

A BEAUTY OF A BATH



\$300 MAKEOVER TAKES POWDER ROOM FROM LACKLUSTER TO LUXURIOUS

BY JOETTA MOULDEN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANET LENZEN

When Gail and Jose Nevarez called me about their combination hall bath/powder room, they were stuck. Their downstairs bath, located just off the entry hall, was in the midst of a makeover, and Gail needed guidance. I'd helped the couple before with their master bedroom and bath and their daughter Elissa's bedroom, so they felt comfortable asking for my advice.



BEFORE: (Above) These handy DIY owners already had added beaded board to the bathroom walls and removed the counter-to-ceiling unframed mirror, but were undecided about their art, shower curtain, lighting and paint.

AFTER: (Left) Painting the walls the same color as the nearby entry hall, adding new hardware, cutting down and framing the existing mirror, hanging larger artwork and purchasing new lighting and a custom shower curtain made this hall bath a show stopper for just \$300.

WHERE TO BEGIN?

Gail and Jose already had added beaded board wainscoting to the walls and were in the process of taking down the existing counter-to-ceiling mirror and old light fixture. "I wasn't sure about what to do with the shower curtain, whether or not to change the wall color, what to do about artwork and how to get more storage space," Gail explains. "I was so excited to have our master bath and bedroom finished that I was eager to get direction for the hall bath as well."

After listening carefully to her concerns, in short order we came up with a cost-effective plan together. First, for consistency and flow, I recommended Jose trust his instincts and frame the mirror just like he framed the mirrors in the master bath, including staining the wood the same color, which looks terrific with the Saltillo tile floors and continues the established flow.

HARDWARE MATTERS

I also encouraged them to buy and install the same light fixture and brushed nickel hardware from Pottery Barn they used in the master bath.

TIP: To ensure high resale value, be consistent with hardware. You can mix "cool" metals, such as brushed nickel, brushed pewter and chrome, but "warm" metals like antique brass, shiny brass and oil rubbed bronze don't mix at all with "cool" metals — or amongst each other.

SHOWER (CURTAIN) POWER

Since the couple have 10-foot ceilings, a standard shower curtain would look quite short. I recommended Gail go to Ikea and buy ready-made Merete (2/\$49) grommet-top curtain panels in beige. The panels come two to a package, and



A wall sconce lamp from Lowe's matches the brushed nickel finish on the faucet, new hardware and light fixture above the mirror.

TRADE SECRETS

- Unify bathrooms with paint colors, window treatments, fabrics and themes used in other rooms.
- Be consistent. Make a commitment to either cool metals or warm metals. Try not to mix both in the same room.
- Little details create great impact and flow. Keep hardware, mirror styles and lighting fixtures consistent.
- Rethink the pieces that already are paid for. An existing vanity can be updated with new hardware, and an existing wall mirror can be cut down and framed.
- Sometimes the most effective plan is to not gut your bathroom, but rather have a professional plan in place, which offers great-looking, cost-saving features to update it.

she bought two packages of 57-by-118-inch-long panels in order to make the shower curtain extra full and luxurious. The grommet-top panels come with a handy iron-on strip to hem them to the desired length. The plastic liner hangs from the couple's existing, separate rod behind the Ikea panels.

TIP: The inexpensive panels were hung from a Lowe's rod, halfway between the 10-foot ceiling and the tub's wall tile, to accent the room's tall ceilings.

"I must admit it was a leap of faith to hang the panels so high in my tiny bath," Gail says. "But instead of making the room feel smaller, the tall panels made it feel larger. Conversely, it was interesting to me that having the old mirror go to the ceiling did the opposite."



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Inexpensive Ikea grommet-top curtain panels were used as a shower curtain, hung halfway between the 10-foot ceiling and the top of the shower tile. A plastic liner hangs from the separate, existing rod.

PAINT, ARTWORK & MORE

Gail was concerned the mushroom color would not work with the new Benjamin Moore “Chilled Chardonnay” wall color, which matches the nearby entry hall. I assured her the Ikea panels would blend with the grout in the tile and that they were both neutrals that worked well together.

To address her desire for additional storage, Gail bought a white, \$60 Classic Wooden Wall Cabinet from Target to hold extra hand towels and toiletries, and Jose hung it above the wainscoting. “Suddenly everything came together,” Gail says with a smile, “and the room seemed more pulled together, more elegant.”

I suggested she re-hang her small, framed verse, centered below the storage cabinet, and either replace or re-mat and reframe her existing artwork into a larger size, 39 by 27 inches tall, to hang above the towel bar. Gail opted to purchase new artwork on clearance from Cost Plus World Market in a frame that matched the stain on Jose’s mirror frame.

TIP: Most homeowners err on the side of timidity when purchasing artwork and accessories. Fewer, larger pieces have more impact than lots of small items.

Additionally, I showed her how to layer the fluffy white bath towels and hand towels on the 24-inch towel bar to create a luxurious, abundant look for guests.

Surprisingly, the big-ticket item in this \$300 makeover was the Pottery Barn light fixture. “It was by far the most expensive purchase, but I feel that the value it added to our home was worth much more than it cost,” she says.

A FINE FINISH

Like a lot of homeowners, Gail feels overwhelmed when she goes to a store without a specific plan. “Everything looks good to me, and I don’t know where to begin shopping — or end,” she explains. With a list of things to buy, the proper sizes and stores to go to, Gail says she could confidently buy without coming home with “mistakes and misgivings.” Once she purchased certain key elements, the rest fell into place. She even felt confident enough to buy a handsome wall sconce light at Lowe’s, which was not on her list.

“Your written instructions were so clear and specific that I knew exactly what you meant when I went shopping,” Gail says. “By giving me direction and a plan, you also gave me the confidence to work within that plan and add my own ideas.”

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