

CREATE YOUR PERFECT LIVING SPACE WITHOUT EXTENDING

For advice
on creating an
en suite without
extending, turn
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HIDDEN PANELS

You can have both a divided and an open-plan layout with hideaway pocket doors that slide away seamlessly into an internal wall. Go for solid doors if you want to be able to shut off a space entirely, or choose a semi-translucent or completely see-through material, if you would prefer to keep the spaces visually united even when the doors are closed. This Mitika single sliding pocket door, H2.1x W0.9m, is finished in bronze glass, and costs £1,420, IQ Glass

If you want to redesign the downstairs of your home without the expense of an extension, take a look at these clever ideas to transform your existing rooms

FEATURE **LUCY SEARLE**

There are many ways to make your living space feel bigger and brighter without extending. The most obvious is to remove internal walls, turning small, narrow or dark rooms into open-plan spaces. To see what might work, make a scale drawing of your house without the internal walls, then think about the layout that would work best if you were starting from scratch. You'll find software online to help you do this, or you can use the services of an architect or architectural designer. Popular options include knocking through between a kitchen and dining room to create an open-plan kitchen-diner, or relocating a staircase to create a better sense of flow.

'Removing the corridor from your hallway and absorbing it into the body of your living room can make the existing rooms feel more spacious,' says Lizzie Webster, director and architect at Fraher Architects. 'And knocking through between the front and rear living rooms will allow the whole space to benefit from light coming in from both sides of your property.' If you're not a fan of open-plan living, removing part-walls - or swapping solid walls for moveable walls, interior glazing panels or pocket doors - will give you the best of both worlds. 'Installing internal sliding or pocket doors will enable you to screen spaces off if required, and give you greater flexibility,' she adds. ►



THINK CREATIVELY

Are there areas of your home that are currently under-used? Converting a garage will give you a generous new space, which could be knocked through into an adjoining kitchen or living room. And the area under your stairs could be repurposed as a utility area, toilet or study nook.

You could also change the purpose of rooms. If you're a keen cook, and don't spend much time in your living room but it has the best views of your garden, then consider turning it into a kitchen-diner and having a smaller living room with poorer views in the old kitchen. Bear in mind that this kind of alteration will require major changes to plumbing, electrics and drainage, increasing the cost.

Another option to make your existing living space feel bigger and better is to incorporate better storage. In a living or dining room, for example, consider floor-to-ceiling shelving to create a home library and display space.

Do you have a ground-floor room with a pitched roof? Removing the ceiling to roof height will make the room feel instantly bigger and brighter, as will adding roof windows or installing a large wall of glazed doors linking to your garden.

SEAMLESS LINK

Uniting your indoor and outdoor spaces will immediately make the rooms inside feel larger. You can do this by replacing solid walls with glazing - either fixed windows or bi-folds, or sliding doors that open right up. Pick flooring and wall colours that match in both areas, and select patio furniture to complement what you have indoors to enhance the effect. These bi-fold doors have been installed flush to the floor to create a seamless link. They cost from around £5,000, supplied and fitted by Cue & Co of London





DURING

AFTER



Search 'Party Wall agreement' at realhomes.co.uk to download a free agreement template

COLOUR CLEVER

Using colours strategically can stretch a space visually – a great example is putting a paler colour around the edges of a room, with darker shades in the centre to create a focal point. This home in Hertfordshire, built in 1835, had a kitchen in dire need of a contemporary makeover. 'The brief was to create a bright, functional kitchen with an island to include a seating area,' explains Wez Clark, director at Ktchns Ltd. 'We noticed that the house had been built on a slight angle, throwing the kitchen walls out by 30cm, so the first job was to straighten these out by adding a stud wall. This was quite handy as it allowed us to run the water, waste, gas and extraction ducting behind.' The owners had a good idea of the colours they wanted, choosing Soft Grey and Charcoal for the Barnes Painted Kitchen from the Simply Burbidge range. The kitchen, including worktops, appliances, sink and tap, cost £23,000

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Planning permission isn't usually required for removing or altering internal walls, unless your home is listed. However, you must adhere to building regulations to ensure that any supporting structures are up to the job, so you'll need to ask your local building control department or an independent building control inspector to issue a completion certificate. Bear in mind, too, that some internal walls, such as those in the hallway, offer protection from fire, and building control may not approve their removal. Find out more at planningportal.co.uk.

If you live in an attached property, you should also talk to a Party Wall surveyor.

'The Party Wall Act means you must notify your neighbour if the remodelling of the downstairs of your home involves removing walls on the boundary line, or doing any work to a shared wall between your homes,' says Steven Way, practice principal at Collier Stevens Chartered Surveyors. 'You must invite your neighbour to agree to the project or appoint a surveyor to draw up a Party Wall agreement, authorising the work. This may also set out how the work will be done to minimise any impact to your neighbour, and how any damage to their property will be repaired.' Party Wall surveyors cost from £300 – and you must pay for your neighbour's surveyor, too. ➤

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POCKET DOORS

An open-plan space can be difficult to live in if you have a busy - and noisy - family life. Consider dividing it with glass doors that create sound proofing but don't interrupt sight lines. Choose a top-hung design like these so that flooring remains seamless and track-free. These contemporary, pocket sliding glass doors provide an opening of H2xW1.8m, and are made from obscured glass. They cost from £1,990, Eclipse

EASY UPDATES

Replacing glazing can help make your home feel bigger and brighter with minimum cost and effort. For instance, replacing small patio doors with a wider expanse of bi-fold or sliding doors can be a simple way of introducing more light, as is adding a rooflight above a single-storey part of your house. Introducing internal glazing - either fixed panels or sliding pocket doors - is another option that can be used to replace existing doors or solid walls.

Using lighter colours in your decorating scheme can also help transform your home - and that doesn't only mean rethinking your wall colours. 'Changing the floor material to something pale, such as concrete or tiles, will help increase levels of light within the ground-floor spaces and bounce it into the core of the house,' says architect Lizzie Webster.

Improving artificial lighting can also make a real difference to your home. 'Long, gloomy hallways are a typical problem within terraced houses,' adds Lizzie. 'It's important to make these corridors feel as open, light and airy as possible. Try alternatives to traditional pendant lights, such as LED recessed spotlights at regular intervals, which will bring a bright, clean light to the space.' ➤



OPEN HOUSE

'Creating an open-plan space doesn't necessarily mean removing entire walls,' says architect Emil Neumann, of Paul Archer Design. 'With this house, we created a sophisticated and open feel but, instead of installing a complicated, and costly, steel-frame, we opted for simpler lintels to make large openings like this one. It helps connect the dining and living rooms to the kitchen, allowing light from the new rooflight to flood deep into the house.' It would cost between £2,000 and £3,000 to create a similar opening, subject to structural conditions

INVISIBLE LINES

Replacing a solid staircase with one that appears to float will create an instant feeling of spaciousness. Enhance the effect by replacing traditional bannisters and handrails with a sleek, contemporary one in glass and steel or wood. This open-rise cantilever oak staircase, supported by hidden steel plates within the wall, cost from £22,000, Bisca



SMART STORAGE

Employing wasted wall space to hide away items that are rarely used will free up storage elsewhere and cut down on clutter, both of which add to the feeling of a well-organised home. This Barnet storage and display system has been created to make clever use of a tall, 3.5m-high internal wall, and comes with adjustable shelves. Bespoke fitted furniture starts from £3,000, Neville Johnson

WHAT WILL IT COST?

Expect to pay around £40 per square metre for a one-brick-thick wall to be removed; £20 per square metre for a 10cm block wall; and around £41 per square metre for a timber stud partition. A load-bearing wall will cost upwards of £1,000 to remove. Creating a new doorway will cost between £600-£800, and new glazed doors will cost between £480-£600 per square metre.

Don't forget to add in extra costs for*:

- Repositioning radiators: £150 each
- Installing a new sink: £200-£300
- Installing an extractor fan: £200-£300
- Moving electrical wall sockets and light switches: £50 each
- Re-plastering: £250-£500 per room
- Decorating: £150-£750 per room >



KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

If you're removing or relocating internal walls, here's how to ensure your new-look space has a good sense of flow:

- Consider how and where you will cross any new open-plan spaces – and whether the new circulation routes you're creating within the layout are conveniently placed. For instance, it's vital to avoid making your kitchen work zone the quickest, easiest route from the living room to the garden.
- Before removing internal walls, consider where your furniture and electric points will go in the new open-plan layout. You may be tempted to create openings that are as wide as possible, but narrower ones might allow you to be more flexible – and more practical.
- Be consistent; choosing the same flooring throughout, decorative schemes that work together, and architectural details that complement what's there already, will help the new layout feel like it's always been there. ➤



SLEEK FINISHES

This understairs space has been stripped back to reveal a useful area for storage and display. The flush finish of the built-in furniture matches the new bannister above and complements the oak flooring. 'Try installing a light-coloured timber flooring to brighten up any space, or even better, if your budget will stretch, a polished concrete floor, as that is more reflective than timber,' advises architect Lizzie Webster. Similar Select Engineered Oak Elite Click UV Lacquered flooring costs £64.51 per m² from Wood & Beyond. The hallway storage and new bannister cost £8,000 for design, fabrication and installation, from Fraher Architects



AFTER

DURING

ZONE YOUR SPACE

'If you're going open-plan, defining spaces will help make the transformation much more successful, as well as easier to furnish and live in,' says Martin Bell, of Transform Architects. 'In this house in Leeds, we redesigned the internal spaces to create an open-plan kitchen-living and dining room with freestanding media wall to create a subtle visual division between the living and dining areas. All the existing walls were supporting, so we needed an extensive amount of props and steelwork to hold up the building once they'd been removed.' The work cost £100,000, excluding décor





OPEN-PLAN LIVING

Contemporary kitchens work best when connected to dining and living rooms. Here, a 2m-wide opening replaces a doorway to create a semi-open-plan space. Choosing a colour scheme and furnishings that are complementary in both areas helps link the separate zones. When joining two rooms, consider whether differing floor and ceiling heights will need levelling, as this will add to your costs. Classic painted bespoke kitchen in Hardwick White with Railings on the island, tall, wall and base cabinets, both Farrow & Ball. Work surface in White Fantasy. Bespoke kitchens start at £35,000, by Roundhouse

FINDING A DESIGNER AND TRADES

If you're planning any kind of internal remodel, it's best to find a qualified architect or an architectural technologist to draw up plans for you, as well as a structural engineer to ensure you aren't removing any load-bearing walls without adequate compensatory support. Personal recommendations are usually the best way to find designers and tradespeople – try asking friends, neighbours or even searching via local social media. However, you can also find qualified professionals in your area using the following websites:

- **Structural engineers:** Institution of Structural Engineers – istructe.org
- **Builders:** Federation of Master Builders – fmb.org.uk

- **Party Wall surveyors:** Faculty of Party Wall Surveyors – fpws.org.uk
- **Surveyors:** Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors – rics.org.uk
- **Architects:** Royal Institute of British Architects – architecture.com
- **Electricians:** National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting – niceic.com
- **Plumbers:** Association of Plumbing & Heating Contractors – aphc.co.uk

Always get at least three quotes for each trade, and ask to see examples of previous work. Remember, the cheapest quote isn't always the best if not all your requirements are met, and you need to feel happy working with the tradespeople you choose. 🏠

FOLD AND HIDE

'Internal bi-fold doors give you the benefits of open-plan living, while also enabling you to divide rooms,' says Chris Miller, product manager at Jeld-Wen. 'Our top-hung doors can be opened and closed within seconds, and no bottom rack or guide means your flooring is flawlessly continued, allowing your living space to flow. Continuity is key, so match new doors to others in your house for a coordinated look.' Room Fold folding-sliding door set in white oak Shaker one-panel design, from £1,600 for a H2.05xW2.5m, four-door configuration, Jeld-Wen

