Every House Has These 5 Outdated Fixtures—Here's How to Refresh Them Like a Designer

Some of the most overlooked details in your home could be making it feel stuck in the past. Luckily, a few thoughtful swaps can make a big difference.

By Patricia Shannon | Published on November 2, 2026

MEET THE EXPERT

- **Angela Wainscott** is the owner and principal designer at Upstaged Design, an interior design studio in Canada.
- **Olivia Snow** is the founder of Mother's Daughter Design, a commercial and residential interior design and styling studio.
- **Annie Kantor** is the founder of Modern Metal, a custom metalwork company.

Credit: Getty Images / Tim Bingham

4. Metal Vent Covers

They fly under the radar until they don't. Dated vent covers or metal grilles on walls, ceilings, and floors can be a major eyesore. "They're common to many homes but not always what we think of when considering upgrades," says Annie Kantor, founder of Modern Metal. "What I particularly love about this opportunity is that it's an affordable, low-lift way to make a big impact."

The metal crafter suggests giving your builder-grade vent covers a semi-custom upgrade, choosing a pattern, finish, and style that harmonize with your home's style. "The result is a delightfully eye-catching, luxe look without the luxe price tag."

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Credit: John Bessler

Trends come and go, and therein lies the problem. After a few years, that of-the-moment light fixture can quickly become a time stamp, dating your home or your latest renovation in a flash. "There are few things that will date your home more than a fixture that was incredibly popular in a prior decade," says Angela Wainscott, owner and principal designer at Upstaged Design.

Spotting these outdated fixtures is a great first step in bringing your home up to modern-day, but keeping it relevant a decade from now is the real key. For that, Olivia Snow, founder of Mother's Daughter Design, says it's all about the mix. "The key to a timeless space is mixing design styles and being thoughtful about how to juxtapose a trend with a classic finish."

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Credit: Julie Soefer

1. Matte Black Hardware

Matte black had a major moment 15 years ago, but now it doesn't feel quite so fresh, says Snow. "A lot of hardware finishes, such as brushed nickel and chrome, end up feeling out of date and builder-grade," she says.

Credit: Kimberly Gavin

2. Glass Lighting Fixtures

The domed flush-mounts of the '80s, the silver fixtures with frosted glass of the '90s to early 2000s, and the Edison bulbs and farmhouse fixtures of the 2010s are all proof that lighting fads change—and quickly, says Wainscott. Opting for lighting that skews more timeless can help keep your fixtures looking fresh for years to come.

Snow says avoiding glass fixtures is a great place to start, since they're often hard to maintain. "Picking structured fixtures out of metal or fabric will be lower maintenance and look polished without the fuss," she says. Steering clear of what can be classified as off-the-moment, popular, or trendy will also serve you well in this category, where fads are more fleeting.

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Credit: Edmund Barr

3. Flat Mirror Panels in Baths

Flat mirror panels over the bathroom vanity can offer a blasé feel. Snow advises removing the panels and the light fixture above the mirror, and replacing them with sconces flanking a new decorative mirror.

"Selecting a mirror with a thoughtful frame will create a moment, pulling down the sconces to the sides of the mirror will create a mood, and lighting the mirror from the sides will provide a more flattering light source for getting ready," she says. "Even if it's too much to pull down the light, swapping out the mirror will refresh the space."

Credit: Getty Images / Tim Bingham

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renovation. For that reason, Snow advises steering clear of trendy finishes and silhouettes and instead opting for a more classic faucet.

"When designing a bathroom or kitchen, I try to stick with the forever favorites," she says. "That means traditional profiles in timeless finishes." The designer suggests sticking with unlacquered brass or polished nickel for finishes that will never go out of style. "Paired with a simple, timeless design, you've removed the time stamp."

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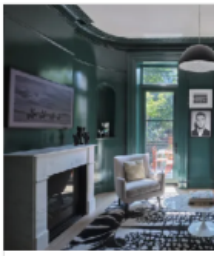

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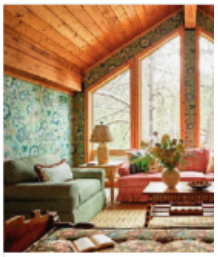

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