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The Holiday-Ready House

20 ways to make your digs more functional, safe, and guest-friendly

The fire's blazing, the hors d'oeuvres tasty, the tree a-twinkle...but if your guests slip on a wet floor or shiver through dinner, no one will remember those lovely details. Use our cheat sheet to help make your home comfortable for everybody, from your baby niece to Great Uncle Harry.

—NATALIE RODRIGUEZ



Dining Room

- Plug up window drafts with weatherstripping or caulk.
- Add seat cushions, especially for folding chairs, to ward off marathon-meal butt numbness.
- Fill scratches in the dining room table with colored paste wax.

UPGRADE



≈ No need to build an island. Move a wheeled cart between the dining area and kitchen for a temporary buffet setup. \$86; stacksandstacks.com

Living Room

- Ratchet down the thermostat by 3 degrees F—guests hate sweating over their holiday cocktails.
- Keep area rugs in place with double-sided tape to prevent tripping and slipping.
- Treat fabric-covered furniture with a protective spray, such as Scotchgard, so that spills don't become a permanent record.

UPGRADE



≈ Tools not required. A storage ottoman provides extra seating or a place to put drinks. \$80; improvementscatalog.com

Powder Room

- Scrape away deposits from the series of flush holes under the toilet bowl rim so that guests don't have to double flush.
- Replace the washer or O-ring on an annoyingly drippy tap.
- Rinse out grit from the faucet's filter screen to keep the water flowing.

UPGRADE



≈ All you need is a screwgun and wall anchors. Even the tiniest half-bath has room for a sturdy ring for holiday hand towels. \$48; atlashomewares.com

Entry

- Add a dimmer switch to the hallway fixture (soft light = instant mood-setter).
- Roll out a runner to absorb slush and snow.
- Fix squeaky hardwood floors by sweeping graphite powder into the cracks.

UPGRADE



» Forget carving out more hanging space. A portable coat rack adds "closet" capacity in a hallway. \$60; bedbathandbeyond.com

Walkway

- Replace blown-out bulbs in exterior lights.
- Scatter sand or kitty litter on slippery steps.
- Knock away icicles hanging above the front door—no skewering your guests!

UPGRADE



≈ Install it in less than an hour. This doorbell plays snippets of your MP3s instead of that boring old ding-dong. \$90; ichime.com