

Most people want their home to be light, bright and airy, but sometimes the stars just don't align and you can end up with rooms that are unavoidably dark - low on windows or facing away from the sun.

With a few smart tricks (and clever renovations, if you're up to the challenge) you can transform a dreary room into a breath of fresh air, either for potential buyers, tenants or just for yourself.

Get painting

A quick and easy way to upgrade a dark space is to freshen it up with light paint. Go for neutral tones and paint the ceiling a lighter colour than the walls, to give the sensation of height as well as light.

When you want to elongate a room, paint the mouldings the same colour as the walls. Use paint with a sheen so it reflects light - matte finishes can soak it up.

Decorate wisely

Small changes can make surprisingly big differences. Try hanging art with white frames or matting instead of black. Also, make sure any large artworks in dark rooms have lighter tones to amp up the brightness and stop light getting sucked into darker accents.

If your furniture is dense and bulky, look for smaller replacements with lighter colours.

Keep home accessories minimal - clutter can make a room feel less open. Go with smartly chosen statement pieces, perhaps with shiny metallic touches. Lush indoor plants can also create a lively, chic feel. Remember to choose plants that can thrive without massive rays.

Shine a light

While your first instinct when fixing a dark room might be to crank up the artificial lighting, it pays to be strategic with both the types of lights you choose and where you place them.

Instead of adding more overheads, try some of these creative ideas:

Illuminate corners to eliminate that cave-like feel.

Place a variety of lamps across a room to balance out the light.

Use decorative mirrors to reflect and scatter light.

Brighten a dingy kitchen with under-cabinet lighting.

When you'd prefer something more structural, consider installing skylights or - for trickier areas - tubular daylighting devices, which are like a cross between a skylight and a periscope, using mirrors to reflect diffused light into the room.

For a show-stopping renovation in a two-storey home, investigate whether you can create a see-through ceiling/floor. Adding an architect-approved window panel to flooring can brighten and open the level below dramatically.

Work with windows and doors

An adventurous property upgrade might include the interior doors and windows. While probably not suitable for a simple DIY weekend project, internal changes can really help to disperse light throughout the house.

Take advantage of light from neighbouring rooms by switching out solid internal doorways

for French doors. This gives the eye a sense of the space beyond, especially if that space has good light.

Another option is to install transom windows - those placed high above a door. They can allow light in without compromising privacy. Internal windows can also really open a space and allow light to be shared.

Once you've adjusted the doors and windows, sheer drapery can always be added to close off a view when needed. And speaking of drapes, consider lighter options if your current window coverings block what little light is available.

While you can't just twist your house around to face the sun, there are plenty of tricks - minor and major - to livening up those darker rooms and creating light-bathed nooks that will appeal to investors, tenants and owners alike.