

THINGS ARE LOOKING UP

THE GLOOMY BASEMENT REC ROOM IS SO LAST CENTURY. FOR STYLE BLOGGER ERIN GATES AND FAMILY, LIVABILITY IS ATTRACTIVE, TOO.

BY JACI CONRY



An IKEA sofa that came in pieces was the only model Erin Gates could find that would fit down the narrow stairwell. Marble-topped end tables with brass legs are from Target. The CB2 Lucite waterfall-edge coffee table doesn't add bulk to the space. Oversize botanical prints bring color to the mostly gray, black, and white scheme.

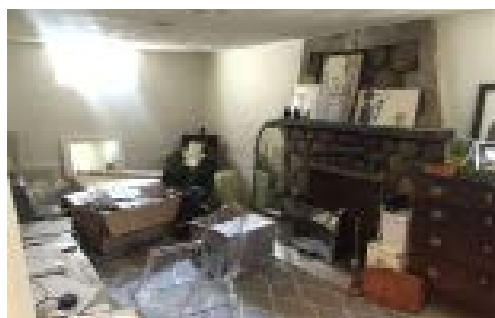
YOUR HOME MAKEOVERS

IN THE 1960s, homes had formal, polished living rooms—but the real living was done in the basement rec room. The aesthetic was simple: inexpensive rug atop cement floor, old living room sofa, maybe some dark paneling, a record player, a Ping-Pong table or a bar, and you were ready for leisure.

Transforming the bottom floor of a home into extra living space went out of fashion for a while. It's in again, and today, much more effort goes into creating comfortable, attractive basement living areas.

"People are going the extra mile and being thoughtful about what they do with the design. They're not just putting in crappy carpet," says interior designer and blogger Erin Gates, who recently renovated the basement of her Newton home.

"Home values are so high now, people are staying put and using every square inch of their houses," says Gates. "If the basement has decent ceiling height, it can be a great place to create a really



BEFORE A nonworking fireplace was removed to create more space. Since the room wasn't insulated, the walls and ceiling had to be taken down and replaced to meet code.

amazing extra space."

Gates and her husband, Andrew, wanted the basement to include a home office for him as well as a den and play area for their son and to serve as a place where they could relax and entertain casually. "I wanted it kind of masculine, but to have a little whimsy," says Gates, who gave the space a modern yet rustic feel on a modest budget.

Lowe's offered to sponsor part of the 175-square-foot renovation project in exchange for exposure on Gates's blog, Elements of Style. To further cut costs, Gates scoured Etsy for one-of-a-kind handcrafted items. She also re-purposed several pieces from around her house, including the black-and-white-striped IKEA rug. Originally in the guest room, it now grounds the rec room space.

At the back of the room, a Cole & Son birch tree wallcovering adds visual appeal. "It doesn't have to look like a mishmash of stuff if you add a few new distinctive elements," says Gates.



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PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARAH M. WINCHESTER



At left: A sliding door of reclaimed barn wood by Etsy vendor RusticRoo Designs acts as the gateway to the space and buffers sound. Floors are vinyl plank with the look of wood. "The product is great to use in basements, where you can encounter moisture," says Gates.

Facing page, top: The World Market desk is a modern take on the classic campaign style. The brass lamp is another Target find; the leather swivel chair is Pottery Barn. A burlap bulletin board hangs above a three-drawer filing cabinet on castors from CB2. Under a wall-mounted television, a low IKEA shelf offers both book and toy storage.

Facing page, bottom: In one corner, honed granite makes a handsome counter above a mini-bar fridge. Floating reclaimed-wood shelves—another Etsy find—provide space for storage and display.