budget for the mundane things - the cost for plug sockets and light switches for all the rooms was more than I expected.



### IDEA TO STEAL

'Wall panelling is a great way to make a subtle feature in a neutral scheme'

### AFFORDABLE CHANGES

'We blocked up the chimney and added the panelling. Desenio prints and Homesense cushions were a bargain'

Becca and Jordan modernised their dated bungalow on a budget, doing the work themselves and giving it a high-end look

**J**ordan and I were determined to get on the property ladder and decided the only realistic way of achieving this was for us both to stay living at home with our parents and saving,' says Becca. 'We spent nearly four years saving for a deposit so that in late 2019 we were in the exciting position to finally begin looking for our first home.'

Our goal was to find an affordable property we could renovate, but we didn't want to spend too much on the work as we needed to make money to climb the property ladder. We were keen on central Brighton at first, but quickly realised space meant more to us than location. A studio flat there cost the same as a small house further out. There were also things we could do to increase the value of a house that we couldn't do in a flat, especially as Jordan's a carpenter and builder and could do most of the work.

### Find the perfect place

We looked in several areas and found a bungalow on the coast ten minutes outside Brighton, where Jordan's parents live. It was only a few minutes from the beach, in a nice location and when we went to the viewing, we both had an instant feeling that this was the one and we could make it look amazing. The semi-detached bungalow was the biggest property we'd seen and had a decent-sized garden. We knew straight away we wanted to knock down the wall between the kitchen and living room and create a more social, open-plan room. Structurally, everything was okay, the rooms were just very old-fashioned.

### Getting to work

As soon as the sale went through in December 2019, we got to work >>



**COLOUR HARMONY**  
'Farrow & Ball's Off Black is a similar shade to the walls'



'WE SPENT ALL OUR EVENINGS AND WEEKENDS HERE WORKING, BUT WE DIDN'T MISS OUT BECAUSE EVERYONE WAS IN LOCKDOWN'

### 3 of the best GLAM COFFEE TABLES

Get the luxe look for less with these chic buys



**SMART BRASS**  
Gloria coffee table, £215, Rose & Grey



**IN THE ROUND**  
Roma coffee table, £349, Cult Furniture



**SMOKED GLASS**  
Arch coffee table, £175, Next

### IDEA TO STEAL

'Choose metallic finishes, like this mirror, to add warmth'



### REFLECTIVE SURFACE

'The round brass mirror from Wayfair looks good against the black wall in the alcove and reflects the light and garden'

### ADDITIONAL SEATING

'Knocking two rooms together gave us a sociable space and a breakfast bar'

» stripping walls, ripping out carpets and the kitchen, while still living at home. Jordan had a long list of jobs to fit in around his day job: the whole bungalow needed rewiring and we discovered we had to replace the boiler and heating system, which was a cost we weren't expecting. By the time we went into lockdown in March 2020 we still had loads to do. I moved in with Jordan and his parents to "bubble" with them so we could safely carry on with the renovation together in our spare time. Jordan took »

## Make it! WALL PANELLING

- 1 Choose a section of wall to panel. Becca and Jordan blocked up a fireplace and made a feature of the chimney breast.
- 2 Look for pattern inspiration. Becca found Instagram sparked her imagination for this design.
- 3 Remove old wallpaper and roughly paint the wall white so you have a blank canvas and draw the pattern on in pencil.
- 4 Measure the straight lines and work out how many wood strips you need. Buy strips of pine beading from a DIY shop and cut to size.
- 5 Fix to the walls with adhesive, like Hard as Nails. Then use a nail gun to secure in place.
- 6 Fill the nail holes and sand, before priming and painting.



**IDEA TO STEAL**

'Go for a slightly different take on the standard metro size with the larger Urban Metro from Metro Tiles'

**COLOUR CHOICE**

'Howden's Fairford kitchen in Charcoal became the starting point in our scheme. The tone's relaxing and cosy – white would have looked cold'

» every job as far as he could and then he'd bring in an electrician or gas engineer he knew through work to certify the final stages. We put together a spreadsheet to keep an eye on our £30,000 budget, outlining a cost for each room to keep us on track. Sometimes it was hard to stick to the budget – we made compromises like sourcing a great marble-effect laminate worktop instead of the real thing.

**Looking for inspiration**

I work in digital marketing and during lockdown I began playing around with TikTok, a social media video platform, and noted it didn't feature many renovators. During the project, I uploaded a video of Jordan knocking down the wall and we couldn't believe it when we got to 1.8m views. Now we have 127,000 followers on @renovationliving. Pinterest and Instagram became a source of inspiration too with some of my favourites being @lustliving and @renovating\_love\_lane who have a similar taste in interiors to me, mixing darks and neutrals with a hint of colour. I learnt a lot about the kind of interiors that appeal to me and luckily Jordan feels the same.

**Deciding on decor**

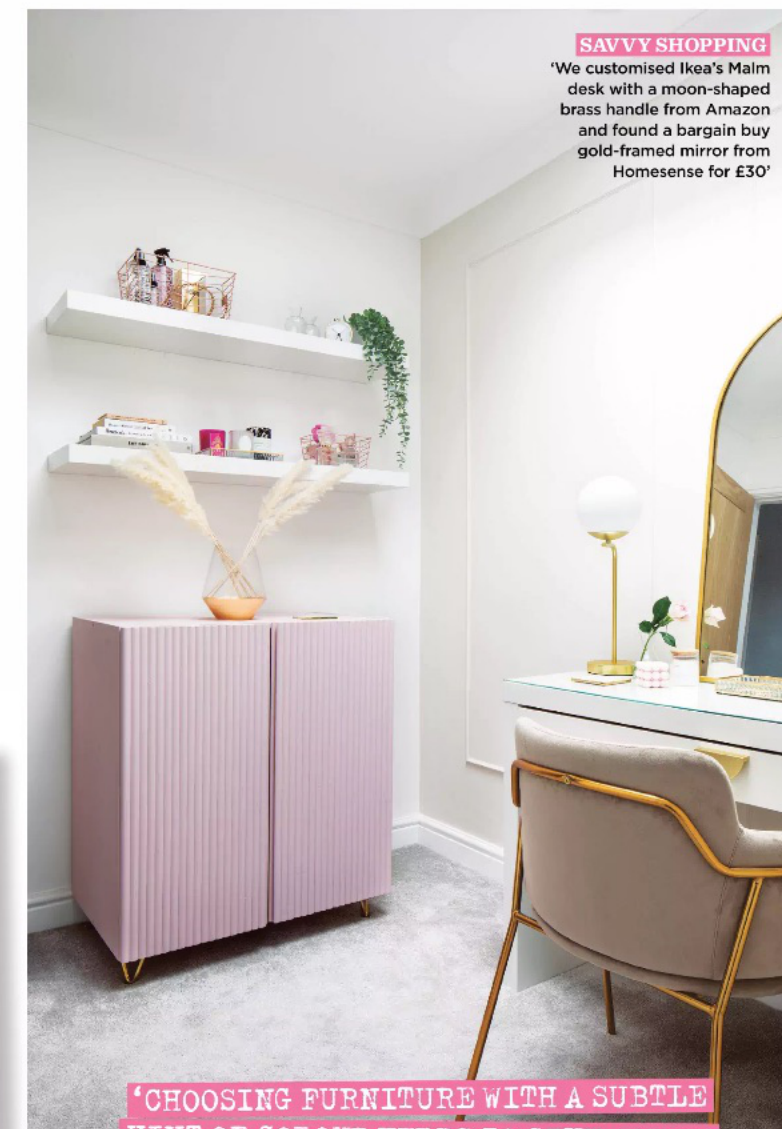
We wanted to create a house that was »

**BARGAIN BUY**

'Ikea's Ekbacken marble-effect laminate is brilliant and only cost £500. I recommend it to everyone!'

**SAVVY SHOPPING**

'We customised Ikea's Malm desk with a moon-shaped brass handle from Amazon and found a bargain buy gold-framed mirror from Homesense for £30'



'CHOOSING FURNITURE WITH A SUBTLE HINT OF COLOUR HELPS TO GIVE A MORE NEUTRAL DECOR CHARACTER'

**Do it! CUSTOMISE A CABINET**

★ Use wooden beading or dowels to upcycle a cabinet to give it a textured finish. You can then paint and finish it with handles for a smart piece updated on a budget. Start with a second-hand buy or the Ivar cabinet from Ikea is a good option.  
★ Measure the door height and find dowels or beading of a similar length so you have less wastage. Lay your

cabinet flat on one side so the pieces can easily be nailed on.

★ Measure the door width. Lengths need to fit snugly side by side so choose the dowel width carefully. Aim for the total width to be the same as the door to avoid tricky cuts.

★ Nail gun the dowelling to the doors, then sand, prime and paint the whole unit. Lastly, screw in brass feet.





#### NORDIC DESIGN

'A textured vanity from the Big Bathroom Shop contrasts with the white tiles. I fell in love with the wood-effect style for its Scandi look'

**'WE WANTED OUR FIRST HOME TO BE SPECIAL BUT BUDGETED WISELY IN CASE WE MOVE SOONER THAN WE THINK'**

» cosy and calm, with lots of candles and blankets to add to the atmosphere. I'm drawn to neutral colours, but I didn't want our entire home to be white as it would look too clinical. I like to wear black, white and nude clothes and I took a lead from this with our decor choices. We both like dark interiors but nothing too heavy or gothic. Black makes a powerful statement in our main living space with a charcoal kitchen and black walls that we've balanced with crisp white features like a white worktop, white tiles and pale oak-effect floor. We've gone lighter in the bedrooms and bathrooms because neither of us are keen on bright colours as that would feel overwhelming and not

relaxing. Light grey, green and dusky pink work because they're soft, muted tones.

#### Moving in day

We were finally able to properly move in during the summer of 2020, although we didn't change the bathroom until the following year. We considered converting the loft or garage but have decided to move on and start again. We've both absolutely loved working on our home, it's become a real passion, I hadn't realised how into interiors I would get - I care more about renovation Instagram accounts than fashion now! I'm super proud of Jordan's work, we couldn't have achieved any of this without his skills. »



#### IDEA TO STEAL

'Choose a headboard in a contrasting shade to make a focal point in the room'

#### MUTED TONES

'I fell for the Hex Waterlily tiles from Metro Tiles. The green matches our bedroom'



### Where to buy Becca's style

- ★ **CREATIVE CABLES** Becca's favourite independent for mix and match lighting where you can choose separate components to create your own design
- ★ **DECORATING CENTRE ONLINE** Type in the brand and colour and they will colour-match so you can buy a sample pot. Wallpaper, DIY supplies and a selection of home furnishings are also available.
- ★ **SUPERMARKETS** Places like George at Asda and Sainsbury's are good for gems such as crockery, cushions and throws.
- ★ **IKEA** Affordable furniture that's well made and stylish.
- ★ **PORCELAIN SUPERSTORE** For tiles in a range of styles, patterns and colours that are well-priced and good quality too.

#### SOFT COLOURS

'The dusty pink Stella bed from Next was inspired by @lustliving and I knew it would look lovely against the wall painted in Valspar's Shadowed Ivy'



Find more clever ideas to style up your home by going to [pinterest.com/styleathomemag](https://pinterest.com/styleathomemag)