

# THE NOMAD'S GUIDE TO DECORATING

*how to create a cozy home on wheels*



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MOUNTAINMODERNLIFE.COM

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## **Note about RV Warranties and Maintenance**

If you currently have or plan to purchase an extended RV warranty, keep in mind certain modifications may void it, even if unrelated. If you have concerns or questions, contact your warranty provider prior to making changes to your RV.

Don't forget that maintaining your RV is essential, especially to prevent water damage or safety concerns, and is recommended every 3-6 months. The last thing you want is to put money into a renovation, only to have it destroyed because maintenance wasn't handled correctly.

# *Dedication*

This book is dedicated to my husband, who has never questioned my desire to decorate, re-decorate, repaint, or rearrange our spaces, including our home on wheels. Eric, you're amazing! Thank you for your unconditional love, support, and encouragement, especially throughout the creation of this book.

And to those who have renovated an RV (or more than one) and shared your experience and inspiration with the RV community, including those featured in this book. You have helped change the landscape of RV interior design and empowered others to do the same. Even more so, you provide a glimpse into how encouraging, kind, and compassionate the RV community is, which we are so grateful to be a part of.

INTRODUCTION.....	5
CHAPTER 1: Explore .....	8
CHAPTER 2 : Plan .....	36
CHAPTER 3 : Simplify .....	64
CHAPTER 4: Flooring .....	71
CHAPTER 5: Paint .....	83
CHAPTER 6: Walls & Architectural Details ....	112
CHAPTER 7: Storage .....	127
CHAPTER 8: Furniture & Fixtures .....	157
CHAPTER 9: Style .....	199
CHAPTER 10: Wabi Sabi .....	246
CREDITS & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.....	249



## Introduction

"Do I LOVE this spatula?" I silently ask myself as I hold a copper kitchen utensil in my right hand, examining all angles to decide if this beauty should come home with me.

"Do I need it? Does it bring me joy?"

As silly as I felt, standing in the aisle with this spatula for what felt like an eternity, ignoring strange glances in my direction, it had become my new normal. This was the question I asked myself for *every single item* I either already owned or was looking to purchase. Reading Marie Kondo's book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, simplified the downsizing process as my husband and I prepared to transition from 1700 square feet to less than 300. However, I was now struggling to make decisions.

It all started when we decided to buy an RV, renovate it, and then hit the road in search of a mountain town to call home. We were dreaming of a life with less "stuff" and more experiences. Something tells me you can relate?

It's now been over five years since we renovated our 2008 motorhome, and while we are no longer full-time RVers, we would do it all over again. Our goal was to transform a 34-foot RV into a mountain modern motorhome. And I'd like to think that we succeeded.

Eric and I met in college and have moved more times than I can count. Back in 2010, we moved cross-country from California to Georgia to be closer to our families and enjoy a lower cost of living. Unfortunately, the economy was still suffering due to the recession, and we took whatever jobs we could find.

A few years later, I was diagnosed with CRPS, otherwise known as Complex Regional Pain Syndrome. CRPS is a chronic neuro-inflammatory disease that affects the central and peripheral nervous systems. It had affected my right hand (my dominant hand) and made it impossible to complete simple, everyday tasks like washing my hair or getting dressed. My hand became ice-cold, and the pain was so severe that the slightest touch would send me to tears.

Despite the doctors saying there was no "cure" or time frame for my hand to start functioning normally again, I went into remission within weeks of being diagnosed, thanks to the teachings of Eckhart Tolle, Dr. Wayne Dyer, and Louise Hay. It felt like a miracle.

In the years leading up to my diagnosis, I spent all my time working around the clock for someone else. My personal life and health took a backseat, and I was constantly stressed and overwhelmed. It seemed I had lost myself, and my creative passion, along the way. Spiritually, I was out of alignment. Unfortunately, this story is typical for many Americans trying to push ahead in the workforce or simply pay the bills.

However, my diagnosis with CRPS woke me up from a life on autopilot and helped me reorganize my life. It was the catalyst to a path of deeper self-awareness and healing, which I am grateful for. Soon after, I vowed to make space for creativity and started a website as a hobby to document the DIY projects I was working on.

In 2015, we rented a home in the Atlanta suburbs while slowly paying off student loan debt and saving up for a house. Eric was making good money, but he was constantly traveling, and we rarely saw one another. We often spent what little time we did have together talking about the future and how our hard work would *eventually* pay off.

It didn't take us long to realize we were dedicating all of our time inching closer to the "American Dream," only it wasn't OUR dream we were chasing. And without the time to enjoy our money or each other, we started to question if it was worth it.

During this time, I had grown my DIY blog into a full-time income, and we realized Eric could quit his job to help run the website. While we knew there would be income setbacks and sacrifices, we decided it was worth a shot. Besides, we wanted to share more than bills and a roof over our heads.

At that point, we were still trying to determine where we wanted to settle down, but with us both working remotely, we could live wherever we wanted. Only, we still had no idea where that was.

That's when we decided to take a detour from our house hunting and instead buy an RV we could transform into a tiny home on wheels. Sure it was a risky move, and we had no idea what the journey ahead would look like, but we forged ahead anyway. Before long, we were spending all of our free time researching RVs, watching all RV-related movies and YouTube channels, and visiting RV shows and dealerships. We had zero knowledge of the RV industry and no idea if we would love or hate the lifestyle, especially considering I had

never stepped inside one before we made this decision. We didn't know how long we would be on the road or even the first thing about renovating an RV, but did we let that stop us?

No way!

Not once have we regretted that decision. We've learned a lot during our four years on the road, though I often joke it's been more of an inner journey than an outer one.

Whether you plan to use your RV full-time or occasionally, and regardless if you'll be traveling or stationary, I want you to love it! Not only for the freedom it allows, but the way it makes you feel when you walk through the door. Because even though we dove into the RV lifestyle for greater experiences, I believe any space we reside in (temporary or not) is more than shelter.

If you're tired of wasting time and money on purchases that ultimately don't work, I'm here to tell you there's a better way.

Designing a space you love is about more than superficial changes. It's about how it makes you feel and all of the incredible ways it can support you while honoring your past, present, and future. While I understood this *before* living in an RV, tiny living certainly enforced it.

We've all experienced this more than ever since the pandemic, which forced our homes to become our refuge. This has contributed to the influx of renovation projects, which has impacted the cost of building materials. We have also seen massive growth in the number of RVers hitting the road full-time as people seek more ways to connect with nature and loved ones. It has been amazing to witness the positive impact this boom of new RVers is creating within the RV renovation industry and community.

In the chapters that follow you'll learn tips for creating a cozy and meaningful home on wheels, regardless of size, budget, or decorating style. And I've included photos of the most inspiring RV renovations created by fellow RVers and renovators, which you can learn more about on the Resources page at the end of this book.

You'll also be taken on a journey of self-discovery to learn more about who you are, what you value, what you desire, and what you want to see manifest in your life. This is because I prefer to take a holistic approach to design and want to help you create a space that not only reflects your personal story and aesthetic but that supports you mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally as you continue to evolve.

While the information I share is self-taught and intended for those who live or travel in an RV, you can apply most of it to any space you occupy. I want you to feel excited, inspired, and empowered to create a meaningful home you love, even if it is on wheels.

Oh, and in case you're wondering, I didn't buy that spatula...

# “You can’t know your style until you know yourself.”

LEANDRA MEDINE COHEN

## 01 Explore

Since you're reading this book, I'm guessing you get excited about decorating, nesting, and creating a home you love, wherever that may be, and no matter how small.

Despite thinking that we would only travel in our RV full-time for one year, it surprisingly turned into four! You'll notice I use the words RV and home interchangeably throughout this book because our RV *was* our home.

Home is where you feel nurtured, loved, and safe to express yourself. It's where you learn, reflect, and grow. It's where memories are created, meals are shared, connections are made, and dreams are often born and manifested.

The environment with which we surround ourselves can elevate our lives, foster creativity, and motivate our behavior. So why not surround yourself with what you find meaningful, beautiful, and will help support your ideal lifestyle and desires?

During our transition from a house to an RV, I began to struggle internally. At the time, I couldn't find any blogs dedicated to RV renovations (thankfully, A LOT has changed over the last couple of years!), which made me question my motives. We wanted more experiences in our lives, so why was I still so concerned with "things"?

Did this make me materialistic or shallow?

Since then, I've learned a lot about myself, and no longer do I feel guilt or shame for wanting to live in a beautiful space. This is because I experienced first-hand what I inherently knew all along, that our homes are more than shelter.

Thankfully, I eventually got out of my way and realized I didn't have to choose between experiences *or* things. I could have both.

And so can you.



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Decorating your home, even if it's on wheels, is an opportunity to share your personal style, story, and values. It gives others a glimpse into your inner world. When done well, it can enhance your life and become an environment you thrive in. Your home should take care of you as much, if not more, than you take care of it. Great design can help you achieve this.

I hope you don't question your desire to decorate, but if you do, I want you to know I've been there, and here's my takeaway:

Creating a home you love and are proud of matters because YOU matter.

I see our homes as an extension of ourselves and as a form of self-expression. It's no secret that our surroundings have the power to affect how we feel or behave, and I've experienced that more than ever in the last few years of tiny living. While this means our interiors can at times make us feel overwhelmed or frustrated, they can also uplift, comfort, and inspire us.

My dream is for you to decorate not only for the joy it brings, but also with the intention of learning how it can impact you mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Often, our outer world reflects our inner world or vice versa, but we can change it as long as we remain curious and pay attention to the connection between the two. This awareness can help us create subtle shifts in our homes that better nurture our needs and desires.

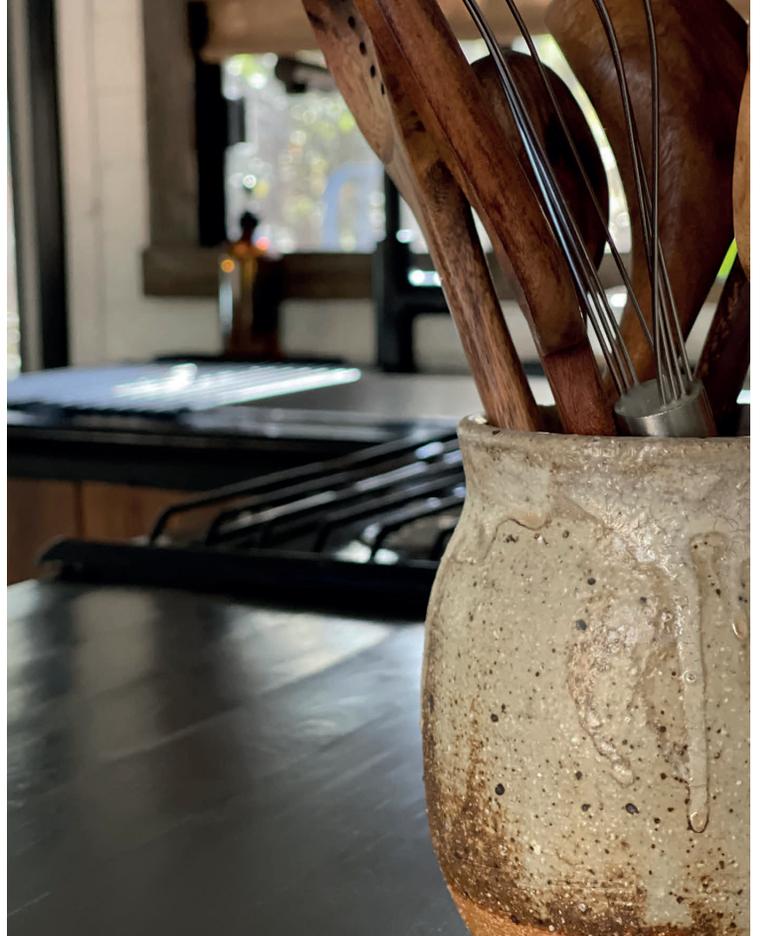
For example, when we first hit the road, the interior of our RV felt open and bright, and I was excited about our upcoming adventures. Unfortunately, it didn't take long for anxiety to take over in a way I had never experienced before. I believe this was partly due to fear of the unknown road ahead of us. My body was frequently in fight or flight mode, and I had to learn to ground myself in a constantly moving home.

Roughly a year into our transition, I began to struggle internally, and our RV interior slowly became moodier and more cluttered. Not only was I feeling stressed, but after several years in remission, my CRPS began to flare up, making it challenging to work or accomplish simple tasks.

This left me feeling guilty, resentful, overly critical, and self-conscious. I was choosing fear over love and could feel myself withdrawing from the world as I felt lost in who I was. My inner world felt chaotic, and our RV was a direct reflection of it. I had never experienced this depth of anxiety before. Determined to find peace amidst the chaos, I dove deeper into the world of holistic health and healing.

In addition to changing my lifestyle habits, I discovered that I don't exactly thrive in dark interiors for an extended amount of time, especially in times of struggle. This doesn't mean I can't have a cozy nook or incorporate darker hues, but I know to be mindful of how and where they are used, especially in smaller interiors, like an RV. Finding balance is key.

Decorating your home, even if it's on wheels, is an opportunity to share your personal style, story, and values. It gives others a glimpse into your inner world. When done well, it can enhance your life and become an environment you thrive in.



However, one of my favorite aspects about decorating is that it's subjective, so there's no right or wrong way to do it as long as you're happy with the results. You have the power to choose what you do, when you do it, and how you experience the process. And you also have the power to make changes whenever you want because as we evolve, so do the spaces we occupy. With that said, your decorating choices may be affected not only by the type of RV you have but who you plan to travel with and how often.

While it is important to surround ourselves with what we find meaningful and purposeful, I also understand there are times when an RV simply needs to be finished enough to enjoy.

For example, the timeline for your decisions will be different if you need your camper to be finished for a trip next weekend vs. someone who plans to live in their RV and make updates over time. You don't have to replace everything and can shop what you already own to see if existing décor can be used or reimaged, even if just temporarily.

Regardless of your travel plans, I hope the tips I share in this book will help provide you with the confidence to make more conscious decisions without the added guilt or overwhelm. Only you can decide what splurges are worthy and when purchases are worth the wait.

To take a holistic approach in your home is to see the connection between your space and yourself. The beauty of tiny living is you learn to be intentional with your surroundings much quicker. So I encourage you to avoid holding onto items that no longer support you, whether physically or energetically. The more you remain curious about your connection with your environment, the easier it is to figure out what you love, what you need, and how living with less truly can be more.

## reflect

The first step to creating a home you love is understanding who you are and who you aspire to be.

You can do this through self-reflection, and I've included a few fun questions on the following pages to help you get started.

Think of it as a journey to deeper self-awareness, which can help guide your long-term design decisions. I recommend designating a notebook or binder for all of your design notes, including the reflection exercise worksheets on the following pages.

*Download the Exercise Worksheets*

All of the exercise worksheets included in this book can be downloaded at the link below:

[nomadsguidetodecorating.com/worksheets](https://nomadsguidetodecorating.com/worksheets)

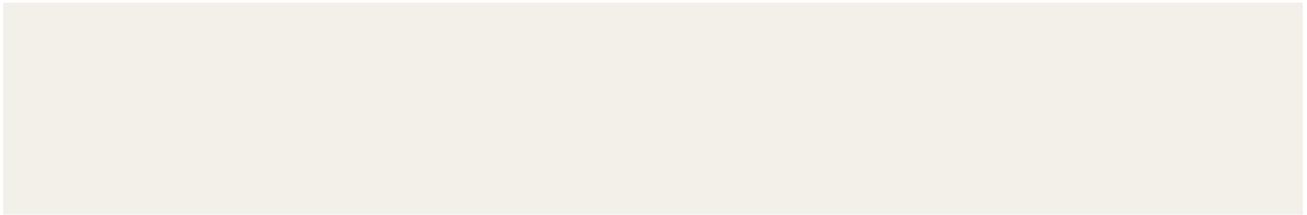
# Reflection Exercise

*Answer the following questions to learn more about who you are, what you value, and who you aspire to be. If you live or travel with someone else, ask them to try this exercise as well. It can be fun to go over your answers together, and you may just learn something you didn't know before.*

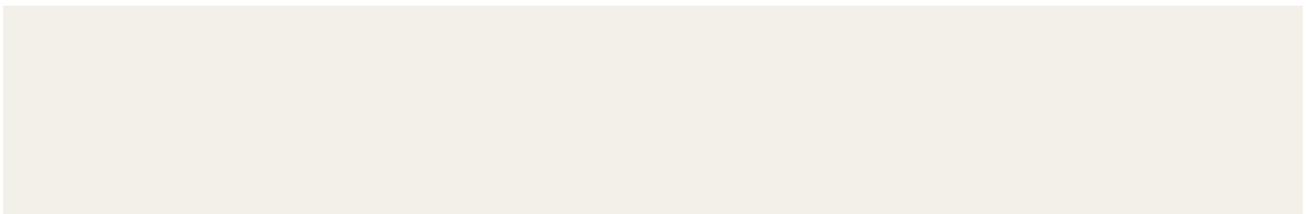
What are a few words you would use to describe your personality? How would your friends and family describe you?



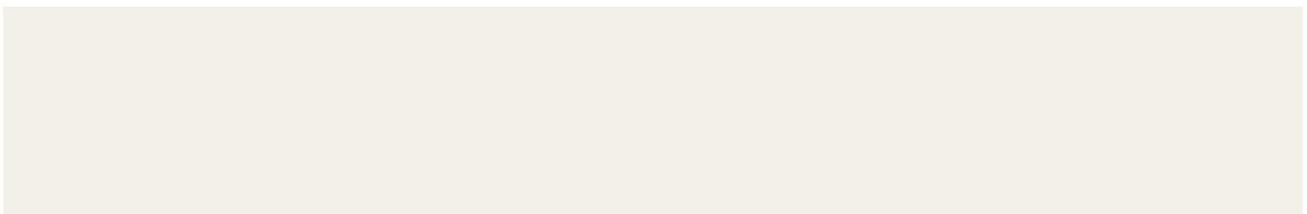
What do you value? Values help us understand what we deem important and motivates our actions. Examples are family, health, spirituality, creativity, nature, education, community, adventure, curiosity, etc.



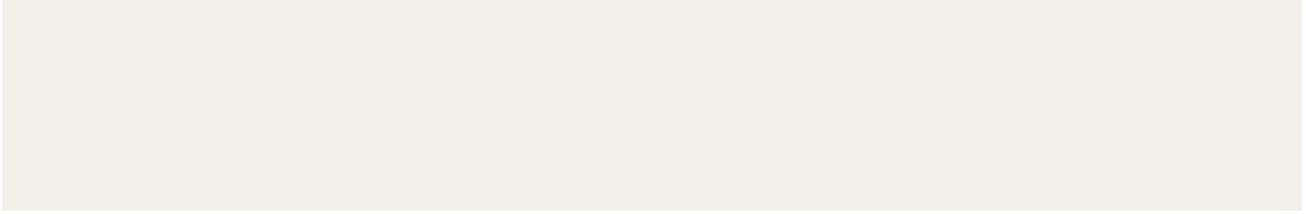
Are there any new habits or rituals you want to implement into your day? Why do you want to start these, and how will they make you feel?



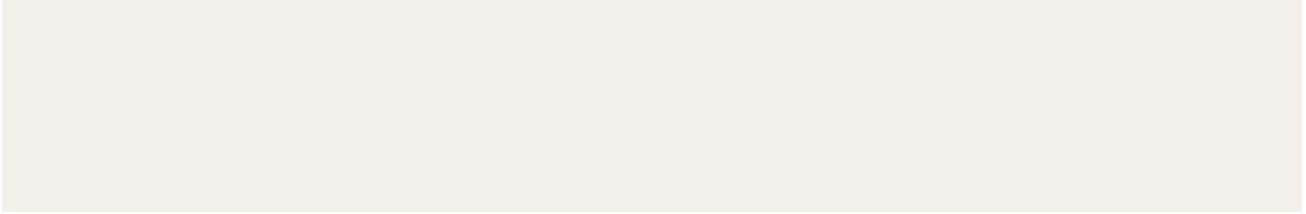
What are your dream vacation spots? Is it near the mountains, ocean, lake, or countryside? Or would it be in a more populated area, like a city?



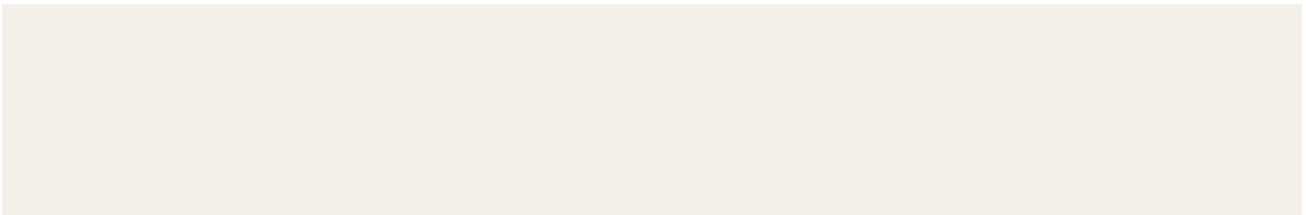
What hobbies do you currently have, or do you envision for your ideal self? Do you have any unfulfilled passions?



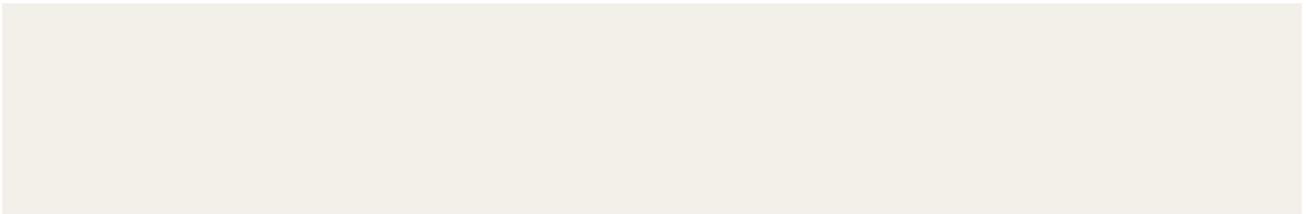
If you had a free day to do anything you wanted (money is no object), how would you spend it?



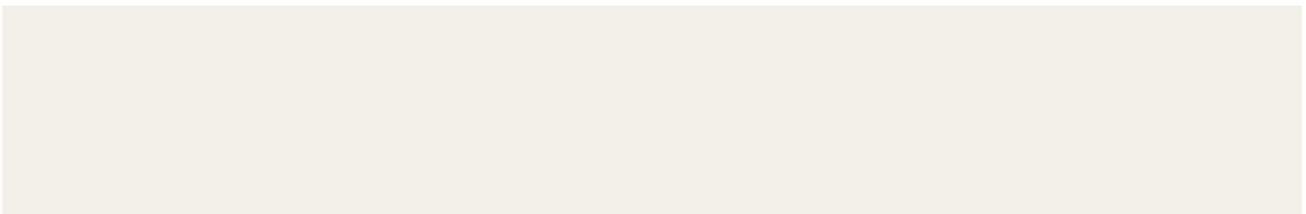
What does your ideal home look and feel like? Describe any special features.



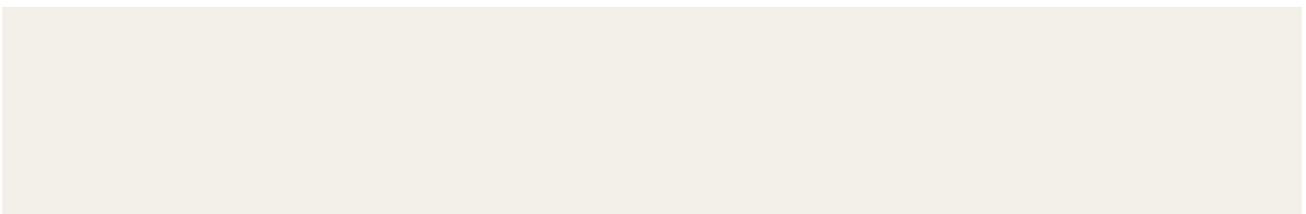
What topics do you wish you knew more about?



What are your favorite colors? How do they make you feel?



What's your favorite book? Why?



What's your favorite type of art? (Landscapes, abstract, portraits, botanical, wood, oil, etc.)

What are your favorite quotes?

What is your favorite childhood memory?

If you could time travel to any era, where would you go? Why?

How do you want people to feel around you?

What makes you unique?

Read over your responses and keep them in mind as we dive into the next section. They will also come in handy during the planning phase found in Chapter 2.

In her book, *Home Sweet Maison*, Danielle Postel-Vinay encourages Americans to take a cue from the French in how they design the “entrée” of their homes:

“This is the power of the entrée. It introduces you, the inhabitant of the home, to everyone that enters. Even if you’re not there.”

Consider that for a moment and how it can apply to your current home - and not just the “entrée,” but every room.

Then imagine someone walking through your RV in your absence. What could they learn about you through your choice of colors, style, and décor? Would visitors discover that you’re laid back, inspired by nature, enjoy cooking, love to read, or have a sense of humor? Would they know what’s important to you?

As you begin planning your RV transformation, think about these questions and how you can bring the answers through your design decisions (and not just through photos on display.) How can you create an environment that reflects what you care about?

You want to embrace who you are, not suppress it!

## inspiration

Before you start worrying about space or budget restrictions, let’s gather inspiration to help better define your design style preferences. This is one of the most exciting parts of the planning process. And because you’ve already spent some time reflecting on who you are, what you value, and what your ideal home and lifestyle will look and feel like, you’ll have a better understanding of what inspires you.

Now is the time to daydream about what you want to create and the overall vibe you want your RV to have.

One of the easiest ways to collect inspiration is to create boards or folders on Pinterest, Houzz, or Instagram. Feel free to use one or a combination to see which platform you prefer and find most comfortable. On Pinterest, I like to use Secret Boards during the planning process, but you can keep your boards public.

Label the board or folder something along the lines of “My Design Style” and spend 30 minutes to an hour saving images of interiors you love. You can start with a general search such as “Bathroom” or “Kitchen” and can later search for more specific terms or styles such as “rustic kitchen,” “french provincial”, or “bohemian.”

Make sure to keep this board dedicated to your absolute *favorite* interior design images only. Don’t save every pretty photo you come across, only the ones that ignite something inside you. Those that stop you in your tracks or make your heart skip a beat.

Nope, this isn’t the time for photos you think are pretty, live up to the current trends, kinda like, or feel “meh” about. You want to be intentional with this exercise yet don’t want to overthink it. This doesn’t mean you have to love *everything* in the photo because you probably won’t, but you want to feel connected to it. If it inspires you or has something you would love to incorporate into your space, save it to your board.

Afterward, you’ll go back through the board and train your eyes to find similarities or patterns between the saved images. As you click through each photo, make a note of the details. At first glance, what is it about each photo that you love, and on the flip side, what do you dislike or want to change? More importantly, how does each image make you feel?

Remember to be authentic to who YOU are, not what you think will impress others. If you go back through the photos and are unsure why you saved



PHOTO COURTESY OF @DARLINTRAILERS

the images, you may have made selections based on what you LIKE. If that's the case, I recommend starting over and making sure you're intentional with your choices and only save what you LOVE.

Think of this as a fun style game to help you better understand your personal aesthetic. You can also ask someone else to look at the board and tell you what they notice as far as patterns in the images you chose. It's fun to get someone else's perspective and see if they notice a detail you may have overlooked.

To help you through the process, use the questions on the following pages, which will help train your eye to pay attention to the details.

## *Design styles to research for inspiration*

If you're unsure what design style(s) you're drawn to or want to incorporate, try searching Google, Instagram, Pinterest, Houzz, etc. for different terms to see what resonates with you. Here are some words to help you get started. Your personal aesthetic is likely a combination of several styles, so have fun mixing terms or come up with your own style mantra.

- Art Deco
- Eclectic
- Mediterranean
- Scandinavian
- Baroque
- English Country
- Mid-Century Modern
- Shaker
- Beach Bungalow
- European
- Minimalism
- Southwestern
- Bohemian
- Farmhouse
- Modern
- Traditional
- California Casual
- French Country
- Moroccan
- Transitional
- Coastal
- Hollywood Regency
- Nautical
- Tropical
- Colonial
- Industrial
- Organic
- Victorian
- Contemporary
- Japandi
- Primitive
- Vintage
- Craftsman
- Lake House
- Romanesque
- Wabi Sabi
- Desert Modern
- Maximalism
- Rustic
- Zen

# Design Inspiration - the details

*This exercise will not only help you narrow down your style, but it can help you narrow down the colors, design details, or lifestyle changes you want to implement into your own tiny home. Taking time to notice these details will help you understand why you saved each photo and what you love about the space.*

Are there a lot of colors – if so, what are they? Or are the photos more neutral?

What does the flooring look like? Is it wood, vinyl, tile, carpet, etc.? What color is it?

What type of fabrics and textures are used throughout the space?

What type of patterns do you see and in what scale?

What is the ratio of patterns to solids? Is there a little, a lot, or a 50/50 mix?

What colors or patterns are on the rugs?

What color are the walls and ceiling?

What colors, shapes, and textures are in the decorative accessories?

What color and style are the metal finishes? Are they more matte or glossy?

What style and color are the window treatments?

What color is the furniture or cabinetry? What is it made of? Is it stained or painted?

Are the wood tones light, medium, dark, or a combination?

Is there wallpaper? If so, what style and color is it? Does it cover an entire wall, or partial?

If tiles are being used, what style and color are they?

What style of art is on the walls? If framed, what do the frames look like?

Are there a lot of straight lines or ornate curves in the furniture and millwork?

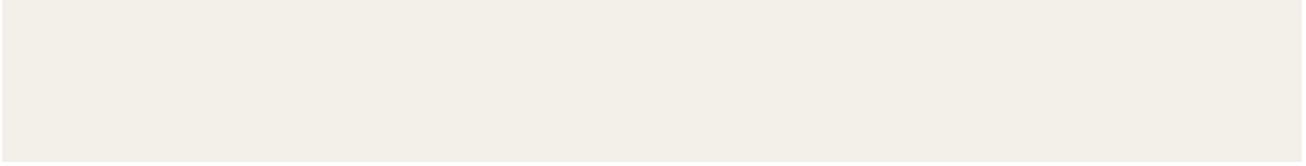
Do you notice any particular era or time-period pieces?

What style is the sofa and what is the fabric made of?

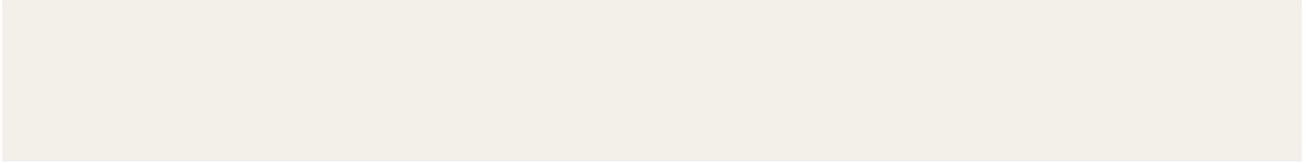
What type of light fixtures are being used?

What does the hardware look like?

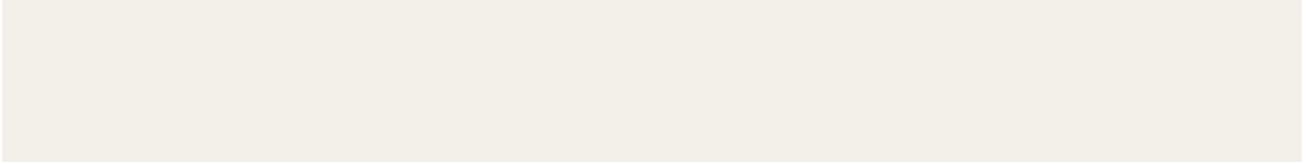
Are there any specific architectural details or wall treatments that stand out?



Are there several decorative items and objects on display, or is it more spacious and minimal?



What do you love about the images you saved?



Additional Notes:

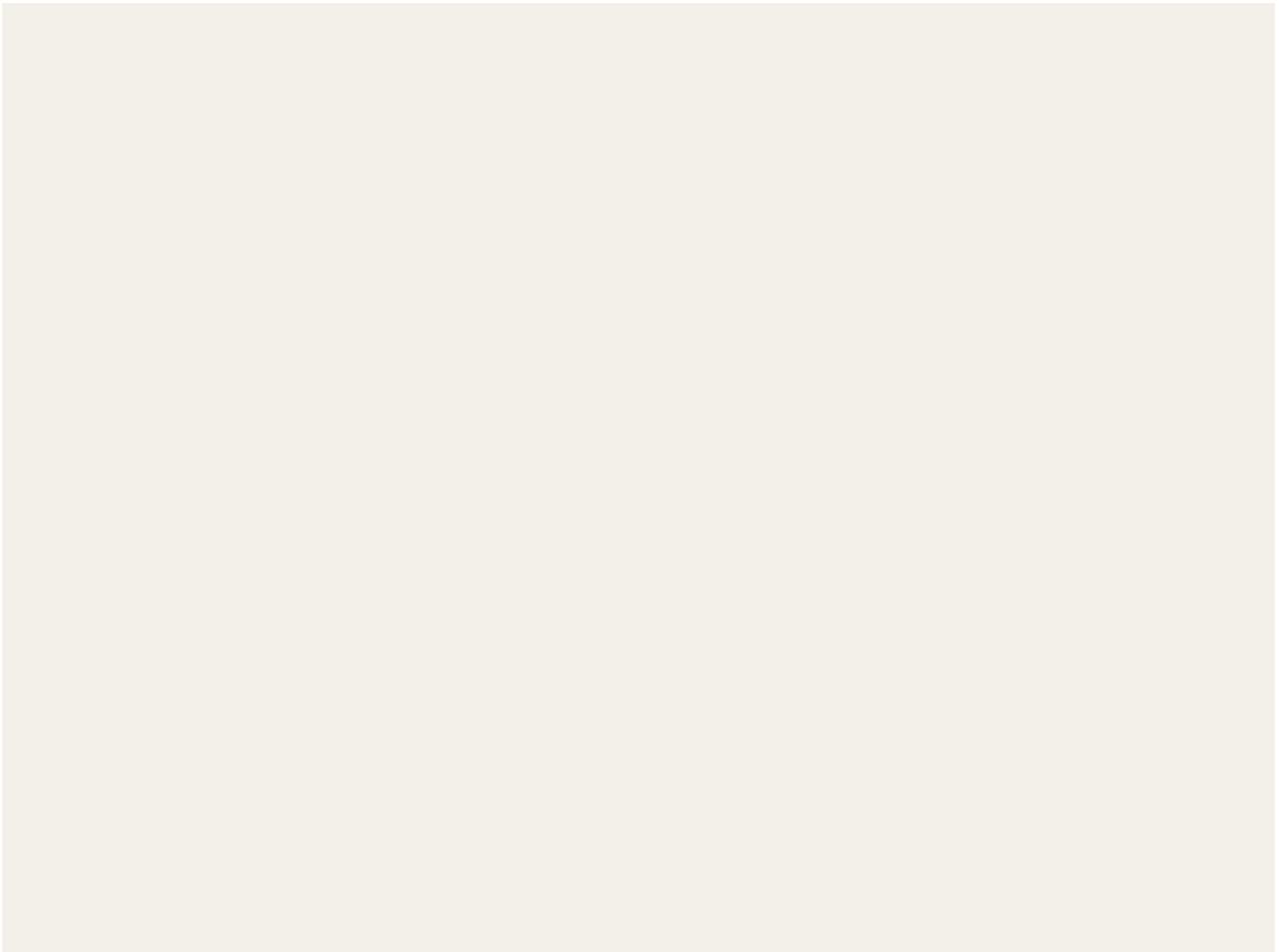




PHOTO COURTESY OF KARLEE AND WESTON MARSH

Keep in mind that finding words to label your design style is less about the actual design terms and more about finding a way to describe, research, and implement your vision.

Once you have a better sense of your design vision and style, you can create additional inspiration boards, one for each space you plan to renovate. For example, you may create separate boards titled "RV Kitchen", "RV Bedroom", "RV Living Room", "RV Bathroom", "RV Bunkhouse", and "RV Exterior." Or save inspiration for specific functions or design elements, like "RV sofa ideas". If using Pinterest you can even segment your main board into multiple categories so that everything is contained within the one main board.

By creating additional style boards for each room, you will have clarity on how you want each space to look and feel, not to mention whether they will work alongside one another.

Don't feel like you need to complete this all in one sitting either. The process may evolve, especially as you work through your renovation plan in the next chapter.

## trends

Sometimes we see an image or style so often that we begin to like it or *think* we like it when in reality, it's what our eyes have told us is popular.

Try not to be swayed by trends that pop up in the photos. Ask yourself if you love the trend or if you've just seen it around so much that it's starting to grow on you. Sometimes it may be a bit of both, or you may be drawn to it subconsciously.

While it's fun to look at photos for ideas, try not to get so caught up in trends or what other people are doing that you end up designing a space for someone else or to impress others.

Trends come and go, but your style or personal aesthetic- what you find beautiful - is likely to stay at least somewhat consistent. There have been times, like the example mentioned above, I've gotten sucked into trends subconsciously only to realize I didn't like them to begin with. Other times, I've changed something just to be "different" and hated the results because it wasn't what I truly wanted. Moral of the story? Just do you, whatever that means.

If you want to test out a trend, I recommend incorporating budget-friendly items you can easily swap out in the future. This may include pillows, curtains, blankets, and decorative accessories as opposed to items that are more expensive to replace, like your sofa or backsplash. This way, you can lean into the trend without forking out a ton of cash should you decide it's not quite your style.

On the flip side, if there is a trend you love and want to embrace, consider implementing authentic pieces that represent it when possible. For example, instead of purchasing disposable décor that screams farmhouse, consider browsing architectural salvage yards, antique shops, or small businesses for something more interesting.

You're going to be living in the space, so make sure you love it, that it reflects who you are and works for your personal needs and desires.

When all else fails, follow your gut.

## Renovation Tip

If you're unsure where to start, focusing on the kitchen design first can help guide the rest of your design and style. And if your RV is your home away from home, this is the perfect opportunity to step outside your comfort zone and take design risks!



## themes

Once you find your design style (which is often a mishmash of several styles), it's easy to go overboard and take "themes" too literally, making the design feel either more cheesy or one-dimensional.

I'm not saying to skip items that reflect a specific style or theme, but to carefully curate what you bring in rather than only decorate with objects that "fit" within that theme.

One way to do this is to focus on how a specific style or theme makes you feel and the words, colors, patterns, or materials you associate with it. You may even notice the colors you jot down are similar to those in the images you saved to your style board.

For example, you may associate the beach with being light, airy, serene, calm, and casual. It may remind you of billowing linens, whitewashed wood, stripes, sisal, jute, driftwood, or rattan. The colors may be shades of white, blues, and gray or brighter hues such as orange, coral, or red.

If a farmhouse is more up your alley, ask yourself what it is about this style that makes you feel good or excited? How do you feel when you're in a farmhouse or think about this lifestyle? And what materials and textures lend themselves to this design?

If you love log cabins and mountain homes, try to think about how you feel when you vacation in one or are out exploring the area. What draws you to the mountains in the first place?

Again, this doesn't mean you can't add certain design elements that reflect a theme you love, but restraint and contrast will help you find balance and avoid going overboard. Besides, if you embrace how you want to feel, you're more likely to create a unique space that reflects the essence you love about a specific theme in the first place.

You're also much more likely to create these feelings by searching out decorative items with "soul" or contrasting the style with its opposite to create harmony, which I'll dive into further in chapter 9.

...if you embrace how you want to feel, you're more likely to create a unique space that reflects the essence you love about a specific theme in the first place.

## other sources for inspiration

Some other ways to find your design aesthetic are to take design quizzes or make a note of your favorite interior design shops, magazines, Instagram feeds, or blogs. Do they have anything in common?

When you browse antique shops or your favorite retail stores, what type of items speak to you or do you generally pick up?

Think about your favorite vacation spots and what the accommodations look like. Do you prefer a luxury hotel, Airbnb, cozy cabin, or beach bungalow?

You may even be able to take some cues from your clothing. While some find their wardrobe reflects their home design style, others find it the exact opposite. You may want to think about your absolute favorite piece of clothing (or accessories) or what you own that is entirely different from your wardrobe.

Sometimes that unique piece highlights a part of us we have yet to fully embrace. Spend a few minutes



PHOTO COURTESY OF @FAWNBLACKHOME

browsing your closet and see if you can find connections between what you wear and how you want your surroundings to look or feel.

If you're looking for inspiration to spark your overall design, browse through art, or look at architecture, fashion, nature, or whatever place you consider your personal "sanctuary."

## *Where to find design inspiration*

- Social Media (Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok, Facebook groups, etc.)
- Houzz
- Design Websites and Blogs
- Design Shows or paying attention to the "set design" of your favorite shows and movies
- Books and Magazines
- Nature
- Art
- Architecture
- Historical sites
- Antique Shops
- Fashion (including your own closet)
- Your favorite Retail Shops or Restaurants
- Any place you consider a "sanctuary."

## focus on the feeling

Do you want the interior to feel casual, cozy, calm, cheerful, luxurious, free-spirited, grounded, or romantic? Grab your design notebook and jot down a few adjectives to describe how you want to feel in each room you plan to update, along with the overall vibe you want to encompass.

It can be just as helpful to consider what you don't want. For example, I'm not a huge fan of formal interiors because I find it difficult to relax or be creative in those environments, but you may feel the opposite. Just remember to design a space for you (and your family), and not one simply to impress others.

Once you jot down the feelings you want your home to evoke, think about what colors or textures you associate with those words.

## creating a color story

Creating a color story is one of the easiest ways to create a cohesive flow throughout your RV. This is especially important in a tiny home because you can generally see every room from one vantage point.

Rather than create a color palette for each room, create a color story for the entire RV, just as you would a residential home. I recommend choosing 3-5 colors that include your base, secondary, and accent colors and repeating at least 1-2 of those in every room. You may have more or less, but it's a good place to start. If you've picked out a decorative accessory to help guide your design, just make sure you're basing the colors off of something you love and find inspiring.

A good rule of thumb is to include a white, a neutral (other than white), and 2-3 colors, though these can also be neutrals depending on your color palette. However, this is just a guide, so do whatever makes you happy. Remember, you don't need a rainbow of colors to create a colorful room. Instead, focus on



PHOTO COURTESY OF @QUEST\_CAMPERS



PHOTO COURTESY OF @MRSCAPTAINKOCH

how you can incorporate a few colors and create visual interest through variance in tones, patterns, and textures.

You may already have an idea of your color story, especially after trying the exercise above, but if you're still struggling, consider using a color wheel. A color wheel is essentially a wheel made of primary, secondary, and tertiary colors that can help you choose what type of color scheme to use, such as monochromatic, split-complimentary, and analogous. You can use a color wheel for free online through apps or websites like Color.Adobe, or you can purchase a printed copy.

Another great tool is color psychology, which studies how color influences our mood, thoughts, and behaviors. For example, blue is generally known to create a sense of calm, whereas yellow is more energizing. Naturally, this can be affected by the amount, intensity, and tint, along with your personal experience with a specific color. How you mix colors can also affect the overall vibe they create.

Think about how specific colors make you feel, what colors make you feel good, and then use it as leverage to achieve your desired mood. Seeing a combination of colors in person can help you get a sense of how the colors work together. Feel free to browse the hardware store for paint chips you can play around with, even if you don't plan to use them for paint projects.

My favorite place to look for color inspiration is through art or photos of nature. Consider your favorite season and what colors are associated with it.

For example, I resonate with Fall and love incorporating warm, earthy colors into my interior. You can even have a color palette generated based on a photo, one of my favorite methods. There are several websites and free phone apps available with this feature, such as Color.adobe and Canva. You can also find pre-made color palettes from websites like design-seeds and colourlovers.

If you're going with a neutral color palette, consider including at least a touch of a dark neutral, such as black or charcoal gray, to help create contrast and ground the space. If you want a color that reads as neutral, consider dark blue or sage green.

### *Renovation Tip:*

When using color, consider the 60/30/10 rule, where 60% of a room is the dominant color, 30% is a secondary color, and 10% is an accent color.

### *color undertones*

A color's "mass" tone is the overall color you identify with it. The "undertone" is the underlying tone of the color that isn't always so obvious. Color undertones can be either warm or cool and are important to consider when choosing a color story.

Warm colors bring warmth and energy into a room and can make it feel more intimate. Warm colors and undertones include orange, yellow, or red. Cool colors are considered to be more relaxing and can make a room feel more spacious. Cool colors and undertones include blue, green, or purple.

It's important to realize that any color may have a warm *or* cool undertone. For example, you can find a cool color like blue with either a warm *or* cool undertone, depending on the swatch. Both colors will feel completely different in a room.

From an interior design point of view, it's often suggested to use the same undertone for all fixed elements in a space to create unity. These elements can include the walls, flooring, cabinets, and furniture. You can then decide if you want to continue that undertone with the rest of your decor or contrast it using the opposite.



Keep in mind that even neutral colors have an undertone, including gray and white. A few years ago, I painted the walls in our residential bedroom white. Or so I thought. The following day, I woke up in a light blue room and was so confused. It turns out the "white" paint color I chose had blue undertones. Not the look I was going for, but of course, I didn't realize this until afterward. This is before I understood the value of sample paint... or undertones.

I later painted over it with a warmer, creamy white, which I loved. However, I chose an off-the-shelf, pure white for our RV, meaning it didn't have any warm or cool tints mixed in. Unless you want to add an undertone, you may want to consider using pure white paint for your walls, ceiling, or cabinets.

If you're unsure of a color's undertone, place the single paint chip or fabric swatch on a white sheet of printer paper. This will help you determine if the color is more warm or cool. You can also compare it to a true red or blue. If you're looking at a paint swatch with several colors, the bottom color, which is the darkest shade, will often help you identify the undertone.

Keep in mind that undertones in a home are often based on personal preference and the type of natural lighting available. However, natural lighting may change in your RV as you travel from one destination to the next. For this reason, I'd focus more on personal preference when determining what undertones to use.

This information isn't meant to overwhelm you but instead help you understand why specific colors may not be working and how you can turn it around by focusing on the undertone.

As with all design rules, these are guidelines to help give you a place to start, but you ultimately get to decide if you want to break them, so don't overthink this! It's simply another resource or tool to reference when needed. And if you make mistakes,

remember it's part of the process! Rather than beat yourself up about it, enjoy the journey and see it as an opportunity to learn and grow.

### *Renovation Tip:*

Simultaneously choosing your color story and finishes can help ensure they work together in the same space.

## mood board

Once you have your style boards saved and the color story picked out, you can take them a bit further and create a Mood Board, which is a collage of inspiration to help conceptualize your design vision.

This process will guide the overall vibe you want your RV to have and can help you determine any specific style, textures, colors, furniture, décor, or finishes you want to include. It should encompass the mood you are going for, hence the name.

You can create a physical or digital mood board and may choose to make multiple mood boards to play around with different options. While I like to have a physical collection of materials and fabrics for inspiration and reference, I also like to create a digital mood board. You can do this using online apps or software such as Photoshop, but I recommend using Canva, as it's one of the easiest online resources to create a mood board, and they even have free plans available.

To do this, you will first need to save photos or screenshots of inspiration images, colors, and products you find online to a folder on your computer or phone. If possible, it's best to save photos with a transparent or white background.



You will then upload them to Canva, where you can use one of their templates or organize the images into a collage before saving the image or printing it out.

Another option is to create a separate board on Pinterest titled "RV Mood Board." Here, you'll re-save some of your favorite interior photos that encompass the design style you're going for, along with any images that conjure up the vibe you want, including color swatches, furniture, fixtures, textures, pictures of nature, or quotes. Even though this may not be as creative or "polished" as the option above, it's a great way to quickly reference the mood you're going for without overcomplicating it.

While your design can come together without understanding your inspiration or creating a mood board, it will likely come together much faster with one. It can also help lessen the overwhelm you may feel otherwise.

We'll dive deeper into creating a plan and budget in the next chapter.

“All you need is the plan, the road map, and the courage to press on to your destination.”

EARL NIGHTINGALE

## 02 Plan

Transforming any space can be overwhelming, nerve-wracking, and highly stressful, let alone one on wheels!

Yup, we've been there, and somehow our marriage survived.

Regardless of whether your goal is to make minor updates or take on a complete remodel, planning is key.

While it's easy to start ripping things out, painting the walls, or browsing shops for all the pretty things, if you want to stay on budget, within your time frame, AND create a space you love, you don't want to skip this step.

With that said, this tends to be the area most often overlooked, probably because to some it sounds boring or like too much work, but it can be fun! Plus, I know first-hand that projects become overwhelming

without a strategy. They can get off track or go over budget (sometimes both). The good news is you can avoid at least some of that by planning.

I'll admit that while I started with the best intentions for planning our RV remodel, I eventually went rogue, which ultimately cost us more time, money, and headaches. Not to mention countless trips returning items that didn't work.

Had I stuck to my plan, most of this could have been avoided. So, make a plan and refer back to it frequently. Think of it as your roadmap. It will make you feel more organized and offer clarity moving forward. You can always make adjustments, but having a strategy or guideline will make the process smoother and keep you on track with your overall vision, budget, and timeline.

While you can keep notes and spreadsheets on your computer (which I recommend), you may also want



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to store this information in your design binder or notebook.

To get started, first jot down your vision or end goal.

Will this be a full-blown renovation, or will you be refreshing the interior through cosmetic updates? Be clear on what your main objective is and the *why* behind it. This will keep you motivated as challenges arise. You may even want to create a design mantra or choose 3-5 words to help guide the project along.

## space planning

If possible, spend some time in your RV to get a sense of what does and doesn't work.

The more time you can spend in the RV as-is, the better, even if it's just a few hours pretending or observing how you may use the space. Becoming familiar with the current layout and flow will help you become aware of what you need from the space and how it can serve you better.

Remember that our homes, tiny or not, are meant to serve us, not the other way around.

While sitting in your RV, take a look around and ask yourself the questions on the following worksheets, which can be based on function or aesthetics. If you're in the beginning stages and haven't purchased an RV yet, consider asking yourself these questions while sitting in an RV you're considering.

Your responses may help you narrow down what to look for in a floor plan, what changes may be necessary, and what items you already own and can incorporate into the design.

## *Download the Exercise Worksheets*

All of the exercise worksheets included in this book can be downloaded at the link below:

[nomadsguidetodecorating.com/worksheets](https://nomadsguidetodecorating.com/worksheets)

# Space Planning Exercise

*Answer the following questions to learn more about what you currently like and dislike about your RV. This can be based on function or aesthetics and can help you narrow down what changes may be necessary to the layout, flow, or design.*

## **What do I like about this space? What currently works?**

I know this may be difficult when you're blinded by funky valences, dirty carpet, or outdated floral wallpaper, but think back to why you bought the RV in the first place. Maybe it's the layout or the natural light? Try to write down what, if anything, is currently working. I find it's best to start in a place of appreciation. For example, we love the windows in our RV, especially those in the hallway because they provide an abundance of natural light.

## **What do I dislike?**

If yours looks like ours did, you might have a long list. If you've already made some updates and are planning a refresh, your list may be smaller. While it may be easy to remove décor in a home, most items are stapled, glued, or bolted down inside an RV. Scan the room and make a mental note of every single item in the space. Then make a list of every single thing you want to replace.

Even if something is useful, can it be replaced with something more functional, meaningful, or beautiful? By elevating your essentials, especially anything that's on display, you'll create a space that makes you happy wherever you look. Unless you have an unlimited cash supply, you'll probably need to update or replace items as budget and time permits. However, creating a list now of everything you want to change will help you find clarity with priorities later.

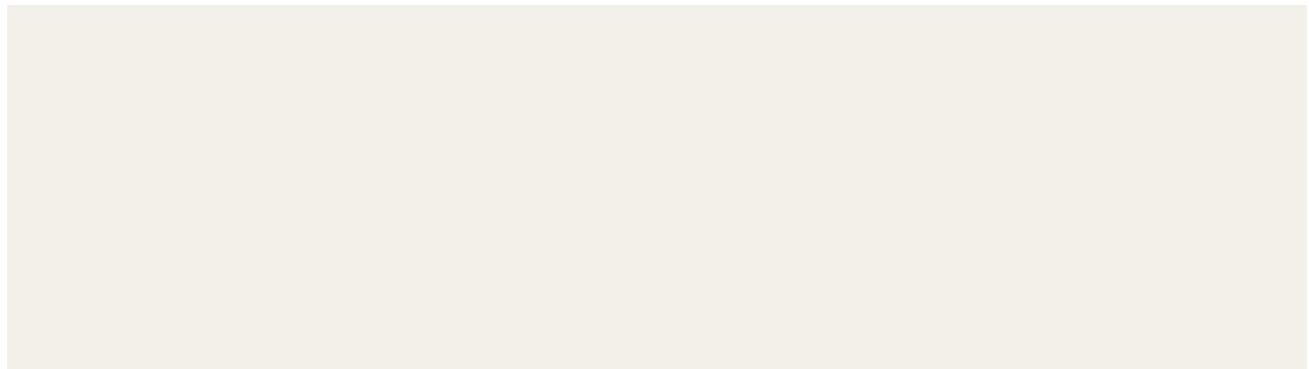
## **Who will be using the space, and what activities will take place? How could it function better?**

Homes, even tiny ones, are meant to be lived in. Think about who will be using each space and how. I recommend breaking each area into zones based on the activities that will be taking place.

You may also want to consider your current home and answer the same questions. Maybe there's something that's not working in your existing space you don't want to replicate, or maybe there's something you love that you do want to try and recreate. When you become aware of these details, you can either avoid or implement something similar into your RV.

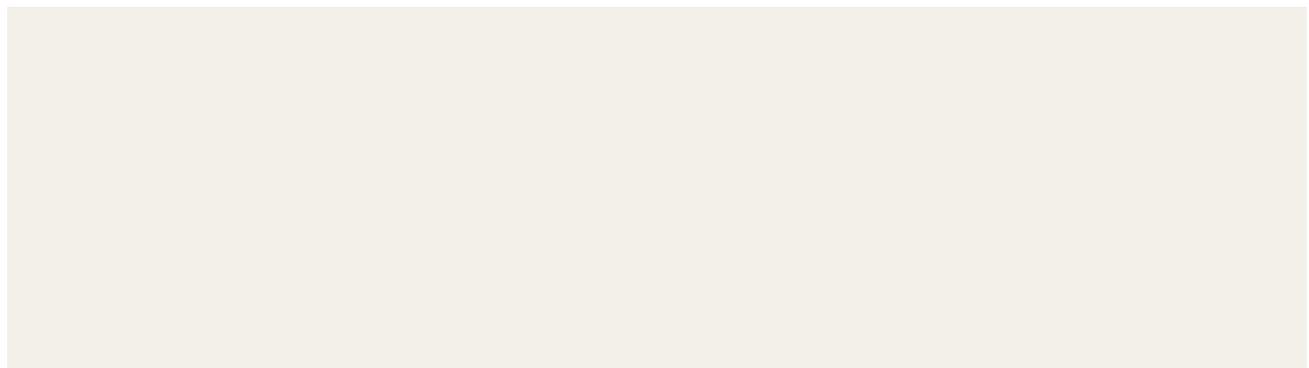
With space limited, chances are you'll need most areas to serve more than one purpose, so keep this in mind as you scan each room. For example, do you need space to snuggle up and watch movies in the living room, a table to gather around for meals, a cozy nook to read, a dedicated spot to meditate, play games, work, entertain, exercise, or do homework? Do you need flexible seating to help foster connection and interaction? Will there be kids or pets?

Look back on the values you wrote down during the reflection exercise and see if there is a way to incorporate any of them into your RV. Often, the frustration we feel from our home relates to function, flow, or maintenance and can usually be remedied through simple solutions or problem-solving.



## **Do I have any hobbies, passions, or collections to consider? Is there anything about my current or ideal lifestyle I want to incorporate?**

Maybe it's crafting supplies, books, essential oils, music, photography, or outdoor gear. While you may be transitioning to a smaller space, that doesn't mean you have to give up what you love most or want to bring into your future. You just need to prioritize what that means to you. If it makes you happy, make space for it. Jotting this information down will also help you understand how much storage you need.

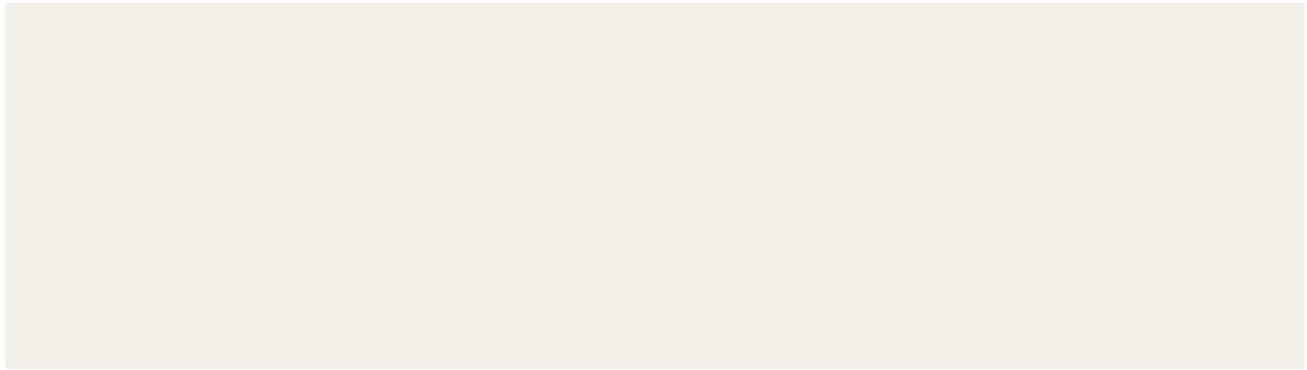


## **What furniture do I need? Do I have any existing furniture I want to include?**

Chances are, your RV already has built-in furniture, but that doesn't mean you need to keep it. My favorite RV interiors are those that include residential furniture. You'd be amazed how much an RV feels like home when you include furniture made for a house rather than an RV. Even so, you may plan to keep what you have or reupholster it.

Otherwise, create a list of the furniture you will need for each space, including any existing furniture you can use. You may be able to swap out the outdated sofa for one you already own or replace the dinette booth with your dining table. Modifications may be necessary to make items work, but depending on the situation and how meaningful a piece is, it could be worth it.

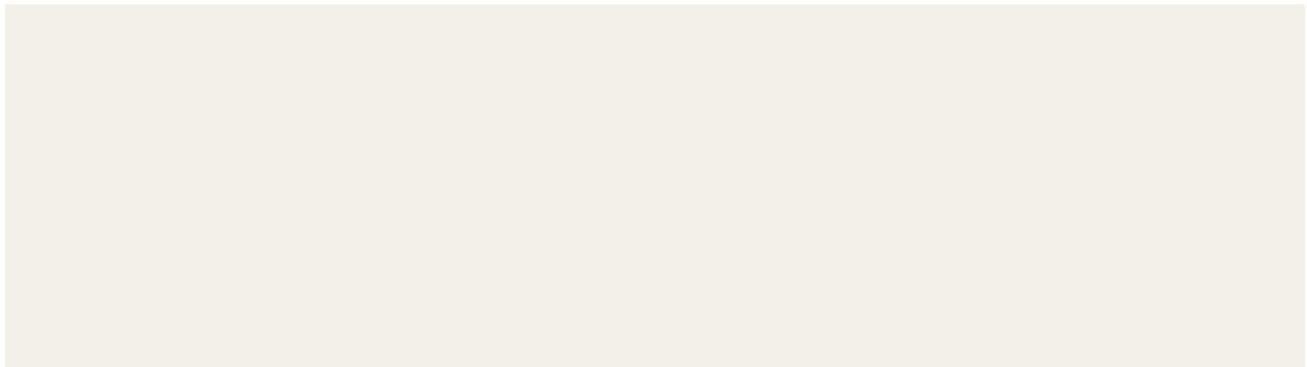
We custom-built most of our RV furniture, including our media cabinet, sofa, and dining table, but we brought in an old dining chair for the desk in our bedroom.



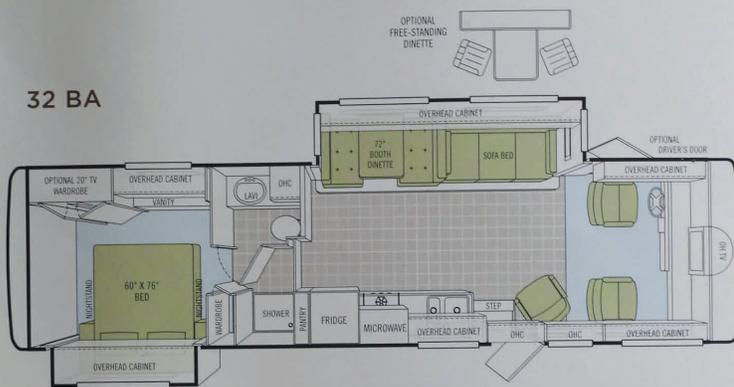
## **What existing décor or essential items can I use or repurpose?**

Do you have any existing décor, such as artwork, curtains, rugs, or bedding you want to bring into the RV? What about cooking appliances, utensils or dishes? Be sure to add it to your list! Try to stick to useful or meaningful items you enjoy. Why bring in a ton of clutter or incorporate items you don't need or particularly like?

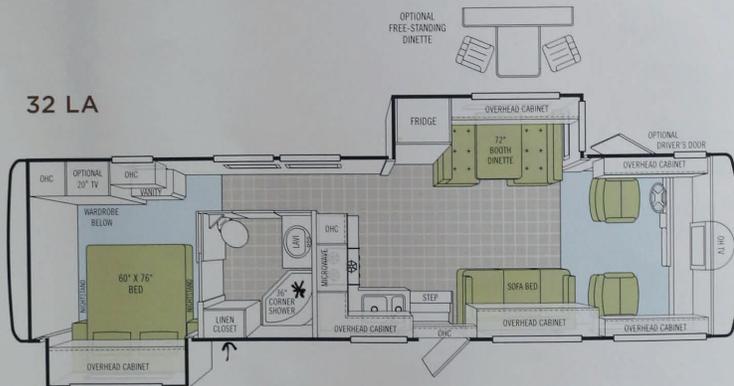
We still have décor in our RV we brought from our previous home, such as wood frames, baskets, throw blankets, and planters. By using what we had on hand, we were able to splurge in other areas as needed.



32 BA



32 LA



## floor plan

Looking back through your space planning notes, sketch out a floor plan of your RV onto graph paper. You can also use a free app, or the worksheet at the end of this chapter.

This can help give you a visual representation of the space, and any furniture or layout changes you want to make. If you're unsure how to draw the existing floor plan, you can always go off the floor plan in the brochure for your specific RV make and model. Even if you have an older RV, you can generally find a digital brochure from online archives on the manufacturer's website.

Don't worry about how accurate this looks, as it's just for personal reference.

## visualize

Now that you've spent some time thinking about what could make your RV function better, let's take some time to visualize how it will feel once the updates are finished.

Close your eyes and visualize opening the door to your tiny home on wheels.

As you step inside, what do you see? How do you feel? Forget about the current state of your RV interior, and instead, think about how you want to feel once the transformation is complete. Imagine what your morning routine will look like, how your RV will feel when you come back from a hiking trip, as you're preparing meals, or how you will unwind at the end of the day?

Visualize the lifestyle you want to have and how you will be interacting with your RV and those you share it with. Take a few moments to picture the completed renovation and the excitement you'll feel for all you've accomplished and the amazing adventures ahead. This state of appreciation will

help you gain momentum moving forward. Whenever you feel stuck or unmotivated, come back to this feeling to help propel you forward.

## wish list

Now that you've gathered inspiration and have a sense of what you need, let's create a wish list.

Consider this more of a brain dump, anything goes, no editing type of exercise where your imagination has no limits. Take 10 minutes and jot down all the updates your dream RV would include.

You can always prioritize projects based on budget and time constraints later, but for now, make space for daydreaming about what you want to create, how you want to feel, and in what ways your tiny home can serve you better.

Consider the luxuries that would make your life more manageable or help you to achieve your ideal lifestyle.

In addition to a fresh coat of paint, maybe you're dreaming of heated floors, installing a farmhouse sink, upgraded appliances, a compact dishwasher, electric fireplace, washer and dryer, upgraded shower, or techie equipment that will create a "smart" home wherever you roam.

This is the perfect time to think deeply about what you value. Maybe it's using sustainable building materials and products, adding solar power, or making space for your adventure gear or hobbies.

If you haven't already purchased an RV, this list (along with your space planning notes) will come in handy when the time comes to narrow down what type to buy or the floor plan that works best for you. If you've already purchased, you might begin to think of creative ways to make these ideas work, even if it's on a smaller scale.

Again, some projects may not fit within your current budget or floor plan, but it's fun to jot them



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PHOTO COURTESY OF @ERICA\_CURTIS



down and dream of what could be. Maybe you can't do something right away, but know it's something you want to save for down the line. Or maybe there's a budget-friendly alternative you may not have considered. Besides, restrictions often get those creative juices flowing and can help you think outside the box. In fact, some of my favorite projects involve little to no budget and creative problem-solving.

## budget & timeline

Now that your imagination has had some time to wander freely, it's time to put things into perspective.

First things first, determine your budget and timeline. Will you be doing the renovation all at once or in stages as time and money permits.

Know your expectations but allow space for unforeseen challenges and expenses. I'm all about being optimistic, but if you're aware that projects may cost more or take longer than anticipated (and in most cases, they will), you're likely to stay positive, focused, and on track.

I recommend adding a buffer of at least 20% for both project budgets and time – you would be amazed at how quickly those trips to the hardware store add up. Not to mention finding compact options to fit your style, budget, and weight limits can be challenging and may need to be customized or ordered online.

While we stayed close to our budget, our timeline dragged on longer than anticipated, partly because we could not renovate in our driveway as originally planned (it was too steep).

After some research, we found a storage facility that would allow us to work on-site, but the Georgia heat made working far from home without electricity less appealing. Needless to say, we didn't accomplish much during the first few months. Thankfully, our neighbor agreed to temporarily rent us her driveway while we worked on the remodel (thanks, Jan!).

Once we had the RV nearby we began to tackle projects, but our timeline continued to drag on. It didn't help that I wasted a lot of time trying to find items locally, only to order online anyway, and then had to wait for them to be shipped. Then there was the dreaded water leak from hairline cracks in our bathroom skylight, which threw everything off. Not fun. While we had a pre-inspection checklist that we reviewed before our RV purchase, we didn't examine the skylight closely, and it was coming back to haunt us.

We knew having the water damage repaired professionally would blow our budget, so instead, we decided to spend a good chunk of time doing research, including several calls to Tiffin (our RV manufacturer) for tips on how to fix it.

Suddenly, we had to remove the cabinets we just painted in the kitchen to remove a damaged ceiling panel. While it was a stressful situation, in the end, we learned more about the build of our RV, which gave us the confidence to take more risks moving forward. I also saw it as the perfect opportunity to repaint the lower kitchen cabinets, which I didn't love anyway. This is why having a time/budget buffer can come in handy.

When and where you renovate can also impact your plan. For example, will you finish the updates before you hit the road, or will they happen while you live in the space? Will the weather or extreme temperatures affect how much you can get done?

Regardless, it's a good idea to be realistic about what you can expect from the changes you plan to make and how they may affect your current lifestyle. We originally planned to do most of the big projects before we hit the road and decorate over time as we collected items from our travels. Instead, we didn't finish all of the projects but hit the road anyway, mostly because I had a timeline and didn't want to stray or let people down.

Looking back, giving ourselves more time would have been smarter and less stressful. Besides, I can't



think of one person that would have judged us for leaving later than we originally planned, and even if someone did, who cares! There's no right or wrong way to do something, just what works best for you and your family.

## Renovation Tip

If you're looking for ways to increase your budget, consider selling some of the existing RV furniture or fixtures. We sold our sofa and dinette booth online and used the money towards building custom alternatives. We also had a garage sale during our downsizing process and put that money into our renovation.

## project planner

It's a good idea to keep your renovation budget, timeline, and project list in an excel spreadsheet or something similar, which can later be printed and stored inside your design binder. This is where you'll list projects, upgrades, materials, tool rentals, contractor fees, etc., along with the estimated *and* actual cost. Jot down any important measurements, so everything is in one place, but don't forget to also store measurements on your phone for easy access while shopping. You can do this by taking photos of your planner, using a note-taking app, or access your files through Google Sheets.

Utilizing a renovation spreadsheet will help keep you on schedule and from going over budget. If you're unsure how to create one, you can download free templates online or search Etsy for affordable options.

Listing every single project, upgrade, material, tool rental, etc., along with the estimated cost next to it, will offer perspective on how much the renovation will actually cost and where tweaks may be necessary. If you're unsure how much a project or purchase will cost, additional research may be required to help you come up with an estimate.

I also recommend storing all receipts in your design binder for easy access, or better yet, scan them and create a digital file. Either way, hold onto any paper receipts until after you've finished your remodel, just in case you need to return or exchange something.

While I think it's a good idea to plan out most of your renovation projects and sources, I think it's just as important to leave space for spontaneous action and happy accidents. Flexibility is key, so you may want to consider planning 70-80% and leave the rest open for interpretation.

## prioritize

After you've created your wish list and understand your budget and timeline, it's a good idea to analyze, categorize, and prioritize what to get done and when.

If you're still trying to narrow down your wish list into a to-do list, consider numbering each item from 1-3 with 1 representing need, 2 representing want, and 3 representing maybe someday.

Next, go back over the list and jot down your top 3 priorities. If you're feeling confident, you can number them out even further, but don't let the list distract you from your top 3. This should be reviewed and adjusted over time as projects are completed, and unforeseen challenges arise. However, creating a list of your top 3 priorities will provide you with a good starting point.

Aside from budget and timeline, make sure you prioritize based on what makes sense in the design process. For example, if you plan to replace the flooring and paint the walls, it's a good idea to start with those items before installing new furniture.

Also, be sure to prioritize what you NEED to make the space function better for you. Your needs will differ depending on how often you'll be in the RV and whether you plan to travel frequently, occasionally, or remain stationary.





PHOTO COURTESY OF @THELINCOLNTRIBE

For example, if you plan to work in the RV, a dedicated workspace will be essential. However, if you're only traveling for fun, you may not need to bring a computer. Or you may choose to bring your laptop and set up shop in the dining area, sofa, or outside.

When we started our RV renovation, we decided to create a custom media cabinet with a built-in fireplace that could hide both our TV and a large table that would double as my desk. It was an exciting project, and we are both proud of how it turned out. With that said, we were so focused on the creative aspects of the build that I failed to think about how it may affect my needs long-term.

After years on the road, my "hidden" desk became not so hidden. I work almost every day, meaning that my desk needs to be accessible nearly every day. Despite taking less than 2 minutes to put away, I eventually dreaded the morning set-up.

Before long, I was leaving the table out more than I was putting it away. However, this made it difficult to enjoy our actual "living room," which drove me crazy. Call me lazy, but it became inconvenient. I needed a better solution. If tiny living has taught me anything, it's that spaces function better when convenience is considered.

We eventually built a modular desk in our bedroom that could accommodate my 27" computer monitor. Creating a designated workspace without the need to change the layout or flow of the room made my life easier. We only use the big table in the living room when needed, and since we only use it temporarily, we always put it away. The best part is we have our living room back!

Moral of the story? Had we prioritized my workspace, we could have made the RV function better for us from the get-go.

If you're still struggling with prioritizing, look back at your end goal and design mantra, if you created one.

You can also re-visit your values, color story, mood boards, and space planning notes to help prevent overwhelm or impulse decisions with purchases.

## measure

As mentioned earlier, once you know the list of projects to tackle and what products you need to purchase, be sure to store the measurements in a convenient location you can access remotely, like your phone. You can do this by taking photos of your planner, using a note-taking app, or through a cloud-based app, like Google Sheets.

You'd be amazed how small something looks in a retail shop and how large it can look in an RV. At the beginning of our renovation, I returned items like our kitchen faucet and bathroom sink because of measurement issues. After a few blunders, I copied all the measurements into my phone and never left the house without a tape measure in my purse (and still don't!). You never know what you may find when you least expect it, and sometimes those are the gems that make a room come to life.

## DIY or hire a professional?

When tackling specific projects, you may find yourself contemplating doing the work yourself or hiring a professional.

You've probably heard of the project management triangle, or some version of it, which refers to the three main constraints of any project: quality, time, and cost. This theory represents how you can have two of those components in a project, but not all three simultaneously.

For example, if you want something done fast, the quality may not be up to par, and if you need something of high quality, it could cost you. Or you may need to be flexible with your timeline if you want something done right and within budget.



PHOTO COURTESY OF @BRHEACHRISTINE / RENOVATED BY KARLEE AND WESTON MARSH

There are four factors I recommend considering before choosing whether to do a project yourself or hire a professional: Time, Cost, Skill, and Joy.

When it comes to DIY, you want to be realistic about your timeline and skillset. While I believe most skills can be learned, some are best left to the professionals, though it's always a good idea to get references, referrals, and estimates before hiring someone.

You may choose to do cosmetic work yourself, but leave anything that requires a license or certification, such as plumbing or electrical, to a professional. Or you may be interested in learning more about those aspects in your RV and decide to tackle those projects too.

Either way, it's essential to understand DIY projects will likely take you longer, especially if you need to spend time learning how to get them done. While you can reference books, blogs, courses, Instagram stories, and Youtube videos, learning doesn't equate to experience, and the process will likely include a learning curve. The good news is you can save a ton by doing a project yourself, and the experience you gain will give you confidence. It may even come in handy for future projects.

And if time isn't an issue and you have a strict budget, DIY can be a lifesaver!

## *Renovation Tip*

Here are 4 factors to consider before choosing to do a project yourself or hire a professional:

1. Time
2. Cost
3. Skill
4. Joy

Just keep in mind the cost of materials or tools you may need to purchase or rent, as the right tool makes all the difference. Sometimes the DIY route can cost you more, especially if it turns out poorly or goes awry.

It's also important to be realistic with your strengths and weaknesses and whether or not you're excited to learn a new skill. If it's something you've done before, do you enjoy the process?

For example, I have no problem putting in sweat equity, but when it comes to sewing, count me out.

I've used a sewing machine a few times and can hand-sew when necessary, but sewing isn't a skill I'm necessarily good at or enjoy, nor do I care to invest time improving. At least not in this season of my life.

Nope, sewing does not bring me joy.

My mom, however, is amazing at sewing and loves the process.

So when we decided to build a sofa, reupholster our captain's chairs, or find a custom Pendleton pillow for our bedroom, I asked my mom for help. I probably could have made the pillow myself (the upholstery, not so much), but I knew the results would look crappy. Plus, I didn't want to spend money on quality fabric only to have it ruined by my impatient fingers.

Thankfully, she's my mom, so she didn't charge (thanks, mom!). The point is to know what you're good at or what you're excited and willing to learn more about. If you have friends and family with the expertise you lack, don't be afraid to ask for help!

While we chose the DIY route for our RV renovation, the process took much longer than anticipated, and our projects are far from perfect. That said, we saw our RV as an opportunity for learning new skills. We're proud of what we've accomplished, not to mention the amount of money we saved.



## weight

According to the RV Safety & Education Foundation (RVSEF), 56% of RVs are overweight, so it's no surprise weight is one of those concerns nearly every RV'er stresses about, myself included. So how do we combat weight in the RV and make sure we aren't adding too much?

As inconvenient as it may be, the only way to know how much your RV weighs is to get it weighed, preferably with full tanks.

To be honest, in the beginning, I was OBSESSED and overly concerned with adding too much weight, to the point of being scared to add a cutting board that was too heavy or even a Himalayan salt lamp night light.

Yeah, it was ridiculous. But to be expected when it's a hot topic of discussion in RV forums and Facebook groups. Not to mention, an overweight RV can cause tire blowouts, create legal issues, and put your safety (and the safety of others) at risk.

I wish there were an easy answer to this, but the truth is, every RV is different.

For example, the weight limit for a small travel trailer will vary greatly from a diesel pusher motorhome, and the needs of an occasional RVer will vary greatly from someone who is a full-timer. The same goes for someone RVing solo vs. a family or someone with pets.

So my quick answer is to be mindful of the weight you remove and add. You'll need to understand your RV's specific weight limitations and stay under the GVWR (Gross Vehicle Weight Rating) and GAWR (Gross Axle Weight Rating).

Getting your RV weighed before, during, or after a renovation can bring you peace of mind and help you make more intentional decisions with confidence. Anything and everything brought into the RV will take up space and add weight, but only you can decide if it's worth it.

## *how to weigh your RV*

Wouldn't it be nice if every RV included a button you could push that would tell you how much it weighs and how much wiggle room you have left? I know this would have made our lives so much easier, but unfortunately, it doesn't exist. At least not yet.

There are essentially two main ways to find out if your RV is overweight: through a certified CAT scale or wheel position weighing.

Wheel position weighing cost less than \$100 and is recommended for the most accurate results because it gives you the best information on how weight is distributed on each wheel, axle, and side, and where rebalancing may be necessary. Most companies that offer wheel position weighing, like Smartweigh and RVSEF, seem to be located mainly in Florida, Texas, or Arizona, though they travel to different states throughout the year.

CAT Scales are generally more convenient and cost less than \$15 but cannot provide individual wheel weights, which can sometimes lead to inaccurate numbers.

You can find CAT Certified Scales at gas stations that cater to trucks such as Love's and Pilot. While it's best to utilize wheel position weighing, CAT scales are beneficial and better than nothing. In my opinion, they seem to be under-utilized by RVers, so I highly recommend taking advantage of this resource.

## *how to locate weight limits*

We located our GVWR and GAWR limits on the wall to the left of the steering wheel. However, they may be located somewhere else in your RV so you may need to do a thorough search or contact your manufacturer. We also discovered the max weight rating in our RV brochure, including the one found in the online archives.





@MOUNTAINMODERNLIFE

You may or may not run into this issue, but we noticed that our owner's manual weight ratings were slightly lower than those marked inside our RV. Even though we were below both and figured the numbers in the RV were more accurate, we decided to call Tiffin (our RV manufacturer) to make sure.

They told us the info inside the RV was the correct information based on the chassis in our rig, which makes sense considering the customizations available to every RV.

## *Compromise*

As we worked through the renovation, we became more confident in the amount of weight we were removing, which helped us understand how much weight we could put back in. We removed extra cabinets we didn't need and even replaced our bedroom door with a curtain.

Was it necessary? Maybe not, but at the time, we knew we didn't need either and that it would provide more flexibility in adding weight to other areas of the RV.

I'll admit we pushed some of my favorite projects to the bottom of our to-do list for fear of adding too much weight. This included creating a planked wall in our bedroom from reclaimed wood, installing a barn door, and adding wood planks to our sofa. We eventually implemented those updates anyway, once we felt more confident, but not before removing the lightweight alternatives we created first. I basically wasted time and money when it wasn't necessary.

By planning your projects and prioritizing what you *really* want (even if it's heavy), you can compromise elsewhere to save on weight and balance things out.

## **clear the space**

Now that you have a plan in place, it's time to get to work! Unless you're renovating while living in your

RV, this is a good time to remove any furniture, décor, and flooring you plan to update or replace, as creating a clean slate is key.

If you're unable to remove the built-in furniture or don't plan to replace or reupholster it, remove as much of the loose décor as possible such as the linens, pillows, or rugs. If you plan to paint, create wall treatments, or hang new wall décor, now's a good time to remove any existing art or mirrors. The more you can prepare the space for renovation or "quiet" it before making changes, the better.

However, if you plan to make updates while living in the RV, it's best to leave at least one space, such as the bedroom, untouched until you finish the other areas. This way, you can hold onto at least some of your sanity.

After clearing the space physically, consider cleansing the energy by burning sage or palo santo, also known as smudging. For a smoke-free option, diffuse an essential oil, such as orange, lavender, frankincense, or cedarwood. You can also create or purchase smudge spray mists. Alternatively, a popular option in Feng Shui is to place orange peels into a spray bottle and fill it up with water. You can then spray it around the room for a cleansing, uplifting scent.

## *Renovation Tip*

Don't forget to take lots of before photos! Not only can these be helpful to reference when planning and shopping, but they can help motivate you on challenging days, as they'll remind you of how far you've come.

## **overwhelm**

With everything I've mentioned so far, and with so many decisions to make, overwhelm can begin to creep in, but the good news is there are ways to combat it.

Before moving into our tiny home on wheels, we were renting an 1800 square foot house. It wasn't



until we began the downsizing process that I realized how little I loved the items we collected over the years simply because we had the space to stash them.

It was nice to finally have a clean slate in the RV where I could only bring in what I cherished, what served a purpose, and in most instances, did both.

Only I didn't have an actual plan for decorating our RV, just the overall vibe I was going for, and this no-plan approach didn't work out too well. With so many decisions to make, overwhelm took over, and I would walk into a store only to walk out empty-handed. Not necessarily a bad thing, but it got to the point where I was holding out for the perfect *everything* and couldn't make decisions. I knew I had taken it too far when I struggled to buy something as simple as a trash can.

Yes, I'm embarrassed to admit I took months to buy a trash can for our RV kitchen. I can pretend it's because we weren't yet living in the RV, but the truth is that I was overwhelmed by this simple task. I finally bought a generic trash can because it's a trash can, and I could buy a "better" trash can later if needed. (I didn't need to.)

While this scenario is extreme, it shows what can happen when decision-making and overwhelm creep in, especially when consumed with making the "perfect" purchase.

This is why having a plan is so important. It will help you better understand your vision, needs, values, and priorities, which will help you make decisions confidently. My original plan had some holes in it, hence the reason I spent a little too much time contemplating whether or not to buy that spatula.

If you find yourself struggling or battling overwhelm, go back to your renovation notes, browse through your inspiration, look over your mood board, reassess your values, and create an action plan of priorities. Or do what I do in times of stress or anxiety... meditate.

## *Meditation Tip*

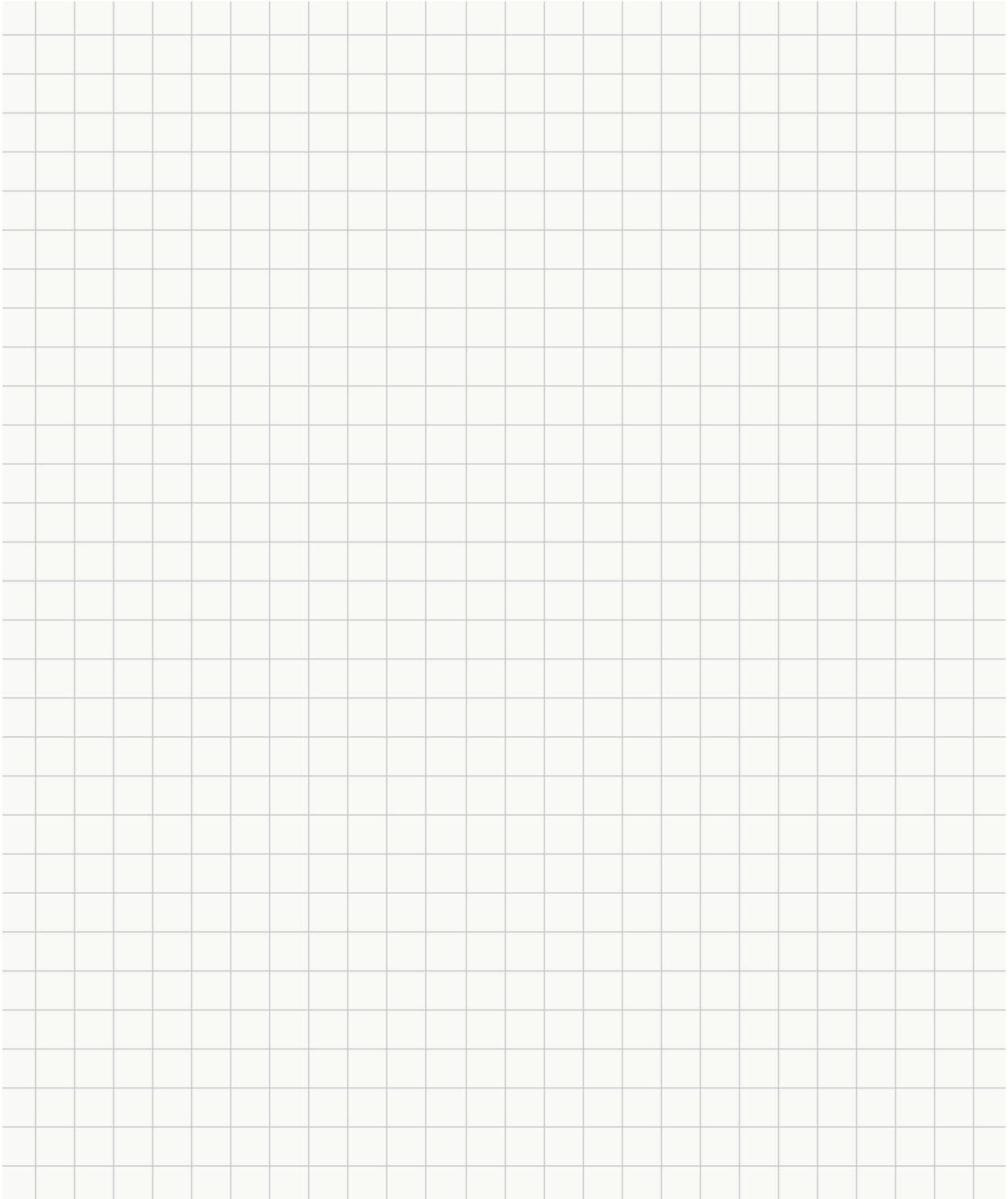
I find it especially helpful to meditate in times of stress or overwhelm, as it can help remove mental clutter. Even taking just a few minutes to close your eyes and breathe deeply can help you relax, ease anxiety, and become more grounded. With practice, you will learn to trust your intuition.

There's no right or wrong way to meditate, and there are tons of resources available to help you get started. This includes countless types of guided meditations depending on what you need for the day, and soothing sounds to help you relax. Some examples include the Headspace, Calm, or Insight Timer app. Headspace even has a beautiful series on Netflix for beginners about how to meditate. Many websites also offer free meditations, or you can search podcasts.

I practice different methods depending on my needs. Sometimes I listen to guided meditations, and other times I sit in silence with the backdrop of rustling branches and singing birds. You can sit, stand, lay down, or even go for a walk. This is all about taking a few moments to slow down, and bring yourself some inner peace.

# Floor Plan Worksheet

Use the space below to sketch out your current RV floorplan and any changes you want to make.



## *Note about potential water damage*

Unfortunately, due to their construction, many RVs suffer from water damage at one point or another, even if you don't notice it during your pre-inspection. As a result, you may come across water damage you otherwise wouldn't have known about during the renovation process.

One way to spot it during the demo phase is to pay close attention when removing items to see if there is rust on the tip of any screws. This doesn't always equate to water damage, but it could be a sign, as it was for us when removing our ceiling fans and skylight. While this is a problem no one wants to deal with, the good news is that many blogs, videos, and forums include tips and tutorials on how to go about tackling these types of repairs.

“Picture your dream home. I bet it’s  
not filled with clutter.”

JOSHUA BECKER

## 03 Simplify

Naturally, one of the biggest concerns when it comes to tiny living is a lack of space. However, life with less doesn't mean you have to give up what you love most. Whether you plan to transition to RV living full-time, seasonally, or for weekend adventures, you'll have to figure out what will come with you. This is especially true if you plan to hit the road full-time, and for some, that could mean downsizing from an entire home full of stuff to less than a hundred square feet.

Sure there will be sacrifices to make, but as you remove unnecessary excess, you make space for what you truly care about. Don't get rid of something because you think you're "supposed to." This is about what works for you, and only you can decide what that means.

Before making the transition from a residential home to one on wheels, Eric and I had a massive amount of decluttering to tackle. Every time we filled

a new box with items to donate, recycle, or trash, I felt lighter, calmer, and as though I was creating space for other priorities in my life.

It was pretty amazing and kind of addicting. We had a home full of stuff, but I was surprised at the pile of meaningless crap we had acquired over the years. I'll admit running a DIY blog had become both a blessing and a curse. I found myself collecting thrifted finds that needed love or vintage pieces I could repurpose. At some point, I forgot to focus on what I loved and instead bought things simply for the challenge of updating or repurposing them. After all, my website at the time was called Upcycled Treasures.

I had bins full of random decor just in case I needed them for photos, but nothing reflected my style, and anything that did was quickly lost amongst everything else. Let's not forget the garage full of thrifted misfit chairs and broken furniture, most of which had been on my "someday" project list for well over a year.

When we moved from California to Georgia 5 years prior, we only brought what we could pack into our Jeep. Yet it didn't take long for us to collect more stuff. It almost felt like we filled that house to make up for lost time.

While clutter affects everyone differently, and some more than others, I believe it can affect our mood, behavior, and self-esteem. Many researchers have proven this theory, including one study from UCLA's Center on Everyday Lives and Families (CELFL), which looked at the relationship between 32 California families and the stuff in their homes. During their research, scientists discovered a link between clutter and higher cortisol levels.

Our homes can mirror our inner environment and vice versa. When my life, or even my desk, feels cluttered, I find myself emotionally drained and blocked creatively. Have you noticed this in yourself? Deep down, I knew this before buying our RV but didn't realize the toll it had taken until we began the downsizing process.

Here are some of my favorite downsizing tips based on what I've learned and implemented over the years.

## timeline

Before you begin the decluttering process, come up with a timeline, and set your intention. This way, you'll have an end goal in mind and motivation to help you move forward. Pick a date, circle it on your calendar, and decide how much time will be spent going through items every week. Just remember this is a process best taken in small, actionable steps.

During our downsizing process, I would generally dedicate a few hours every weekend to decluttering, but you may prefer to spend 15-20-minutes daily instead. Do whatever works best for you and take breaks if you feel stressed or overwhelmed.

## prep

Grab some trash bags and a few bins, boxes, or baskets that can be used for the following categories:

- Keep
- Donate/Sell
- Recycle
- Trash

You may also choose to have a separate bin or designated area for items you want to keep or store. Prior to hitting the road, we decided to store some of our handmade furniture, along with our favorite sentimental items. We had no idea how long we would be on the road, but our original plan was to travel until we found a place to settle down. We still don't know when or where that will be or if we will even want or need some of the items we saved. Even so, I don't regret storing some of our favorite possessions.

I mention this because I don't want you to think you have to do things a certain way if you choose to downsize. Do what's best for you and what makes you most comfortable.



Regardless of how much you need to go through, I recommend you first create a calm, inspiring environment. Open some windows, play some music, light a candle, or diffuse your favorite essential oils. I love to burn palo santo before cleaning or organizing as it helps set the mood for a space I want to be in.

Don't forget to keep your favorite beverage nearby. For me, it's a chai tea latte. Then take a deep breath, and while exhaling, let go of all expectations. It's time to start decluttering.

## letting go

Keep in mind this process may take some time, especially if you have several rooms or an entire home to downsize. And your space will look worse before it gets better, but hang in there. You've got this!

Whatever you do, leave your sentimental belongings for last. Trust me on this. Otherwise, you'll spend all day reminiscing over photos and mementos, which will leave you feeling more overwhelmed by the end of the day. Instead, start with something easy or practical, like utilitarian objects.

By practicing on items you're less attached to, your confidence will increase over time, making the process easier. It will then be less daunting to navigate items with higher sentimental value.

I used to declutter based on the room, but after reading Marie Kondo's book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, I began decluttering based on categories. I prefer this method because it gives you a better sense of what you own and makes it easy to locate unnecessary duplicates.

For example, rather than go through your bedroom closet, coat closet, and dresser drawers separately, locate all of your clothing, and I mean ALL of it, and pile it onto the bed. Once you have every single item of clothing in one place, begin to go through it, one item at a time. And the same

method can be applied to shoes, books, movies, medicine, dishes, electronics and cables, crafting supplies, paperwork, etc.

As you work through the pile, pick each item up, and ask whether you use or cherish it. At first, this may sound silly or unnecessary, but it's a great exercise for items you're considering keeping. Physically holding an item will help you understand whether or not you still feel connected to it. You may also notice something is damaged, expired, or hasn't been used in over six months, which will help speed up the downsizing process.

I'll admit I was holding onto a few too many "paint clothes" and tattered pajamas. I also realized we had a lot of spices that were past their expiration date. Oops.

Once you pick up an item, try to decide within 30 seconds. You will likely know right away if it's something you want to keep or not. However, if you place it into the "donate" bin and immediately regret it, take it back out and keep it. Or put it back into the pile and come back to it later. There's no right or wrong, so listen to your inner guide for direction. In the beginning, you may even want to go back through your "keep" pile and, in doing so, realize you can let go of even more.

If the idea of going through an entire category all at once feels overwhelming, consider starting with something small, like your purse, medicine cabinet, or sock drawer. Then set a timer for 10 minutes. After you tackle your first task, you'll feel the momentum and a sense of accomplishment, making you excited to clear more from your life, even if it's on another day.

No need to panic if you're on the fence about letting go of something. Instead, make a mental note of how often it's used over the next month or two to help you decide whether it's worth keeping. Or you can set it inside a box or basket and store it elsewhere. Check the basket in two months, and if



you haven't missed what's inside, you'll know it's time to let it go.

And if you're struggling with nostalgic items you no longer cherish or want to display, consider taking photos of them. This way, you can let go while continuing to enjoy the memory associated with it by looking at the image.

During the downsizing process, I realized I had held onto things I didn't need, love, or care about simply because I felt guilty for the money I had wasted in the first place, otherwise known as the "sunk cost fallacy". Other items stuck around because I thought they might come in handy *someday* or feared I wouldn't be able to replace them. Then there were the items I felt bad getting rid of because someone gave them to me, and I didn't want to seem ungrateful or waste money they had spent on me.

I'm sure you can relate to most, if not all, of the scenarios above, but here's the thing, unless it's meaningful or useful, it's okay to let that stuff go. If you feel like you need permission, I'm here to give it to you.

Don't let your things own you.

The money has been spent, and there's no need to hold onto anything that makes you feel bad, annoyed, burdened, or frustrated. In fact, that's a good indication it may be time to let it go.

The last thing you want is to surround yourself with negative energy or items that no longer bring meaning or value into your life. When in doubt, follow your gut. Besides, someone else may find joy or use from those items you're keeping to collect dust and bad feelings.

By taking the time to understand how something you own makes you feel, you'll become more intentional with what you bring into your future. As Marie Kondo suggests, it may help you to thank those items that no longer serve you. This can release any guilt you have,

which may be what's holding you back from letting go in the first place.

If you're holding onto something you want to sell or plan to fix, consider giving yourself a deadline. When the date rolls around, if the item hasn't sold or you haven't gotten around to fixing it, donate it.

Every time you release more clutter, imagine you're also releasing any negative energy that has been holding you back, such as fear, anxiety, anger, resentment, shame, or guilt.

As mentioned in the last chapter, smudging the space with dried botanicals, oranges, or essential oils can help clear the old, negative, or blocked energy. It can also help bring new intention into the space, especially if one is set prior to and during this ritual.

You can do this before decluttering, afterward, or both. Don't forget to open some windows afterward to visualize any negative or stagnant energy leaving the room.

## progress over perfection

For us, decluttering didn't stop once we left our sticks and bricks home. Even in the RV, it's an ongoing process.

We purge every couple of months or anytime we no longer need something. You may also choose to follow the "one in, one out" rule, where you remove something from the RV every time you buy something new. I'll admit this is a great practice, but one I've never really followed.

If you have the room, consider keeping a donation basket in a dedicated location of your home, RV, or the trunk of your car. Once it's full, you can drop it off.

This process is about choosing progress over perfection. It's about being mindful of our shopping

habits and not letting consumerism, comparison, or FOMO (fear of missing out) take over. Thankfully, this process is easier when space is limited, but don't forget to give yourself grace and celebrate those small victories. And remember that everyone's threshold is different and you don't need to be a minimalist to enjoy RV life. You get to make your own rules.

After you spend time evaluating what you own and removing excess, you'll be more aware of your shopping habits and if there are changes you want to make moving forward. Chances are, with less stuff to manage, clean, or store, you'll find clarity in both your inner and outer world.

## *Questions to ask yourself when downsizing or decluttering*

1. Do I love it?
2. Do I use it?
3. Is it damaged?
4. Has it expired?
5. Is It an unnecessary duplicate?
6. If rarely needed, can I rent or borrow it from someone else?
7. Does it reflect who I am or who I want to become?
8. Do I have a place for it and can it be used in more than one area?
9. What's the story behind it and does it align with my values? (How and where was it made? Is it sustainable? Is it a company or brand I want to support?)
10. What's the symbolism behind it? Consider both personal and universal symbolism. Is this something I want to infuse into my space energetically?

“We shape our dwellings, and afterwards  
our dwellings shape us.”

WINSTON CHURCHILL

## 04 Flooring

When we purchased our RV, we were excited to replace the dirty beige carpet and tiles. Not only was it dingy and dated, but traveling in an RV with carpet and fur babies seemed like a disaster waiting to happen.

Are you thinking about replacing the flooring in your RV but confused about what products will hold up in a home on the road? Or maybe you're nervous about tackling the slide-out flooring?

After countless hours researching options online, Eric and I decided on a floating floor made of luxury vinyl planks. We chose luxury vinyl planks because we wanted something lightweight, flexible, and waterproof that would be stylish and durable.

A floating floor doesn't require nails or adhesive for installation and instead uses a locking system. Since it floats above the subfloor or existing flooring, it can contract or expand as the temperature and

humidity fluctuate, which can be both beneficial and a burden. Beneficial because humidity and temperatures often change when you travel in an RV, but there is the potential of buckling over time.

With that said, there are several flooring options available, each with its own set of pros and cons. Do your research, consider your budget, skills, resources, and lifestyle, then choose the best-suited option for you. While eco-friendly flooring was limited and expensive during our renovation, more options have become available at various price points.

In my opinion, it's best to look for something waterproof (or at least water-resistant), lightweight, durable, and easy to clean. It's also best to stick to flooring under 5mm thick, especially if you have a slide-out, though we used a slightly thicker option and never had an issue.

Below are a few popular flooring options used in residential homes, along with the pros and cons of each



for RV use. I hope this information gives you a basic understanding and direction for what type of flooring you want to research further or may want to avoid altogether.

Regardless of the flooring you purchase, make sure to read the fine print as the warranty may be void once installed in an RV. While this didn't stop us from using our specific flooring, it was good to know beforehand.

## Renovation Tip

If you plan to replace the flooring in your RV, keep a staple lifter or Oscillating Multi-tool nearby, along with some patience. You'll be amazed at how many staples you'll need to remove!

### carpet

While carpet was off the table for us, it may be worth considering depending on your lifestyle and budget. More durable options are now available, including indoor/outdoor carpet that is easier to clean and maintain. You can find sustainable carpet options with a less or non-toxic adhesive for installation. You can even purchase carpet tiles, making it easier to clean or replace smaller sections rather than the entire carpet.

**Pros:** More affordable, easy to install, variety of colors, dampens sound, soft and warm.

**Cons:** Gets dirty easily, can retain moisture and odors, not as easy to clean and may need to be replaced more often, may include off-gassing chemicals.

### hardwood

I'm a sucker for real wood and drooled over hardwood flooring styles during our research, especially those made from reclaimed materials. Not only is hardwood eco-friendly, but it brings a quality often unmatched by synthetic alternatives. Unfortunately, hardwood flooring is heavy and doesn't handle water or humidity well. This makes it less durable and impractical in an RV and is why we crossed it off our list early on in the research process. Even so, I mention it to help you understand why it's not the best option.

**Pros:** Renewable resource, durable, easy to clean, high-quality, wide variety of design styles.

**Cons:** Heavy, doesn't handle moisture or humidity well, more expensive, can scratch easily, may require an additional topcoat, more challenging to install, noisy.

*Note: We may not have replaced our RV carpet with real wood flooring, but we did use some to build our butcher-block style kitchen countertops.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF @THISBUS

## cork

Cork is a natural option that has gained popularity over the years because it's a renewable resource made from the bark of oak trees. It can be more affordable and lightweight than typical hardwood flooring and comes in glue, peel and stick, and click-lock installation styles.

**Pros:** Eco-friendly, more affordable, weighs less than hardwood, sound dampening, great insulator, soft and resilient, hypoallergenic, antimicrobial, variety of installation styles.

**Cons:** Not recommended for moist environments unless sealed, may need to be resealed periodically, can fade from sunlight, more susceptible to scratches and stains, limited styles.

## bamboo

While technically considered a grass, Bamboo is generally categorized under hardwood flooring. This is an eco-friendly option that can be somewhat lighter than other hardwood flooring options. However, bamboo quality can vary greatly, so consider low VOC options or FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified options, which means the product is held to high social and environmental standards.

**Pros:** Eco-friendly, weighs less than hardwood, durable, easy to clean, can be refinished, hypoallergenic, and antimicrobial.

**Cons:** Does not do well with excessive moisture or humidity, prone to scratches and dents, depending on where and how it's produced, it may include off-gassing chemicals.

## laminate

Laminate flooring is often considered an affordable alternative to hardwood. While some options may be water-resistant, it's not waterproof and can be damaged from moisture, making it a risky move in an RV. With that said, it's still a popular option amongst RVers, and many have taken this route with great results and stand behind their decision.

**Pros:** More affordable than hardwood, resembles natural wood, variety of design styles, durable, easy to clean, easier to install, floating floor options available.

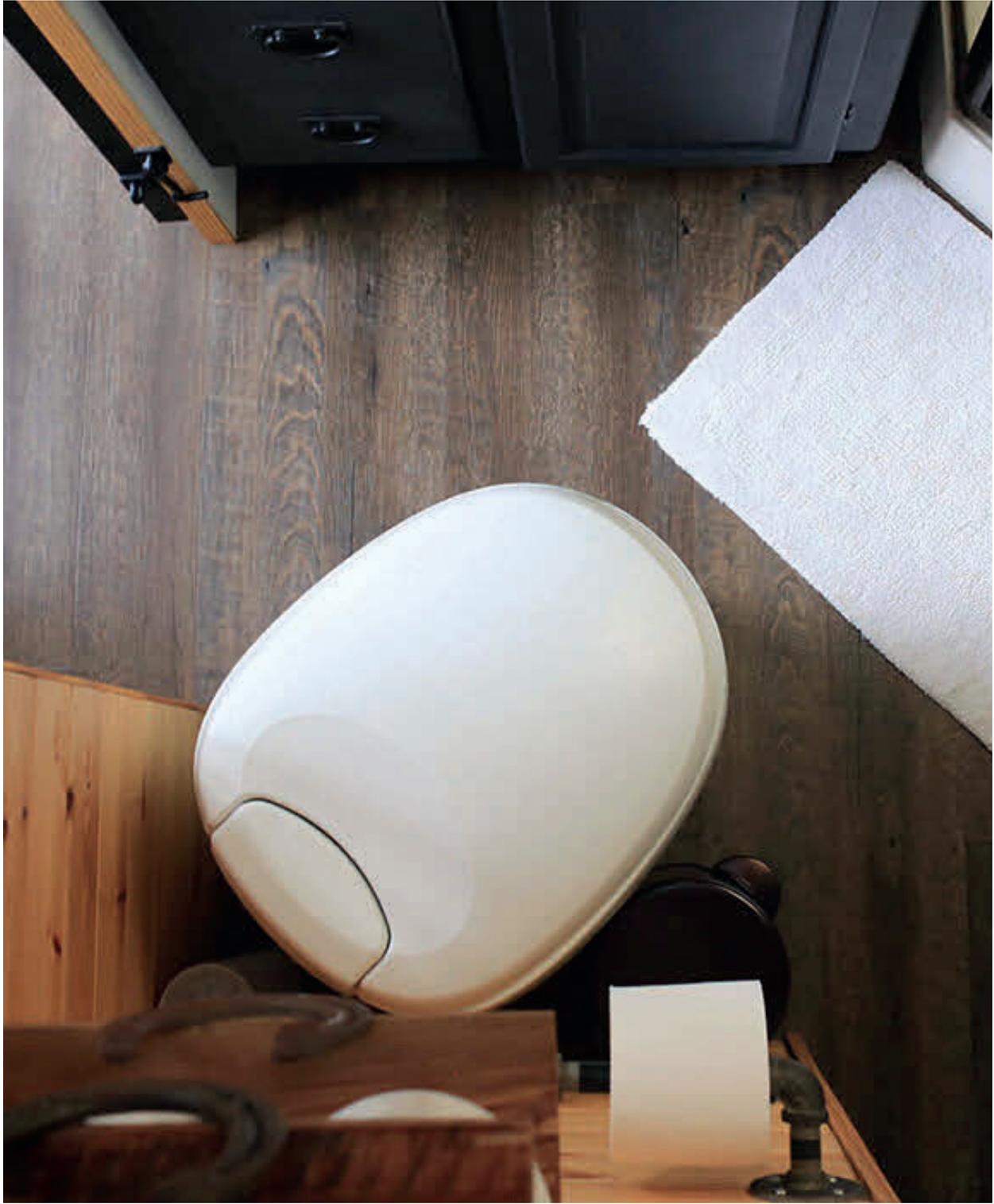
**Cons:** Prone to warping or buckling, does not mix well with water, heavier than vinyl, may include off-gassing chemicals.

## vinyl

Vinyl flooring is made of plastic and is available in sheets, planks, and tiles with a variety of styles and price points. It is most often compared to laminate because they can be similar in price, maintenance, and ease of installation. However, vinyl is superior when it comes to water resistance. You can purchase peel and stick, glue-down, or click-lock (floating floor) options. Peel and stick vinyl flooring is one of the most popular choices for RVers due to the cost, weight, and ease of installation, especially tile options.



PHOTO COURTESY OF @THEFLIPPINGNOMAD



While more expensive, click-lock luxury vinyl planks are another extremely popular option amongst RVers, which is what we used. However, most vinyl planking includes off-gassing chemicals, which may take days, weeks, or even years to dissipate. If going this route, you may want to consider eco-friendly vinyl options or using an Air-purifier in your RV, which I recommend regardless.

**Pros:** Affordable, lightweight, waterproof, easy to clean, durable, easy to install, handles moisture and humidity well, wide variety of design and installation styles.

**Cons:** hard, can be noisy, made of synthetic materials, vinyl sheet flooring is more susceptible to tearing if there's a slide-out, may include off-gassing chemicals.

## *Renovation Tip*

Companies like FloorPops and Quadrostyle offer vinyl tiles in fun colors and patterns that are easy to install on a variety of surfaces, including the floor, walls, or stairs.

## linoleum

While often confused with vinyl, linoleum is made of natural materials, such as linseed oil, tree resins, and cork powder, making it a renewable resource. However, while water-resistant, it's not waterproof and isn't recommended in high humidity or moisture areas.

**Pros:** affordable, durable, easy to clean, sheet rolls or tile installation, easier to install, low maintenance, natural linoleum is made of renewable sources and is biodegradable.

**Cons:** Can be susceptible to moisture, prone to denting, may yellow over time, not recommended in areas with high humidity or moisture.

## ceramic

I'll admit I was drawn to several ceramic flooring options while browsing through hardware stores, especially those mimicking wood or stone. Porcelain tiles are made similar to ceramic tiles, but the clay is fired at higher temperatures, making it denser and even more durable. While some higher-end RVs install ceramic tiles in the kitchen and bathroom, this flooring can be extremely heavy and more expensive, so we didn't consider installing it in our motorhome. With that said, many RVers choose to use this sparingly in their RV for more visual interest, texture, and a high-end look.

**Pros:** Tiles are water-resistant, can handle high humidity, stain-resistant, variety of design styles.

**Cons:** Heavy, more expensive, may require an additional top coat, hard and cold to walk on, grout may require maintenance, it may crack or chip depending on style, more challenging to install, will want to use flexible grout.



## slide-out flooring transition

One of our biggest concerns with replacing our RV flooring was figuring out how to tackle the slide-out transition. Our slide-out is raised when extended (rather than flush), so we originally planned to use bullnose stair molding or an overlap reducer.

However, we could not find any that matched our specific flooring at the time, so we browsed the hardware store aisles in search of alternative solutions. This led to our discovery of outside corner molding, which we stained to match our flooring.

Compared to bullnose molding and other stair treads, this was a budget-friendly option that has held up great so far. Every slide-out is different so if these options don't work for your situation, consider browsing the hardware store looking for alternatives. I also recommend researching RV forums to see what someone else did in a similar situation to your own.

If you choose to use outside corner molding (or something similar), I recommend attaching it with construction adhesive vs. a nail gun to avoid the occasional nail from popping up.

## what I would do differently

Our floors are pretty dark, much darker than I anticipated. Looking back, I wish we would have chosen a lighter floor color.

In my experience, most people fall into one of two categories:

1. You want to see dirt so you can clean it.
2. You want to hide or camouflage dirt, so you don't need to clean it as often.

I fall into the first category, at least in this season of life. While it can be annoying to see dirt or pet fur tumbleweeds, I'd rather know they are there. I can decide if I want to clean them up right away or not, but either way, I want to see the dirt rather than have it camouflaged into our dark flooring.

After traveling around in an RV, I can also tell you that different locations have different bug issues. When spiders, ants, or the dreaded Asian beetles make their way in, I want to know about it. If you fall into this category, you too may want to consider going with a light or medium colored flooring, and the same goes for the paint colors you choose. Lighter flooring will also brighten up the RV interior.

Whether you see it or not, the dirt is there, but I can understand the desire to make it less noticeable. If you prefer an interior that hides dirt more than showcasing it, you may want to consider darker colors. Once you understand your personal preference, it's easier to make a decision based on your lifestyle and needs.

If you're still on the fence, there are several websites with a flooring visualizer where you can upload a photo of your RV to get an idea of how different flooring options will look in the space. To find one of these websites, do a quick google search for "Floor Visualizer," and multiple options will pop up. Regardless of the



PHOTO COURTESY OF @WHITEHOUSEMUDDYFEET

flooring you choose, I highly recommend ordering samples first so you can get a true sense of how the color and texture will feel.

Something else I wish our flooring had? Heat! If you're considering heated flooring, be sure to do your research and plan accordingly.

### *Renovation Tip*

You can use an online flooring calculator to estimate the cost and amount of flooring to purchase, but add an extra 10-15% to cover waste from cut or damaged materials. To save money, consider purchasing flooring during sales or from a Habitat for Humanity ReStore, surplus supply, or architectural salvage shop. Installing the flooring yourself vs. hiring it out can also save a ton of cash!

“Some people look for a beautiful place,  
others make a place beautiful.”

HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN

## 05 Paint

If there's one product that can completely transform your RV, it's paint.

In fact, I would say paint gave us the biggest bang for our buck because it completely changed the overall feel of our RV and made it so much brighter. I won't sugarcoat it though, painting the interior of an RV sucks.

It's tedious and tiring and more work than you would probably imagine. With that said, it's also an affordable update anyone can do with a bit of patience and elbow grease.

In other words, it's worth it!

In this chapter, I'll share tips for removing the wallpaper border, and additional tips for painting the interior walls and cabinets. If nothing else, I hope this chapter can serve as a resource for you to reference when necessary.

### how to remove the wallpaper border

Before you start tearing at your RV walls, you should know there's a MAJOR difference between the wallpaper texture all the walls have and the bordered wallpaper added *on top* of that.

Most RV interior walls are constructed from lauan plywood sheets with vinyl tape used to hide seams between the panels. The plywood panels have a wallpaper texture adhered to them, which you don't want to remove, but can paint over. Then, your kitchen or bathroom walls may have an additional wallpaper border added *on top* of

## Renovation Tip:

If you need to replace interior wall panels, consider using Revolution Ply or 1/8-1/4" plywood which is less expensive than RV-specific products.

this, which you can remove. This seems to be the case in most RVs, especially older models. The tips I give below are for removing the wallpaper border added *on top* of the textured wall surface.

However, if you plan to cover your wallpapered area with some sort of wall treatment, such as shiplap, you can skip removing it altogether. While I removed the wallpaper border in our kitchen, it wasn't necessary since we ended up covering that area with a tongue and groove backsplash. With that said, you'll still need to prep the area accordingly if using a peel and stick treatment.

Keep this in mind before moving forward so you don't create more work for yourself.

Removing the floral wallpaper from our kitchen happened more out of opportunity than necessity. I was in the kitchen, a flathead screwdriver was on the counter, Eric had stepped out for a minute, and my curiosity got the best of me.

Within minutes, I removed the kitchen wallpaper border using the screwdriver (though I recommend using a better tool, like a paint scraper.) I've since learned I was one of the lucky few, as pesky RV wallpaper doesn't always lift off with such ease.

To remove the wallpaper from your RV walls, you'll first want to clear the area and give yourself a clean working space. If there are any outlets or switch plates on top of the wallpaper border, be sure to remove them.

Starting at one corner of the wallpaper, shimmy your paint scraper under the edge and slowly slide it underneath until it begins to lift away from the wall. You may need to continuously slide the paint scraper under the wallpaper border with one hand and use your other hand to remove it from the wall.

If it's extra stubborn, consider using a heat gun or spray sections of the wallpaper with a 1 to 1 ratio of vinegar and warm water, then let it sit for 10-15 minutes before attempting to remove it.

## how to remove the wallpaper *adhesive*

Removing the wallpaper border took less than 5 minutes in our RV, but the sticky residue left behind wasn't so easy. This part can get messy, so I recommend moving anything you don't want to get wet or covering the area with rags or towels. Again, if you plan to cover this area with a textured wall treatment, you can skip this step.

I removed the glue residue from our RV walls by scrubbing it down with Goo Gone, a sponge, my paint scraper, and some elbow grease. Unfortunately, what works in one RV doesn't always work in another, so I'm including alternative adhesive cleaning options for you to try on the next page.

You may already have some of these items on hand, so I recommend starting with what you have and only buying additional supplies if necessary.



## Recommended supplies to remove the wallpaper residue

- Paint Scraper
- Spray bottle, bucket, or container
- Sponge
- Rags or Towels
- Cleaning Solution (see options below)
- Protective wear (if using a heat gun or chemical cleaner)

### *Cleaning solutions to try*

Here are some cleaning options known to remove sticky wallpaper residue, along with some popular options that have been discussed in RV Facebook groups:

- Bucket or container filled with hot water, a few squeezes of dish soap, and a tablespoon of baking soda - This is a great solution and you likely already have everything you need on hand. If you're still having issues, you may want to add some vinegar to the solution before scrubbing the walls with a sponge (about 1 cup of vinegar per gallon of water).
- Spray Bottle filled with a 1:1 ratio of hot water and fabric softener - Mix fabric softener with warm water into a spray bottle, spray the area, wait a few minutes, and then use a sponge to wipe it off. Make sure the water stays hot for the best results.
- TSP, Krud Kutter, Goo Gone, or Simple Green - You can scrub your walls with a heavy-duty degreaser, such as TSP (Trisodium Phosphate), but be sure to wear long sleeves and use safety gloves and eye protection. TSP isn't exactly eco-friendly and may affect those with respiratory issues or sensitive skin, so you may want to consider a TSP alternative instead, such as Krud Kutter, or a more natural solution such as Simple Green.
- Homemade TSP Alternatives - For a homemade alternative to TSP, you can also mix one tablespoon of borax into a gallon of warm water or combine 1 cup water, 1 cup vinegar, and 1/2 cup of baking soda.
- Heat Gun - Not only can this help lift the wallpaper from the wall, but it can also help loosen up the adhesive. If you don't have a heat gun, a portable steamer or blow dryer could do the trick but may require more time.
- Pure Citrus Orange Air Freshener or Citrus Magic - Believe it or not, I've heard people in RV forums swear by this stuff. After spraying the adhesive residue, let it sit for a couple of minutes, then use a scraper to remove the gummy texture left behind. Afterward, wipe the area clean using a solution like Simple Green.
- Orange or Lemon Essential Oil - This is a more natural alternative to the citrus option mentioned above. Use Lemon, orange, or any other citrus essential oil to help remove the residue. Bonus, it smells good!
- WD40 - This may seem odd, but this is another option that may help you remove the sticky residue, although I've never tried it.
- Commercial Cleaner - If all else fails, you may want to use a commercial cleaner made specifically for removing wallpaper adhesive.

And there you have it, your outdated wallpaper border is out, and you have a clean slate to work with!

Next, we'll dive into how to paint the interior of your RV.



# how to paint your RV interior

Brace yourself. You're about to embark on a journey that may include late nights, hand cramps, frustration, and the feeling it will never end. Patience will be needed, but you've got this, and it will all be worth it in the end, I promise!

Who knew painting less than 300 square feet could be so much work?!

During the process, I remember thinking I never wanted to paint *anything* in my life ever again. I'm not one for being dramatic, but yeah, it sucked that much. If you have friends and family nearby, this may be the time to call in a favor. Or it may even be time to review the DIY or hire out section in Chapter 2 and decide if you would rather someone else do the job.

With that said, there are tips and steps you can follow that can help speed up the process or yield better results.

**As it turns out, painting the walls of your RV isn't like painting the walls of your home for two main reasons:**

1. The walls in a residential home are made out of drywall. As mentioned earlier, the walls in your RV are constructed of wood paneling or thin plywood covered in wallpaper or vinyl. This is what makes prep especially important.
2. In a home, aside from kitchens and bathrooms, most rooms are square or easy to access and paint. Whereas in an RV, there are countless nooks, crannies, and funky built-ins, making the process a little more awkward.

But you know what? Painting the interior was one of the most rewarding projects we tackled. And despite thinking I'd never paint anything, let alone an RV interior again, I would if I had to. Especially after seeing how much we saved doing it ourselves vs. hiring out.

Whether you plan to paint the walls, ceiling, cabinets, or other surfaces in your RV, the process outlined in the following pages is a basic framework to follow.

Keep in mind that some built-ins and cabinet door fronts may be made of wood depending on your RV, although most are constructed of laminate or wood-veneered particleboard. This gives the appearance of real wood while keeping them lightweight. You can paint either way, but prep is key, especially for the latter.

## *Renovation Tip*

If you're considering replacing the cabinets in your kitchen or bathroom, consider replacing only the fronts with wood to save money or create a custom look. We took this approach for our lower kitchen cabinets and even a couple of drawers in our bedroom.



# Recommended supplies to paint the RV interior

Here is a list of supplies you may choose to use when painting the interior of your RV. Keep in mind that many of these items are optional, but could make the process easier.

## *Cleaning Supplies*

- Degreaser/Paint prep cleaner
- Bucket/Container
- Sponge/Clean Cloths/Rags
- Flat Mop
- Protective Gear (Eye Protection, Gloves, Respirator))

## *Prep Supplies*

- Spackling or Paintable Wood Filler
- Caulk
- Paint Scraper
- Sanding Block or Electric Sander and Sandpaper
- Pole Sander
- Painter's Tape
- Drop Cloths
- Press'n Seal
- Hand-Masker Dispenser with Masking Paper or Film
- Plastic bags (to cover fixtures)
- Stool or Step Ladder
- Protective Gear (Eye Protection, Gloves, Respirator)

## *Paint Supplies*

- Bonding Primer
- Paint
- Paint Brushes and Rollers
- Paint Roller Extension Pole
- Painting Tray and liners
- Paint Stir Sticks
- Bucket and roller screen
- Paint Sprayer (optional)
- Protective Gear (especially if using a paint sprayer)

## Renovation Tip:

Cover paint brushes and rollers with Press'n Seal or store them inside a re-sealable zipper storage bag between coats. You can keep them in the fridge for a few days if necessary. I also recommend using a tray liner (or lining the tray with Press'n Seal) before adding the paint, which will make both the application process and cleanup go smoothly.

## Step 1: Prep

You may be thinking about skipping this step, but it's crucial for creating a quality paint job that will last.

### Prep includes the following:

- Correct
- Clean
- Protect

Yeah, I know it looks like a lot of work, and that's because it is, but once you finish the prep, the painting process will go much quicker, and it will yield better results. Be sure to follow the prep steps for all surfaces you plan to paint, including the ceiling, trim, and cabinets.

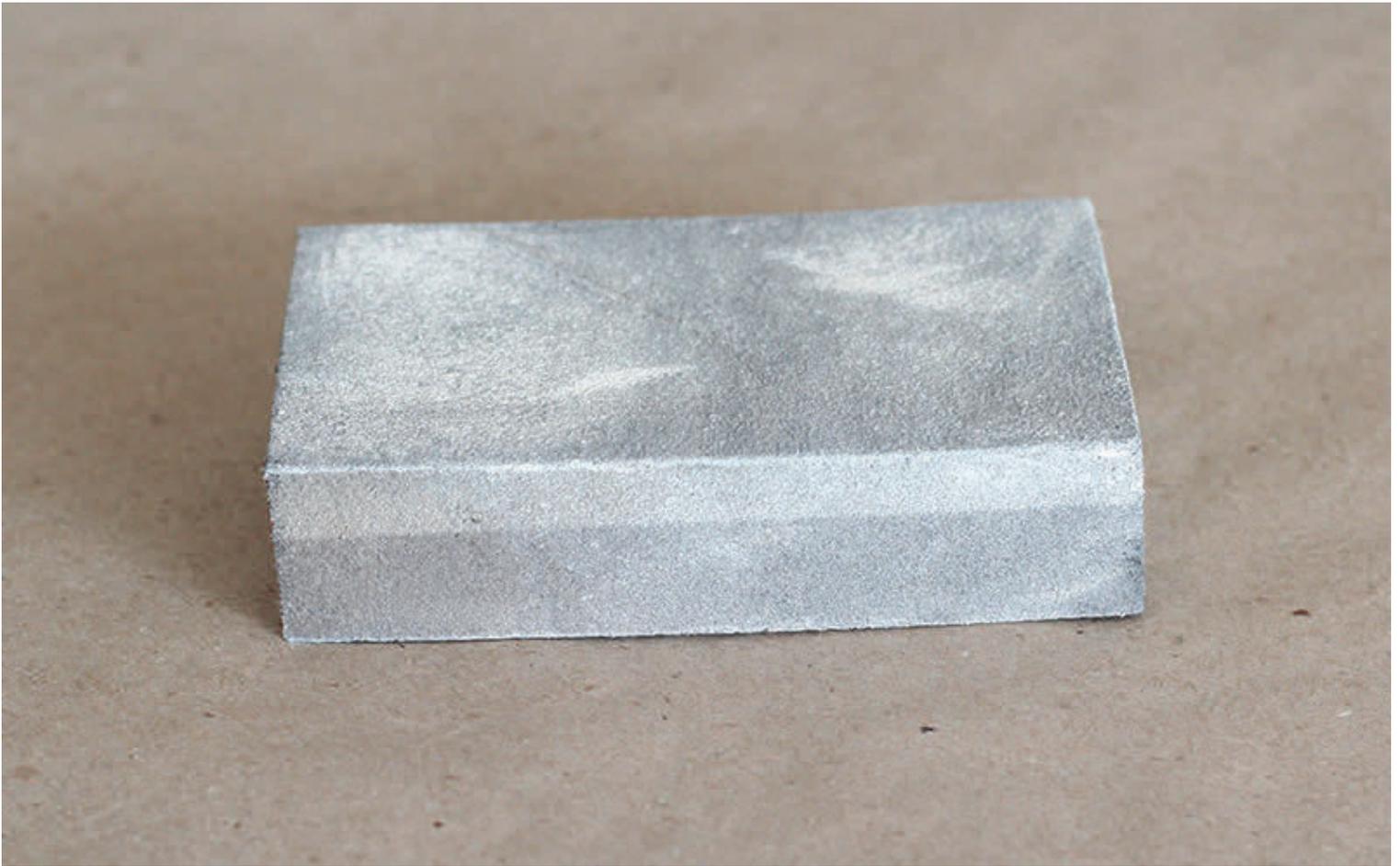
### *correct*

Repair any wall damage and fill nail or screw holes with a paintable wood filler or spackling. Afterward, lightly sand the area and any other imperfections.

You can take this one step further and lightly sand all of the walls in the RV that you plan to paint. The point of sanding the walls is to create a smooth surface, remove shine, and give the paint something to grab onto, though a degreaser will help with some of these issues.

However, unless you're trying to smooth out a highly textured or recently repaired area, this will be a speedy, gentle job using 220 grit sandpaper. In most cases, you will only be spending a few seconds on each surface. And yes, you can even do this on non-wood surfaces. You may even want to consider using a pole sander to speed through the process, though it's not necessary.

When following this process for cabinets, I would first use lower grit sandpaper, such as 120, followed by a higher grit, like 220, although this will still be a fairly quick job. Even so, a palm sander may come in handy and help the process move along quicker, which is what we used for all of our cabinet doors.



TOP PHOTOS: @TROOP NASHVILLE/ BOTTOM: BRITTANY WINEBARGER

## Renovation Tip:

It's generally recommended to lightly sand the walls *after* cleaning them (instead of before), but I prefer to do it first to avoid extra cleanup. This is another reason why using a degreaser such as Simple Green can come in handy, as it helps give the paint something to adhere to, therefore reducing or eliminating the need for scuff sanding.

### clean

Clear the area you plan to paint and vacuum any dust, fur, or dirt. The last thing you want is dust or pet fur flying around and sticking to your paint.

Next, you'll need to clean the walls or surface with a degreaser, which will remove any dirt, grease, or grime and help the primer and paint adhere to the surface.

The most popular option for cleaning an RV interior seems to be TSP, a degreaser and cleaning agent often used by professionals to prep walls before painting. This is what we used, and it was a fairly simple process. You mix the powder with warm water and then wash any walls or surfaces you plan to paint with a sponge. Afterward, you rinse all surfaces with a clean, damp sponge before wiping them down with a clean, dry towel.

However, as mentioned earlier, TSP isn't exactly eco-friendly and may affect those with respiratory issues or sensitive skin, something I was unaware of during our renovation. For this reason, I recommend using a less toxic option instead, such as Simple Green Cleaner, which has become increasingly popular to use before paint jobs in both residential homes and RV's. Another perk of using Simple Green is you don't have to rinse the walls afterward. That means one less step!

Regardless of the cleaning solution you choose, follow the directions and use gloves and eye protection if necessary. To speed up the cleaning process, consider using a flat mop to wipe down the walls.

### protect

Once the walls are clean and dry, tape off any areas you want to protect, such as the trim, ceiling, and window frames. Be sure to cover the floor and any fixed furniture with drop cloths. You'd be amazed how tiny splatters can end up on the floor and furniture, even if you're gently rolling paint on a wall. Been there, done that.

And don't forget to remove or cover any outlet covers, switch plates, and fixtures that could get in your way. While this extra step is easy to skip, you'll be thankful you didn't. Especially if you need to remove them later and realize you painted them to the wall. Yup, been there, done that too.

By the way, I've received quite a few emails asking if it's better to paint or install new flooring first. We painted our walls first because we were worried about getting paint on our new vinyl plank flooring. However, I later learned that most professionals recommend installing new flooring first to avoid getting dust on the freshly painted walls. You can weigh the pros and cons of both to see what you prefer.

## *Renovation Tip:*

A hand-masker dispenser is a great tool that can help speed up the prep process immensely, especially if you're considering using a paint sprayer.

## Step 2: Prime

Okay, so this may "technically" be considered part of the prep, but I've decided to give it its own section because it's crucial for creating quality results. As far as I'm concerned, you can spend hours prepping the walls or cabinets only to end up with peeling paint if you use the wrong primer, or worse yet, don't use any kind of primer.

Not only does primer remove funky smells, cover stains, and provide a smooth, even surface for your final paint color, but it gives the surface a consistent base and the paint something to adhere to. This is key! In other words, it can prevent your paint from peeling, cracking, or chipping later on down the road.

Most paints say they have a primer mixed in, including the white paint we used in our RV, but this isn't the same as using a separate quality primer, at least not when it comes to painting your RV interior. Unfortunately, I learned this lesson the hard way. I figured four coats of paint would provide the same results as two coats of primer followed by two coats of paint. I mean, doesn't it all come out in the wash?

Apparently not. At least not when it comes to using rollers.

Thankfully, I had only tested my theory in one small area before realizing it was a bad idea. After three coats of white paint, I could still see beige wallpaper seeping through. Ugh.

Right then, I knew primer was going to simplify my life, and it did. Not to mention, the primer cost less than my paint.

This isn't to say there aren't exceptions to the rule, which mainly comes into play when you're painting the walls with a paint sprayer since they have better coverage than rollers or brushes. Even so, you will need to prep first and use quality paint with excellent coverage, and it will likely require additional coats. Primer generally costs less than paint, especially high-quality options, so it may cost you more to take this approach. Although it could also prevent less work by not cleaning supplies as you swap between primer and paint.

After you paint your RV's interior, the last thing you want to do is repaint it, so skipping primer is ultimately a risk only you can determine is worth it.

Even if you choose to forgo a primer on the walls, I would highly recommend using it on any faux wood surfaces or cabinets. You can also research alternative options such as chalk paint or all-in-one paints that may eliminate priming, and I'll mention some of them later in this chapter.



## *oil vs. water-based primer*

Not all primer is created equal.

Before choosing the type of primer to use, you'll need to decide if you'll be using an oil or water-based paint.

While you can generally use water-based paint over an oil-based primer, you don't want to apply an oil-based paint over a water-based primer. To simplify, water can go over oil, but oil can't go over water. If you find this confusing, it may be easier to stick to either both water or both oil-based primer and paints. For the best results, follow the manufacturer instructions and guidelines provided on the primer and paint purchased.

If you're unsure of the difference between oil and water-based paints, here's a quick rundown.

Oil-based paint also referred to as solvent-based, is easier to blend, has better coverage, and is more durable. With that said, it generally includes a high amount of VOCs, has a strong odor, is difficult to clean up, and can yellow over time. It also dries much slower, although that may or may not be a bad thing. Oil-based primer is recommended when using oil-based paint.

Water-based paint dries quicker, is easier to clean, and is much less toxic with low or zero-VOC options. This also makes it have little to no odor. Latex, Acrylic, Mineral, and Chalk paints are considered water-based. Water-based primer is recommended when using a water-based paint, although an oil-based primer could work (check your product instructions first.) For health and environmental reasons, water-based paints tend to be more popular for interiors.

If you're unsure which route to take, don't be afraid to ask for help or suggestions from a paint expert when browsing the paint store or department. You'll have to decide which option is best for you and your situation. However, I recommend using a low VOC

primer, especially if you're looking for eco-friendly options or if you or someone in your family is pregnant, has asthma, or other health-related issues. VOC stands for Volatile Organic Compounds, which release toxic chemicals into the air and can cause short or long-term health issues. Otherwise, be sure to follow the precautions, wear proper protection, and keep the area well-ventilated.

## *bonding primer*

Not to sound like a broken record, but in case you skimmed the sections above, your RV walls are likely made of vinyl-covered plywood or wood veneer. There are various primer options available, but a bonding primer is highly recommended in RV's.

Bonding primer sticks to various challenging or slick surfaces, including vinyl, laminate, Formica, fiberglass, and wood paneling, and it comes in both water and oil-based options. The consistency is thicker than your average can of primer, so it can be slightly more challenging to work with depending on the brand, but the coverage is much better. This can also help smooth out any texture imperfections on the surface you paint.

## *Renovation Tip*

Shellac-based primer is available in oil and water-based options and can be used as a complete surface primer or for spot coverage. An example is Zinsser's B-I-N primer. Its purpose is to block stains, knots and smells from surfaces, including those caused by smoking, pets, or water damage. However, even Shellac water-based primers are known to have a powerful smell, a high level of VOCs, and in most cases, won't be necessary if using a bonding primer.

We originally used a Low VOC, water-based primer that we had on hand, but it wasn't a bonding primer, so even after two coats it didn't have the best coverage.

While this primer worked for us, and I was happy to use what we had on hand, I recommend using a bonding primer to play it safe, especially on your walls or any faux wood.

This will give those funky RV surfaces the best chance for a quality paint job that won't crack, peel, or chip. You'll generally want to use two coats of bonding primer before applying two coats of paint (and if you plan to paint any surfaces a dark color, consider using a tinted primer.) Popular bonding primer options amongst RVers include PPG Gripper, Kilz Adhesion Primer, INSL-X Stix Bonding Primer, and Glidden Gripper. In the last couple of years we have used PPG Gripper bonding primer, and the coverage is like night and day compared to the standard, water-based primer we previously used.

## *Renovation Tip*

Caulk adheres better to primed surfaces. If you plan to re-caulk any areas you will paint over, tackle it once the primer has dried. Be sure to purchase a paintable caulk option so it matches your paint color.

## *dry vs. cure time*

Whatever primer you use, follow the instructions, especially the drying time in between coats. If you paint on top of primer before it fully dries, it will never actually fully dry, and that won't be good. Or it may feel dry to the touch within 30 minutes but require 1-3 hours before painting a second coat, so again, read the directions to determine when to paint over it for best results.

I used to get confused about the dry vs. cure time for paint and primer. All you need to know is that dry time is the amount of time it takes for the paint to dry either to the touch or before you can add another coat of paint. "Cure" time, on the other hand, refers to the amount of time it takes for the paint to completely harden, meaning it's fully dry and less prone to damage.

Up to this point, the primer is vulnerable, so you want to be extra careful not to bump into, scratch, or clean the surface. This is especially important to keep in mind if you are painting laminate cabinets. Also avoid painting during extreme heat, cold, or humidity, as it can affect the results and dry time. To prevent cracking, bubbling, or peeling paint, check the temperature guidelines and instructions on both the primer and paint. There are ways to overcome these types of challenges, but being aware is the first step.

## **Step 3: Paint**

Whew! With all the prep and priming complete, it's finally time to add your final paint color! Regardless of the paint you purchase, I recommend at least two coats, and if you buy cheap quality paint, you may need additional coats. Keep in mind that quality paint will pay off in the end.

By the way, after we started painting the walls of our RV, the ceiling looked more yellow, so we painted it to match, following the same prep/prime/paint process. However, if you plan to paint the ceiling, you may want to paint it first, followed by the walls. Regardless of the surface you paint, make sure to carefully remove the painter's tape after you're finished but while the paint is still tacky.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MORTONPHOTOGRAPHIC FROM GETTY IMAGES SIGNATURE

## Tips for choosing a paint color

Before you run to the store and choose a paint color based on the swatch alone or the name of the color (yes, I used to do this), it's important to bring samples home. Use your color story and inspiration from Chapter 1 to help guide your decisions.

Whatever paint color you choose, go with your gut and with what you are most excited about. Many people told us black was a terrible idea for a small space, but it's all about balance, and I loved it in our kitchen before replacing it with reclaimed wood, and I still love the black vanity in our bathroom.

Chances are, the lighting in your RV will be much different than the fluorescent lighting in the paint department. This is why it's essential to test the color on the walls or cabinets before making a decision. Unlike a residential home, yours is on wheels, meaning the natural lighting can change from time to time. Even so, understanding how much light can come in through a window or the type of artificial lighting you have in a space can make a difference. And it's fascinating to see how the same paint color can look completely different depending on the location it's in, due to the amount of light it receives.

If you want to avoid painting samples directly on the surface, you can paint poster board or cardstock and tape it to the wall to get a sense of the color. However, one of the easiest methods is to use removable paint decals, which you can find from companies like Clare, Samplize, and Sherwin Williams. The decals are large, pre-painted sample sheets made of a flexible material that can be applied to any wall through a peel and stick application. Not only are these paint decals mess-free and repositionable, but they're more accurate than painted poster board, making it easier to test color in any space before committing.

Keep in mind that decor can affect the overall color of a room by reflecting on the wall. While you may or may not have your décor picked out just yet, this is

something to keep in mind. And if you painted poster board or have removable decals, you can hold it next to any décor or furniture you plan to bring in, which can help you determine if the undertones play well together.

Even if you plan to paint the interior of your RV a neutral color, keep in mind that neutrals have a warm or cool undertone. The exception is pure white like we used in our RV. (You can refer to the color undertone section in Chapter 1 for more guidance.)

If you're still unsure where to start, consider choosing a color from a decorative item you plan to bring into the space. It's easier to match a paint color to décor vs. the other way around.

## sheen

When choosing a sheen for your paint, remember the higher the sheen, the shinier it will be, which translates into being more durable and easier to clean. It's important to keep this in mind, especially in high-traffic areas such as the kitchen, where you want something more durable and easy to wipe down. However, a higher sheen, such as gloss, can also show more imperfections than a flat sheen.

I prefer Satin and eggshell sheens because they are right in the middle, but satin, semi-gloss, and gloss are popular for kitchen cabinets, especially if you want a more modern look. Again, the glossier the sheen, the easier it will be to clean.

## Renovation Tip

If purchasing multiple gallons of paint, it's best to mix them in a 5-gallon bucket to ensure color consistency. For this reason, you also don't want to use the same roller/brush for painting that you used for priming unless it's been thoroughly cleaned. Otherwise, the color and sheen will likely vary and give your surface inconsistent results.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DLMCK FROM GETTY IMAGES SIGNATURE

## paint application

You can apply a primer or paint with a quality roller and paintbrush (Wooster, Purdy, and Whizz are my favorites) or use a paint sprayer to get the job completed even faster, though there will be a learning curve.

Brushes and rollers made of synthetic fibers are best for water-based paints, whereas natural fibers are best for oil-based paints.

### rollers

As far as rollers go, I prefer a woven roller with a 3/8 inch nap for walls and a 1/4 inch nap for cabinets and trim. Your preference may be different. To be honest, I didn't always understand what the nap size represented or pay much attention to it. I would then wonder why the surfaces I painted had different results. I didn't figure this out until *after* we painted our RV.

The nap represents the height of the fibers on the roller. Larger naps are generally used on textured surfaces or if you want to create more of an orange-peel texture. Lower naps are used on smoother surfaces or for a smoother finish.

Woven rollers are generally used on walls and ceilings, while foam rollers are typically chosen for cabinets and when applying protective topcoats because they provide a smooth finish. Again, this all comes down to preference, but don't forget that quality counts and a cheap roller may not deliver the results you want.

You may also want to keep a couple of different roller sizes handy, one for smaller nooks and a bigger one to cover larger surfaces. Just be sure you use the same nap size on the same surface to create a seamless look.

Before using a new roller, you can quickly remove any fuzz with tape or a lint roller. Afterward, condition the

roller by dampening it with water and patting it dry with a paper towel or cloth. Just be sure the roller is lightly damp and not soaking wet or dripping. You may even want to roll it onto a piece of cardboard or a few paper towels to remove excess water. This conditioning process is another way to remove loose fibers, and it ensures the paint loads evenly on the roller. (You only want to dampen the roller with water if using water-based paint or in a solution such as mineral spirits if using oil-based paint.)

I recommend using a short, angled sash paintbrush to "cut in" along any perimeter edges the roller won't reach, such as tight corners or the ceiling line. I prefer stubby ones, but longer ones can come in handy for hard-to-reach areas. In the past, I would try to jam or squish my roller into the corner or move it vertically up the edge of a wall, resulting in streaks or funky lines. By cutting in the edges with a paintbrush first and then going over the entire surface with a loaded roller, you'll achieve a smooth, even coat.

### Renovation Tip

Keep a damp paper towel or q-tip nearby for cleaning up paint mistakes on the fly! You can usually remove dry paint from hard surfaces with a magic eraser or cotton ball dipped in rubbing alcohol. This trick came in handy when I had to clean some of the metal window frames we hadn't taped off. You can also cover a paint scraper with a clean rag to clean up tight edges.

### paint sprayer

If you plan to paint the ceiling, walls, trim, and cabinets of your RV, you may want to seriously consider using a paint sprayer to at least prime those areas first. You may even want to use the sprayer for your final paint application.



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However, if you don't plan to paint the entire interior of your RV, want to use multiple paint colors, or don't feel like spending extra time to protect unpainted surfaces, then a roller and brush may be the best option for you. The same is true if you plan to live in your RV during the painting process. Using a paint sprayer can also cost more if you need to buy or rent the equipment, not to mention they tend to use more paint due to overspray.

On the flipside, spraying multiple areas, especially tight spaces or intricate details, can be accomplished much quicker with a paint sprayer. In general, a paint sprayer can save you half the time as painting with a brush or roller! It also lends itself to beautiful results that are free of brushstrokes.

We painted our upper kitchen cabinet doors with a paint sprayer, although we used a paint tent outside the RV. If we were to do it all over again, we would use a paint sprayer to paint the entire interior. Truth be told, I was too lazy to cover everything up and didn't think it would take that long to paint anyway. If only I knew then what I know now.

If you choose to use a paint sprayer, it can take a minute to find your rhythm, so it's a good idea to paint a piece of cardboard first or start in an inconspicuous area, like the inside of a closet, until you get the hang of it.

If you don't already own a paint sprayer, there are tons of options online, or you can rent one from your local home improvement store. Because this is a pretty big job, I recommend looking into Airless or HLVP options. Be sure to follow the instructions and make safety a priority, including proper ventilation and wearing a respirator and protective clothing.

## cabinet painting tips

If you plan to paint any cabinets in your RV, including those in your kitchen or bathroom, you can follow the same process mentioned above. Don't forget prep is key. Some people prefer oil-based paints for cabinets due to coverage and durability, but you'll have to weigh the pros of cons for yourself.

However, if you're looking for alternatives to the typical oil-based or latex paint, whether for aesthetics or to cut down on prep, here are some popular options you may want to consider.

### *chalk paint*

Chalk paint is a non-toxic, water-based paint that requires little to no prep before painting. Yup, in some cases, you don't need to sand or prime a surface before painting it with chalk paint.

The name is trademarked by Annie Sloan, who originally sold this style of paint before alternative versions became available. We used Annie Sloan Chalk Paint for years before renovating our RV and even painted our RV bathroom vanity in Graphite. We cleaned and lightly sanded the vanity first but skipped the primer and didn't have any issues.

Chalk paint is often used with glazes and waxes and lends itself to a vintage or farmhouse-style vibe because it can easily be distressed. With that said, you can use this paint on just about any surface, and without distressing, it can provide a more modern finish. There are also several brands to choose from, and DIY recipes you can make.

At this point, you're probably asking why I mentioned all the above prep and prime steps when this miracle paint is available, right?



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Well, yes, chalk-style paint can be amazing and time-saving, but it's far from perfect. In fact, prep is still recommended on certain surfaces, including those made of laminate. Ultimately, only you can decide if it's the best application for your situation.

By the way, chalk paint is similar to chalkboard paint in that it's matte and has a chalk-like appearance, but chalkboard paint's sole purpose is to be written on.

## *chalk paint pros and cons*

### **Pros**

- Little to no prep (aka no sanding or primer in most cases but not always)
- Excellent coverage
- Non-toxic
- Easy to clean up
- Dries quickly
- Can be distressed for vintage/farmhouse look
- Matte finish

### **Cons**

- More expensive
- Depending on the surface being painted, light sanding and primer may be necessary, especially anything glossy or that has a lot of knots or water damage
- It's highly recommended to use a protective top coat
- May leave brush marks (unless used in a paint sprayer)
- If sealed with wax, it can be labor-intensive and may require re-application over time

Before replacing our lower kitchen cabinets with reclaimed wood, I had painted them with black chalk paint. I originally planned to use the same Annie Sloan Chalk Paint we had used for our RV bathroom vanity (Graphite), but it had a grayish-blue undertone, and I wanted a *true* black. Annie Sloan didn't have the color I wanted at the time, so I opted for another brand, and after painting the lower cabinets, the matte finish looked great. The problem, however, came when I needed to apply the protective topcoat.

You see, chalk paint is porous (similar to milk paint), which is why you need to apply a sealer on top. Otherwise, it can easily chip, scratch, and show fingerprints. The most common sealer used with chalk paint is wax. Unfortunately, wax is a bit more labor-intensive and requires more maintenance, including re-application.

I knew I didn't want to create more work for myself later, so I opted for a clear coat finish. Unfortunately, when I applied the clear coat, the results were streaky. I later discovered this could occur with darker chalk paint, especially when using a foam brush vs. a roller, so the process required some trial and error. I mention this because if you

choose to use chalk paint, particularly a darker color, you may want to test a small area with your protective coat application choice before moving forward. While I have yet to try it, I've read that hemp oil can provide a low maintenance finish to dark chalk painted furniture and cabinets, while eliminating the haziness or brushstrokes that other clear sealers can create. (Miss Mustard Seed has a wonderful video about this.)

Aside from hemp oil mentioned above, wipe-on poly and General Finishes Flat our Flat Topcoat are popular alternatives to wax when using chalk paint. However, some chalk paint companies offer their own protective top coat, and this includes Annie Sloan, who has a water-based polyacrylic (something that wasn't available back when we renovated our RV.)

The main point I want to make is while chalk paint can be applied to just about any surface, that doesn't mean it's always the best option. For example, since it's porous and requires sealing for high-traffic areas, it may not be the best choice for painting walls, at least not all of them. However, if used on cabinets or furniture, it can be a great option with beautiful results.

## acrylic enamel & waterborne alkyd paints

There are also paints geared *specifically* for cabinets or water-based options that include similar characteristics to an oil-based paint, which can be beneficial if used on kitchen cabinets. Most of these will consist of some sort of acrylic enamel or waterborne alkyd mixed in. They may also have a protective topcoat built-in.

## research

Moral of the story? There are countless paint options available, and new ones continue to come out every year. In my experience, and based on what I've read from product instructions, light sanding and sometimes one coat of primer is still recommended, regardless of the paint you purchase. Using a protective topcoat (even if one's already built-in) will bring extra durability, especially if using on your kitchen cabinets.

As you can see, no paint is magic for all surfaces or situations, but if you know this going in, you can remain flexible and keep an open mind.

I'm all about testing various products, but it's not without its headaches. While trying new paint products can absolutely be worth it, I recommend researching before purchasing. See what other people recommend in similar situations, read reviews and test samples if you're unsure. At least when it comes to larger or more expensive projects. RV Renovation Facebook groups can also be a helpful resource to learn about other people's experiences with a specific brand of paint.

If you visit a retailer that sells specialty chalk, mineral, plaster, or all-in-one paints, don't be afraid to ask the owner or sales associate for their advice. Most of these smaller retailers will have painted pieces throughout the store using various finishes to show as examples.

The beauty of paint is you can always paint over it, so don't be afraid to take risks and keep an open mind. Who knows, you may just discover your next favorite product.



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Ultra Fast-Drying  
Easy Water Clean Up  
**CLEAR MATTE**  
32 FL OZ (1 QT) 946 mL

**GENERAL FINISHES**  
**ENDURO-VAR**  
**SATIN**  
• WATER BASED URETHANE •  
1 QUART (U.S.) 946 mL

## protective topcoat

While a protective topcoat isn't necessary for the walls, it's a good idea to seal any surfaces, furniture, or cabinets that will get a lot of use, like those in the kitchen and bathroom. The top coat will add durability and makes the surface easier to clean.

There are countless sealing options available, from water-based to oil-based to varnishes, lacquers, and waxes, all with various advantages and finishes. There are also several eco-friendly options on the market. You'll want to choose the protective sealer right for your situation and the finish you want to achieve.

With the exception of all-natural, oil-based sealers, most water-based options are less toxic. However, in my experience, they don't yield quite the same results as their oil-based counterparts. At least not on surfaces, such as countertops, that are heavily used and need protection from water. I want to love water-based sealers for these types of applications, but I'm just not there yet, although this hasn't kept me from trying.

Keep in mind if you paint a surface a light color, you'll likely want to stick to a water-based sealer, as most oil-based options can yellow over time.

One of my favorite products to seal natural or reclaimed wood is high-quality Tung Oil, though I'm excited to explore other natural oils, like hemp and linseed. We used tung oil on the reclaimed wood around our slide-outs, and I love how it deepened the color without completely changing it.

Regardless of the sealer you purchase, be sure to read the instructions, and don't be afraid to ask the owner or sales associate for their advice. They are generally happy to help and share any tips they may have up their sleeves.

### *Renovation Tip:*

RV Renovation Facebook groups are a great resource to bounce ideas around and ask fellow RVers for their experience with a specific product. For a list of popular groups, visit :

<https://nomadsguidetodecorating/resources>



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Foundation to Finish All In One  
500mL 16.9 fl oz

**KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN**  
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## Popular All-in-One Paints

Here are some popular paint brands known to require less prep, which you may want to research further.

### *heirloom traditions*

Heirloom traditions offer a non-toxic, all-in-one paint that has become a popular option. It's a special-formulated paint with a bonding primer, wax, and topcoat built-in.

Their website states no additional topcoat is necessary unless used on countertops, although you may want to add one for extra durability on surfaces that will be used often. They also have Finish-All paint, which is flexible and can even be applied on certain fabrics, including leather and vinyl.

<https://www.heirloomtraditionspaint.com>

### *fusion mineral paint*

Fusion Mineral Paint is a water-based acrylic paint with zero VOCs that has a protective topcoat mixed in, but again, an additional top coat is recommended for surfaces that will get a lot of use. While their website states primer may not be necessary, they still recommend light sanding and using their primer for trickier surfaces like lacquer or laminate.

I used "Coal Black" to repaint our RV bathroom vanity when I needed to do some touchups and realized Annie Sloan had tweaked the original "Graphite" paint color. I didn't use any primer, and it turned out beautiful.

I've also used their white "Picket Fence" paint color on projects. While both paint colors turned out great, the darker color was definitely easier to work with and had better coverage. (Though this is true of most paint colors regardless of brand.)

<https://fusionmineralpaint.com/faq/>

### *beyond paint*

Beyond paint is a low VOC, an all-in-one paint formulated for cabinets, furniture, countertops, etc., and can be used on challenging surfaces such as Formica and laminate. It doesn't require sanding or priming in most cases and has a bonding primer and finisher built-in.

<https://beyondpaint.com/>

“The details are not the details.  
These make the design.”

CHARLES EAMES

## Walls & Architectural Details

Incorporating custom wall treatments, millwork, moulding, and trim into your RV is one of the easiest ways to bring life and style to an otherwise dull space. In fact, by creating texture and visual interest, you'll likely need less décor to make a statement.

Plus, if you're looking to cover up imperfections left behind after removing cabinets, funky mirrors, or anything else from your RV walls or ceiling, textured wall treatments are an excellent solution. Not to mention it will be one less wall to paint.

Keep in mind that these treatments aren't just for walls and backsplash installations; most can be used on the ceiling, stairs, cabinets, furniture, or doors!

### wood

There are countless ways to incorporate natural materials into your RV that will add depth and character. You'll want to be mindful of weight, but

incorporating wood into your design is one way to accomplish this. You may want to consider using shiplap, tongue and groove boards, beadboard, wood slats, plywood, or board and batten. Pole-wrap, a flexible, fluted wooden panel traditionally used to wrap basement poles, has recently gained popularity for its ability to elevate walls, furniture, and cabinet inlays.

You may choose to add decorative trim around your RV windows, install a faux vent hood in the kitchen, or build an arch into a doorway, slide-out or bunk bed frame. You can add wainscoting to the bathroom, create a feature wall with dimensional wall paneling, or add a specific wall treatment throughout your RV, like shiplap.

Wood can be new, reclaimed, or weathered and installed horizontally, vertically, or in a pattern. It can be left natural, coated with a clear sealer, stained, whitewashed, bleached, or painted.



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You can install faux wood beams on the ceiling or slide-out, and hollow doors can be spruced up with moulding then painted for a high-end look. Even a carpeted ceiling can be transformed with real or faux wood planks.

We considered various options for our RV kitchen backsplash, including peel and stick tiles, wallpaper, and copper metal sheets, but ultimately used tongue and groove planks we painted white. The planks were easy to install and thin, which helped with weight. Not only was this an upgrade from the outdated wallpaper, but it gave our motorhome the modern rustic vibe we wanted. Tongue and groove planking was also added near our media cabinet and in the hallway and bathroom. We installed shiplap below the map in our bedroom and planked reclaimed wood next to the bedroom desk.

### *Renovation Tip:*

Don't be afraid to play with height and consider installing wood vertically vs. horizontally to help bring the eyes up and make the interior feel taller.

Did you know the moulding around your RV slide-outs can be removed and replaced? In most cases, it's screwed in, although it may be nailed or attached with adhesive or Velcro. We pried ours off and replaced them with reclaimed hand-hewn barn wood. However, you may choose to use a different type of wood or paint the existing moulding. Another option is to use MDF painted white to help to make the slide-out casing less obvious. Not only will this remove visual clutter and allow the eyes to focus on other areas of your space, but it can also make the walls feel taller. Or consider one of my favorite updates I've seen in RVs, which is to use white MDF for the sides and create a faux wood beam for the top.

If your RV has more than one slide-out and you want to update all of the moulding, try to keep the style consistent or at least complimentary. The same goes for any other wood accents you plan to

incorporate, and this can be better defined in your color story to ensure harmony and balance throughout.

Softer woods such as cedar and pine are lighter options worth considering. However, feel free to contact your local lumber mill to see if they can plane down thicker wood for you, which will make it lighter. If so, you'll have even more options. Eric and I were married at a cabin resort in North Carolina and were lucky enough to become friends with the owner. Not only did he have reclaimed wood from the 1800's he was willing to part with, but he milled it down for us too. This wood can be found in various projects throughout our RV and makes my heart so happy when I think about its origins.

Plywood is another lightweight option that is often cut into strips to create faux shiplap on a budget. However, an abundance of shiplap products are now available and can be easier to install. Keep this in mind when deciding whether you want to buy or DIY during your renovation. (Or you may want to refer back to the buy vs. DIY section in chapter 2.)

For an alternative to shiplap, consider decorative wall moulding or board and batten made from lattice wood, common pine boards, lath wood, or MDF strips. These options require less material to create (which saves on weight) and can be installed in a geometric pattern or abstract design. You don't need an entire wall for this type of treatment either, as this has become a popular solution for sliding doors or creating a textured headboard.

While on the pricier side, pre-cut wood planks can cut down on labor, and most are milled down pretty thin, which will save on weight. Additionally, there are peel and stick options with adhesive strips attached, which makes installation a breeze. Another benefit of pre-cut or peel and stick planks, especially if using reclaimed barn wood, is you don't need to worry about dirt or bugs because the wood is generally already clean and kiln-dried.

We used our Brad Nailer to install wood planks throughout our RV because I was still feeling indecisive



TOP LEFT: @WISCO\_FLIP / TOP RIGHT: @WHITEHOUSEMUDDYFEET / BOTTOM LEFT: @THEFLIPPINGNOMAD / BOTTOM RIGHT: @QUEST\_CAMPERS



at the time and wanted the option to remove them easily. With that said, construction adhesive is recommended in most cases, even if using a Brad Nailer and vice versa. This is because one of the benefits of using a brad nailer is that you can secure the wood to the wall while waiting for the adhesive to fully dry.

With adhesive, not only will you have fewer nail holes to fill, but you won't have to worry about hitting anything behind the walls. We mostly nailed wood to the interior walls when we knew what was behind them. However, anytime we felt nervous, we reached out to Tiffin, our RV manufacturer, who told us what to expect. Most manufacturers offer RV schematics, which map out exactly where the electric, plumbing, and water lines are located. Some are available online, but if not, don't hesitate to contact them directly for more information. They may not always have the answer you're looking for, but it doesn't hurt to ask!

And if you're still nervous about nailing or screwing into the walls, pay attention to any screws you remove from the RV, like those from the valences or dinette booth. Not only did we remove countless screws, nails, and staples, but several of them were nearly 2" long! This helped give us an extra boost of confidence when it came time to install something ourselves.

### *Renovation Tip:*

For a budget-friendly, weightless alternative, consider faking the look of architectural details with wallpaper or paint. For example, you can create faux shiplap walls with a paint marker or make a focal point with a painted arch headboard.

## dimensional panels & metal

Wood isn't the only way to add character to your RV. Dimensional panels, such as faux brick, can be used, which can also be painted over. You can purchase corrugated metal new or from salvage yards and install it as wainscoting, inside the shower stall, as cabinet door inlays, or to create a rustic door, as we did in our bathroom.

For a more modern finish, consider using decorative metal sheet panels. These can be purchased in a variety of finishes, including copper, stainless steel, and brass. Keep in mind, a thinner gauge will equal less weight and most likely can be cut using aviation snips. Some other metal options include using embossed ceiling tiles, faux metal panels, or tin backsplash rolls. You can even cut some of these options with scissors.

## tile

One of the most popular options for the backsplash in an RV kitchen or bathroom is peel and stick tile. Not only is peel and stick tile lightweight, but it's available in a broad spectrum of colors, patterns, and design styles. They can be purchased anywhere from big box stores to online retailers to specialty shops. The quality has continued to improve over the years, but additional adhesive is often recommended due to extreme temperature changes in RVs.

Real tile can also be used, although weight and extra precautions will need to be considered. Several RV'ers have gone this route without issue but have chosen no-grout options, MusselBound adhesive mats, or used



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flexible grout and adhesive to prevent cracking. Another way to prevent cracking with real tile is to use tile sheets or smaller tiles vs. large format options. A good rule of thumb is if you can break it by hand, it's best to avoid it inside an RV. Installation for real tile is more labor-intensive than peel and stick options but can provide a more residential look and feel.

### *Renovation Tip:*

Consider painting leftover or secondhand tiles for a custom, budget-friendly fix. You can use them to create a simple pattern, mural, or abstract design.

## wallpaper and vinyl

Wallpaper has come a long way and is available with traditional adhesive or peel and stick designs that can be removed, making them easy to change up in the future. This is a lightweight option with countless styles and patterns that can fit within just about any budget. You can find scenic wallpaper murals, botanical designs, abstract motifs, and bold, geometric patterns. There are wallpaper options made of natural textures like linen and grasscloth, others that resemble specialty finishes like limewash or plaster, and additional options that mimic materials such as marble, wood, brick, or stone. Then there are paintable options, such as beadboard, that give you the appearance and texture you want while remaining lightweight.

I made the mistake of adding wallpaper I wasn't crazy about to our bedroom because I felt limited on time and hadn't found the reclaimed wood I originally planned to use. It resembled stone but wasn't the most realistic and made the room feel more chaotic. Needless to say, it was removed a couple of months later. While I'm all about temporary solutions, in this instance, it would have been better to wait until I found the material I originally wanted rather than spend the time and money trying to "finish" the space.

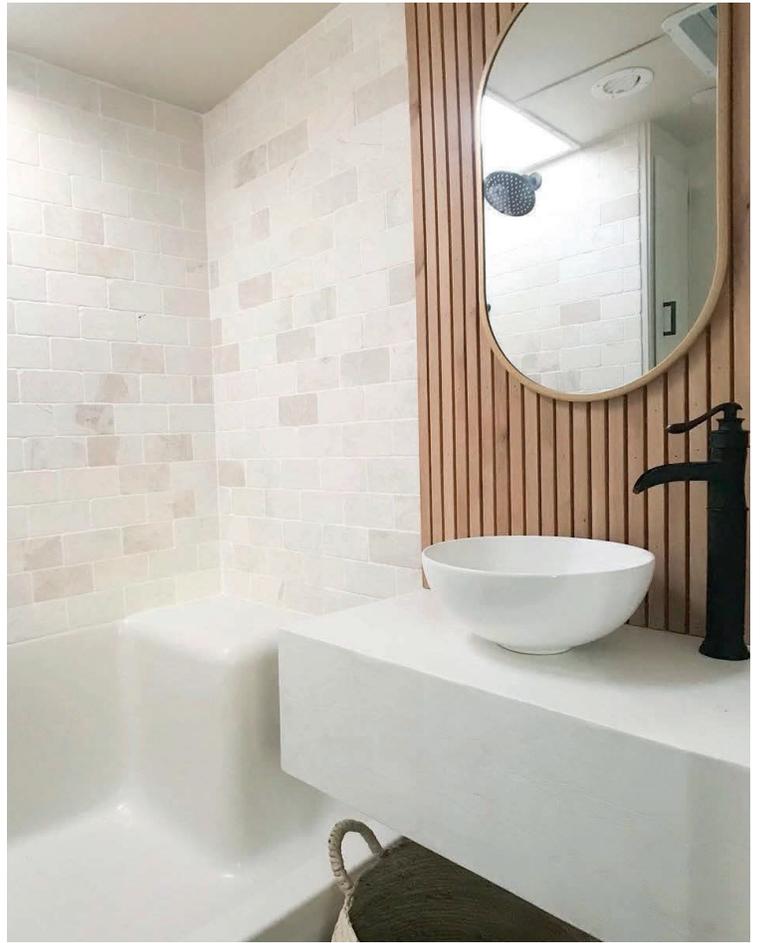
If you choose to use wallpaper, find one that makes you happy every time you see it and doesn't compete with the rest of the space. Just remember to stick within your color story to create a cohesive flow throughout your RV. And if you want to take a risk on a bold or interesting pattern, peel and stick wallpaper is a great way to do it.

While our removable wallpaper stayed in place until I chose to remove it, I've heard several stories where the wallpaper peeled off. This is due to the humidity and moisture in RVs, as can be the case when using peel and stick tile. Unless you want your removable wallpaper to remain easy to remove, consider using extra adhesive. Or at the very least, be aware that you may need to add extra adhesive should your wallpaper begin to peel off the wall.

Vinyl tiles and flooring, including peel and stick designs, have become increasingly popular to use on walls, as a backsplash, or inside a shower surround. As mentioned in Ch. 4, FloorPops and Quadrostyle offer vinyl tiles in fun colors and patterns that are easy to install through peel and stick application. And companies like DumaWall and Palisade Tiles offer large, interlocking, vinyl wall tiles that are installed with adhesive and don't require grout.



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TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: @TROOPNASHVILLE / BOTTOM: @BRITTANYWINEBARGER

## specialty finishes

If you're looking for an affordable yet creative way to add depth and texture to your walls, consider specialty finishes and coatings. For example, one popular specialty paint finish is limewash or lime wall paint, which is generally made from crushed limestone, water, and natural pigments, making it a non-toxic, eco-friendly option. Limewash is applied in 2-3 thin layers with a block brush and creates a soft, chalky, mottled, suede-like appearance. It also mimics old-style plaster, though it's more of a visual texture than a physical one. With that said, the thick mineral consistency allows for more texture if desired. Gypsum-based plaster finishes are another zero VOC option similar to limewash but applied with a putty knife or trowel.

These paint applications can give your space an artistic touch, and you can also use them on furniture. While they are designed to be used on interior walls, I don't recommend either for *all* of your RV walls and instead would stick to an accent wall or unexpected area. The reason is that, unlike typical household paints, these options *technically* aren't meant to be cleaned. And even though they are anti-microbial and can hold up well under high humidity, it's best to avoid high-traffic areas or splash zones. Otherwise, stains may be left behind, though touch-ups are generally quick, forgiving, and can add more character to the layers of paint underneath. And while you can add a topcoat to offer more protection, it would be a lot of work when you factor in all of the nooks and crannies in your RV, not to mention it's often not recommended unless absolutely necessary as it diminishes the reason for using these types of paints in the first place.

You can find DIY recipes online to make your own limewash or plaster finish, or you can purchase from retailers such as Portola Paints, Kalkpaint, Bauwerk, Vasari, and JH Wall Paints, to name a few.

Another popular specialty finish to consider is a concrete skim coat, also known as micro-topping, which will give your walls (or countertops as mentioned in chapter 6) the look and feel of concrete without the added weight. And because this finish is applied with a trowel, it too offers beautiful dimension and smooth texture. Popular products include SureTex Microcement Concrete Overlay and Ardex or Henry Feather Finish.

As with any paint or finish application, prep is key, so be sure to do your research and follow the instructions. And this includes applying the proper primer for the product you choose to use. With a quick Google search, you can also find in-depth video tutorials and inspiring before and after photos.

### *Renovation Tip:*

Finish out any trim, caulking, or random small tasks when possible. Otherwise, the to-do list will clutter your mind, and you may start to feel overwhelmed or unmotivated. These are generally smaller projects you can knock out in one day, but if not, create a plan to finish them up. By creating an action plan, you'll immediately feel relief, even if it means tackling a single task from the to-do list once a week. This can offer mental clarity and energy you can then pour into other projects or activities.

“The greatest gift that you were ever given was the gift of your imagination.”

DR. WAYNE DYER

## 07 Storage

I'll admit it's easier to avoid clutter and keep your RV organized when you get rid of all the crap you don't want or need. But since you're human, there's going to be stuff you *do* want or need, which will require space. Thankfully, there are solutions available to help your tiny home look and function better for you.

You'd be amazed how one minor tweak can make the space more comfortable to live in, clean, and maintain. In fact, despite removing some of the built-in cabinets, our RV still functions better than our previous home that was more than 5x the size, all thanks to creative storage solutions.

### Put it on display

While lack of storage may seem frustrating, it can become an opportunity to creatively display everyday items you love and use in plain sight.

We don't have a ton of cabinet space in our kitchen, so I keep items we often use on the counter for easy access. On travel days, I either move these items into cabinets or corral them into our kitchen sink.

While at first, you may be using items you already have on hand, be intentional with any new purchases you make. Remember the values you wrote down and keep those in mind before making purchases. For example, do you want to focus on the quality of materials, artistry, how and where it was made, how easy it is to clean and maintain, or whether it's eco-friendly? Unless you need something ASAP, try to have patience and purchase items that you find more enjoyable to use or beautiful to look at, preferably both.

One of the easiest ways to do this is to elevate your everyday essentials. Start paying attention to the items you use every day and want to keep out for convenience. Then, make a list and prioritize which



items you would like to replace first. If you're on a budget, like we are, these changes may need to happen over time.

I would prioritize what items you use most that are also most visible. There's no need to splurge on something you keep hidden inside a cabinet when there's something else you could replace that you see every day.

When I first researched RV storage or decorating ideas (a few years ago), everything that popped up seemed cheap or made of plastic. While I understand the need for lightweight, budget-friendly items that are camping-approved and easy to clean, I wanted less disposable options that were more stylish. While I believe RV-specific type retailers have a place, you can often find better quality items elsewhere without the novelty price markup.

## elevate your essentials

Rather than buy something simply because it gets the job done, is convenient or on sale, try to find items that excite you and make you happy to leave out on display. Why focus solely on practical needs when you can find something practical *and* beautiful?

Maybe it's hand-carved wooden spoons or hand-thrown pottery. While we don't keep anything too precious to stress over, I love drinking coffee from my handmade ceramic mugs and have never had an issue with them on travel days since they are secured in the cabinet.

Elevated essentials don't need to be expensive either. You can find simple, sustainable designs at an affordable price. It can even be something as simple as upgrading your sponges to something more natural and easy on the eyes. When my cleaning supplies are pretty and practical, I enjoy using them more often.

Do you have a plastic broom and dustpan? Depending on your style preference, consider

replacing it with a higher quality version made of wood or a vintage-inspired or modern design. With an upgraded version, you won't mind if it visibly hangs from a hook near the kitchen or bathroom.

For example, we bought a handmade broom from an Etsy shop based in the Pacific Northwest, and I'm obsessed with it! I never knew I could love a broom this much or that it could feel like art. Not only is it beautiful, making it a joy to store in sight and use, but it works fantastic and brings soul into our tiny home on wheels. Every time I use it, I appreciate the time, energy, and craftsmanship the makers poured into creating it.

Walls and dead space are another opportunity to display everyday essentials. For example, produce can be wrangled inside baskets or cotton market totes, which you can hang on the wall or the side of cabinets. If you enjoy cooking, create a magnetic herb garden to hang on your fridge or install wall-mounted planters. And if you lack storage space in the kitchen, consider hanging pots, pans, and cooking utensils from a rail rack or knives on a magnetic wall strip. (Ikea is a great resource for small space storage solutions!)

When we were planning our RV renovation, I wanted to purchase a beautiful, well-made cutting board. Only this is when I was *obsessed* with weight, and all the cutting boards I came across seemed "too heavy." My sister-in-law ended up giving us lightweight bamboo cutting boards for Christmas that year, and they work great for our RV. While I now have a better understanding of weight limitations and have considered upgrading our cutting boards, I enjoy the ones given to us, so it's no longer a priority.

I mention this because I don't want you to think you have to go out and upgrade *every single item* you already own. Instead, enjoy what you have and what works for you. If you're feeling overwhelmed, this can help you prioritize what to buy and when to splurge.



@MOUNTAINMODERNLIFE



TOP LEFT: @MOUNTAINMODERNLIFE / TOP RIGHT: @SIMPLYHANNAHLEE / BOTTOM: @MOUNTAINMODERNLIFE

## Renovation Tip:

When planning your RV organization and storage, consider taking cues from your favorite retailers. How are they storing shoes, clothing, accessories, bathroom, and kitchen supplies? How can this be translated into your RV?

### doors

When it comes to making the most of a tiny space, it's important to see the potential of unused surfaces. One way to accomplish this is to utilize the front or back of doors, including cabinets. Hooks can be installed inside kitchen cabinet doors to store pot lids, oven mitts, or hold measuring cups. You can install corkboard wallpaper behind these items to muffle clanking sounds when the door shuts or during travel days.

Specialty organizers or magazine holders can be installed inside cabinets to neatly store items like foil, wax paper, and trash bags. And hand towels can be hung on over-the-cabinet hooks.

Get more out of your tiny bathroom by installing magnetic strips inside cabinet doors to store bobby pins and nail clippers or mount acrylic containers for nail polish, makeup, or essential oils. In addition, you can hang a laundry hamper bag on an over-the-door hook, or an over-the-door caddy can store toiletries or hair styling tools.

### hidden storage

While tiny homes generally come with tiny closets, that doesn't mean you can't find a place to store your favorite accessories or seasonal items. Not only can you utilize the back of closet doors (as mentioned above) to hang jewelry, belts, hats, or scarves, but you can take advantage of other hidden storage areas.

If you plan to replace the sofa, consider one with hidden storage or that allows you to slide baskets

underneath. You can also utilize stylish furnishings that double as storage, such as ottomans or benches. Most RVs include storage underneath the bed, perfect for under-the-bed organizers or vacuum space saver bags.

However, according to Feng Shui philosophy, if you have to keep items stored under the bed (and let's face it, most RVers do), it's best to keep them clean and tidy. It's also recommended to only store items like bedding, pillows, and linens vs. objects that may carry toxic energy. The reason? Even if you can't see clutter, it can affect you, especially if you're sleeping right on top of it. By keeping the storage underneath your bed organized, you're more likely to sleep peacefully.

### hooks

Never underestimate the power of a hook. Hooks are a simple solution for keeping items organized and easy to access. You can also have fun with the style of hooks you install, so they bring not only function but show off your personality and style.

You can use accordion hooks for coats, purses, mugs, photos, or hanging produce bags. Hang hats from decorative hooks, plants from clasp-cup hooks, or install adhesive solutions made of wood or metal. While some hooks may be hidden, others may be visible, so keep this in mind when making purchases.

Shaker peg rails add a primitive yet modern touch and lend themselves to various uses, including being used in the kitchen to store pots, pans, and other supplies. Wreath hooks can be repurposed



PHOTO COURTESY OF @MRSCAPTAINKOCH



PHOTO COURTESY OF @DEBANDDANELLE



PHOTO COURTESY OF @RV.FAMILY.RENO

for hanging towels over shower doors, and you can use swing-arm hooks for kitchen towels.

We have modern adhesive hooks inside our RV shower, where we hang our towels to dry. This way, we can take advantage of the wall space inside our shower and keep the towels off the floor and out of sight. We also use hooks on the inside of our bathroom vanity door to store my hair styling tools.

You may want to use a shower caddy to hold toiletries or a mesh pocket organizer, which will stay secure while you drive. They can be hung from hooks inside your RV shower or attached to the inside of your shower curtain rings. There are also silicone bathroom hooks specifically made to stick to bathroom mirrors or shower walls.

Another space-saving way to store your bathroom toiletries, such as shampoo, conditioner, body wash, hand wash, or lotion, is through wall-mounted pump dispensers. Drill-free options are now available that are easy to install and extra stylish when used with apothecary bottles.

S-hooks can be added to tension rods and rails to hang kitchen, office, or cleaning supplies. We use S-hooks to hang shoes by our door and over our RV slide-out to hang planters, my apron, and market totes.

You can even install folding hooks on the exterior of your RV for hanging wet towels, shoes, and bathing suits.

Whatever your storage dilemma, there's likely a hook for it.

## Renovation Tip

When possible, upgrade plastic hooks for more stylish ones, and that includes adhesive options.

## collapse or nest:

Regardless of where and how often you plan to travel, RVing allows the comforts of home to always be within reach, and that includes a fully stocked kitchen.

You can find pots, pans, and dishes that nest within one another, along with storage containers, measuring cups, funnels, and mixing bowls that collapse flat when not in use. You can even find pans with removable handles for easy storing or with lids that double as a skillet.

However, just because you're living in a small space doesn't mean *everything* has to collapse or nest. We have a mix of these items in our RV, along with items that don't do either. I think it's just as important to consider quality, convenience, and if you enjoy the process of using it.

For example, I love our collapsible colander but hated the collapsible over-the-sink dish drying rack I originally bought. It took up too much space in the sink, and I didn't like it on the countertop either. I tried keeping it stored away when not in use, but that felt pointless since we frequently wash and dry dishes.

Ultimately, we gave it away and I haven't missed it since.

Once we got rid of it, we switched to using a microfiber dish drying mat. It worked well, but I didn't like the space it took up on the countertop either, or that we had to wait for it to dry after putting the dishes away. It just wasn't working, and I knew there had to be a better solution.

That led to the purchase of a roll-up dish drying rack. We don't have a dishwasher in our RV, so I love this solution, at least compared to the other options we've tried. It doesn't take up a lot of visual space when placed over the sink, so I don't mind

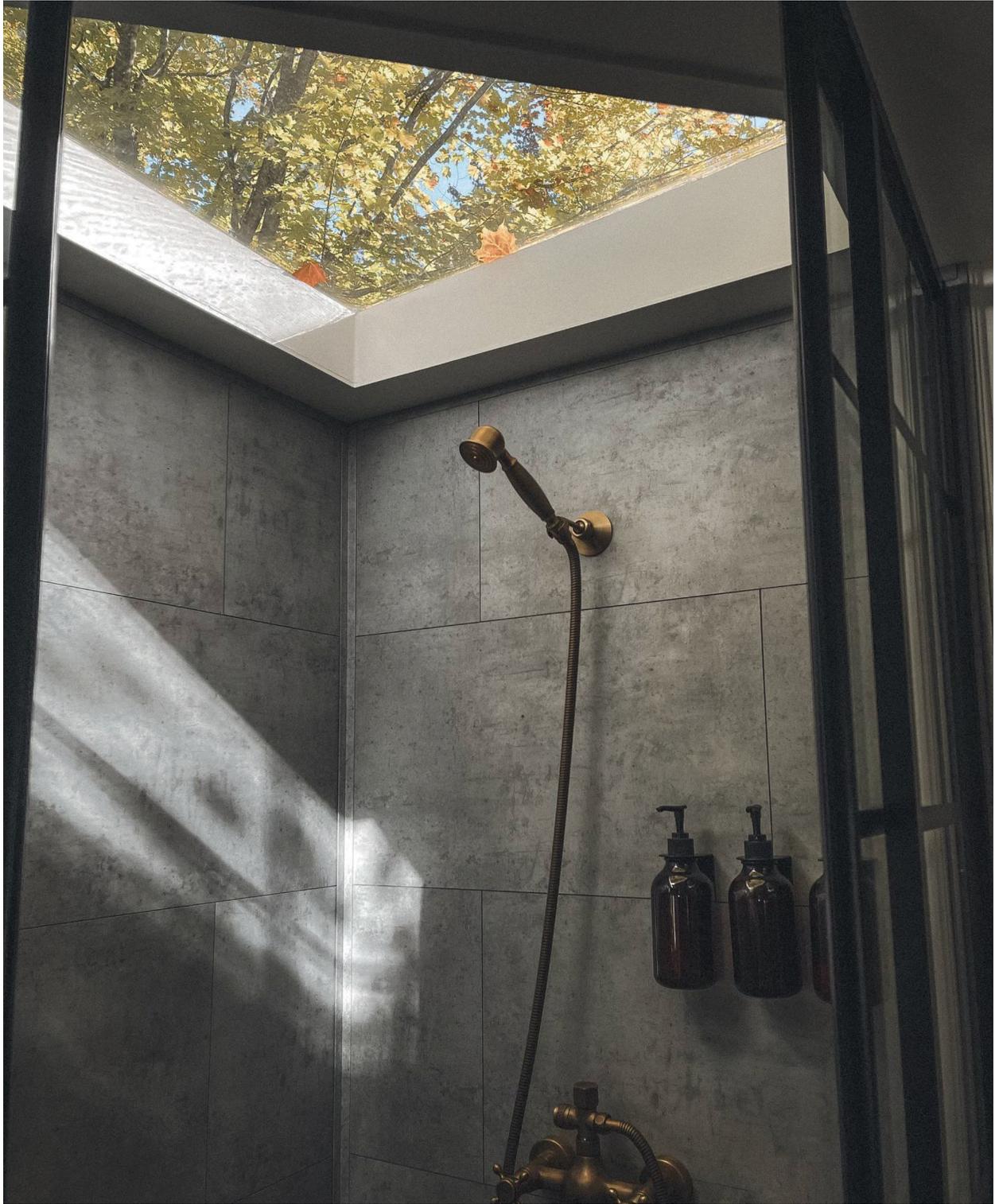


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PHOTO COURTESY OF @PRVBSTHIRTYONEGIRL



PHOTO COURTESY OF @FAWNBLACKHOME

leaving it out, and because it's made of stainless steel, it dries quickly. Not to mention it doubles up as a cooling rack, and we can easily roll it up if we need more sink space.

Collapsible options go beyond the kitchen. For example, we use a collapsible laundry bag underneath our bathroom sink and collapsible storage bins to wrangle up loose décor on travel days.

Ultimately, it comes down to trial and error and figuring out what works best for you. Again, we want our homes, tiny or not, to serve us better, and understanding what's working or not, is one way to figure out how.

## make it match

Even the most disorganized space will instantly appear more organized when the storage containers match or feel cohesive. If you're using multiple baskets, bins, or canisters in one location, try to make them match or pair well together. Your eyes will thank you for it.

Whatever you do, try to avoid purchasing new organizational bins, baskets, containers, or file organizers until *after* you know what you're bringing into the RV *and* where it's going. This way, you know exactly what you need, along with the correct measurements. Otherwise, you may end up with several containers that don't work and instead create more clutter or chaos.

## decant

Decanting is when you pour the contents of one container into another.

You'd be amazed at how pretty, tidy, and cohesive your kitchen or bathroom will appear once you remove pantry or toiletry items from advertised packaging into clear, airtight containers. Not only does this remove visual and physical clutter, but it

can help extend the shelf life while allowing you to see exactly how much you have left.

When we first moved into the RV, I brought some round, acrylic canisters from our previous kitchen to store our dry goods. I eventually swapped them out for square canisters that would be easier to line up and stack, but sometimes you need to use what you have until you're able or willing to splurge on something better.

### *Renovation Tip*

To limit storing surplus supplies after decanting, make sure your container is large enough for the contents. Otherwise, consider purchasing from bulk bins so you're only buying the amount you actually need.

Don't forget to label anything you decant, even if it seems obvious. You don't want to accidentally use baking soda instead of baking powder (yup, been there, done that). Labeling will make it easier for you, or anyone else, to find what's needed. And that goes beyond decanting.

The labels don't need to be anything fancy, and even if you want to make them pretty, a temporary solution is often better than nothing. You can write on glass jars with a paint marker or acrylic containers with a dry erase marker, both of which can be removed with rubbing alcohol (always test in an inconspicuous area first). Writing on the containers can also help you keep track of when you last filled it, or the contents will expire. Instructions can be taped to the side or back, if necessary.

While using a paint marker is a simple way to label items, I don't recommend it for smaller, glass containers or an area you will touch frequently.



PHOTO COURTESY OF @THISISBUS



This is because after labeling our glass spice jars, I noticed the letters started to rub off within a couple of weeks. I wasn't overly concerned since this was only a temporary solution until I printed labels, but it's something to keep in mind.

Decanting doesn't have to stop in the kitchen pantry. We also decant our pet's dehydrated food into clear containers. And while I enjoy making my own room sprays and cleaners, I also use commercial, natural soaps and cleaning supplies, all of which are stored inside amber apothecary spray bottles. Not only do I love how these bottles look, but they are easy to refill for future uses. I even use a small amber spray bottle to mist my plants with water.

## create more counter space

Counter space in an RV kitchen can sometimes feel like a joke, but thankfully there are ways to add additional counter space to make prep work more manageable. One of the easiest ways to do this is to purchase a cutting board stovetop cover. Some can even be stored this way.

The roll-up dish rack I mentioned earlier allows us to dry our dishes while keeping them off the counter. We can also use it to hold our produce during prep or store hot pans.

Another way to add counter space to your RV kitchen is to install a countertop extension. This will allow you to flip up the extension when needed or set it back down when not in use. Alternatively, a small folding table or TV tray is a budget-friendly option that can be moved into the kitchen during prep to provide extra workspace but stowed away afterward. If you have the space available, you may even consider keeping a rolling cart handy or building a slide-out island within the lower kitchen cabinets.

### *Renovation Tip:*

IKEA's Lämplig bamboo cutting board is popular in RV's because it fits most stovetops perfectly. This allows you to store it in plain sight, or double the stovetop area as a prep surface when not in use.

## compact appliances

Consider what appliances you must have in the kitchen, and see if you can replace them with compact options. Before hitting the road, we swapped out our specialty coffee maker with a French press and haven't regretted it once. Not only does our coffee taste better, but we've been able to save valuable countertop space. If you're not quite ready to switch up the way you make coffee, you can likely switch to a compact version of what you're currently using, such as a mini-Keurig machine or espresso maker. However, if you LOVE your specialty coffee maker or any other kitchen appliances that seem too bulky or frivolous, I'm not here to tell you to ditch them, at least not *all* of them. Instead, make space for them!



PHOTO COURTESY OF @SHELBYADRIFT



PHOTO COURTESY OF @DARLINTRAILERS

Another way to maximize space in your kitchen is to replace bulky appliances that serve one purpose for options with multiple uses. For example, you can find a blender that doubles as a food processor or a pressure cooker to replace a slow cooker, steamer, rice cooker, air fryer, etc. We're obsessed with the versatility of our Ninja Foodie, and it's no surprise that Pressure Cookers are incredibly popular with RVers, though storage will need to be determined as they take up a lot of space. However, the best appliances are those we *actually* use. So remember that it will only benefit you if you take it out of the box and put it to work.

It's crazy to think we almost didn't purchase our RV because it didn't have a separate oven. While it had a microwave/convection oven combination, we had never used anything like it and didn't know how well it would work. I'm so happy we didn't let that sway our decision because it's worked amazing for us during our four years on the road. We stopped using our microwave a couple of years ago, but the convection oven we use daily.

While dual-purpose appliances may not be necessary, they can make life much easier in a smaller space. With that said, a smaller, simplified option may be a better solution, such as using an immersion blender instead of a countertop option or replacing a massive fridge with a compact version.

You may even choose to remove the oven or microwave entirely to create more storage space.

## Renovation Tip

A salad mixer is one of my favorite kitchen "gadgets" to wash veggies. This is because the spinner can help drain extra water in a matter of seconds. As a bonus, it includes a colander, so you may not need a separate one.

## shelves

It may seem like a no-brainer, but shelves are a simple way to bring style and storage to your RV. To store bathroom towels, we created custom shelving using horseshoes and reclaimed wood. While we now use it for more than towels, it has become incredibly useful, and the rustic design makes me happy every time I look at it. Not to mention the reclaimed wood holds sentimental value.

You can also purchase ready-made shelves, re-imagine something into one, or DIY your own. Picture ledge shelves are generally light and narrow and can easily be installed next to the bed and used as a nightstand. We had extra supplies on hand and made our own, but these types of shelves come in a wide variety of styles, finishes, and price ranges.

Replacing kitchen cabinets with open shelving has become increasingly popular over the years, even in RVs. However, it's important to keep in mind how frequently you will be traveling and how much you will need to wrangle up or put away each time, though this generally takes less than a few minutes. Don't forget to consider the amount of storage you need and what will be on display. While this may not be the most practical or convenient option for some, you may still feel it's worth it.

If you choose to use open shelving in your RV, you may want to add a ledge to prevent shifting, and secure décor with industrial-strength Velcro or museum putty/wax. Then be sure to wrangle or relocate all loose items into a secure location, such as a basket or bin, before hitting the road.

We keep a few collapsible storage bins handy for this purpose, making packing up a breeze!

**For more travel packing tips refer to Chapter 9.**



PHOTO COURTESY OF @THELINCOLNTRIBE





## tension rods

Tension rods are tiny but mighty. They come in various sizes, styles, and strengths and are easy to add or remove. Not only can they be used to prevent items from shifting in your fridge or kitchen cabinets on travel days, but you can use larger ones to hang curtains.

I've even heard of RV'ers using tension rods inside their RV shower to hang extra clothes or towels. We currently have a tension rod inside our bathroom closet, where we hang extra cleaning supplies. Best of all, they stay in place while we drive down the road.

## drop zone

Creating a functional entryway in a home can be challenging, but even more so in an RV. Thankfully, a drop zone can help combat this. Ask yourself what items you leave and come back with, such as your keys, purse, shoes, sunglasses, coats, pet leashes, and flashlights. These items will likely need a place near the entry, making them easy to find and put away.

Understand this may take some experimentation, and as you figure out how you live in your RV, your needs may change. If your layout is anything like ours, you may not have much wall space and will need to find creative solutions.

We originally hung a basket on the side of our sofa, followed by a custom cubby, but both became a catchall for everything, resulting in a jumbled mess. After reevaluating our needs, we replaced the cubby with a wooden dowel rail and S hooks to hang extra shoes and pet supplies. We also added a cup hook to the side of the sofa for our dog's leash and installed additional hooks in the stairwell to conveniently hang our keys. These modifications have greatly improved the space's functionality (and my sanity!).

You may want to consider the sides of furniture, vertical wall space, the back of the door, or even

the corner of a kitchen countertop or dinette booth. If you have an abundance of shoes, consider keeping only those used most frequently near the door and stashing extras elsewhere. Or if you have "dead space" underneath your sofa, fill pretty baskets with shoes and slide them underneath, making them easy to access and put away. If that's not possible, keeping a stylish basket for shoes near the door is another convenient, clutter-free option.

## *Renovation Tip*

The Ikea Trones, Bissa, and Stall storage cabinets are great for small spaces because they are lightweight, narrow, and shallow. The Trones cabinet can even be stacked and includes a recessed area on top that can hold keys or sunglasses. And if you're traveling during the winter, these types of cabinets can store more than shoes, including scarves, gloves, leashes, or headlamps. You can find similar styles at other retailers.

You can corral items with hooks, baskets, rods, bowls, trays, tote bags, cubbies, and shelves. We don't have enough wall space near the door to hang coats or sweaters but have added hooks to our sliding bathroom door to hang them when necessary. I keep my purse on a hook near the bedroom, and Eric likes to hang his coat on a cabinet knob in front of the captain's chair, which is often hidden by the curtains we have hanging upfront.

There are several small space solutions; you just have to figure out what works best for you.

## pets

If you plan to travel with pets, chances are you'll need storage for pet supplies, like bedding, food, toys, and possibly a pet crate. Think of where



PHOTO COURTESY OF @RVINGDOGSANDWINE





TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: @MOUNTAINMODERNLIFE / BOTTOM: @PLACE\_OFMY\_TASTE

activities will take place and see if there's a good storage solution nearby. If you need a large pet crate, consider building one into existing furniture, like the bed, sofa, or dinette booth. Or, if you need a lighter, more temporary option, a pet gate can help provide separation when necessary.

You can bring your pet's favorite bed, although the sofa, rugs, sofa ledge, and even the dashboard have become our pet's favorite napping spots.

If you plan to travel with cats, you'll need space for a litter box. If you have floor space in your living, bedroom, or bathroom, one simple way to hide your litter box in plain sight is to cut a hole on the side of a stylish basket with enough space for both the litter box and your cat. Make sure to use a basket with a hinged lid to contain the box and litter, which will make for easy clean up. However, if you lack floor space, you may want to consider keeping a litter box inside the shower or in front of the passenger chair. With that said, we tried both options in the first month of RVing and were annoyed with the inconvenience of moving and cleaning it.

If possible, consider utilizing one of the RV basement storage bays via a cat door installed inside the stairwell. This way, your cat can access the litter box from inside the camper without it taking up valuable space. We planned to go this route, but unfortunately, a steel beam was in the way and prevented this from happening. Alternatively, you can build litter box storage into existing furniture, like bench seating, or buy furniture with this option already built-in. We ended up storing the litter box inside our bathroom linen closet and installed a cat door on the side, which the cats can access from our bedroom. Not only did this solution keep the litter box secure during travel, but it was out of sight while still being easy to access and clean.

## the 80/20 rule

I recommend keeping anything you use 80% of the time super convenient and moving anything used less often further away. There's no use taking up valuable real estate for something you only use 20% of the time.

Sure it's a good idea only to keep what you'll use, but if you love something and know you'll use it sometimes, there's a workaround.

For example, once we bought our juicer, our Ninja blender wasn't getting used as often. Not to mention space was getting pretty tight.

I didn't want to get rid of it since I enjoy using it for smoothies and vegan sauces, so I stored it underneath our sofa. It wasn't the most convenient to access, but I didn't need it to be. A few months later, when I started digging it out of the sofa more often, I realized it was time to make it more convenient. I went through the media cabinet storage and made space for it. It's not in a "typical" or prime location, but it's still easy to access when necessary.

## experiment

When we first moved into the RV, I designated one of the drawers in the kitchen as the "junk drawer." I had become accustomed to this drawer of randomness my whole life, and it almost felt expected. However, it didn't



take long for me to realize this drawer was taking more than it was giving and that I didn't actually *need* it. What I needed was a better solution for storing the items crammed inside the junk drawer. And more space for kitchen tools.

After rummaging through the drawer for about 15 minutes, I relocated most everything into the storage basement while frequently used items, such as pens, scissors, and a screwdriver, were placed inside a magnetic holder on the fridge.

We also experienced some trial and error when figuring out where to store our spices. We initially kept them on a magnetic wall strip behind the stove. Not only did we discover they lost flavor more quickly when exposed to heat, but we eventually had more spices than space on the strip. That's when we moved the magnetic containers over to our fridge, only to realize our cat, Kobe, enjoyed knocking them off as we slept. I later transferred all of our spices into glass jars and neatly stored them inside the drawer below our stove.

I love the new location so much more. Not only are the spices easy to access, but I can see what's inside (and how much). Best of all, I no longer struggle to open the lids due to them being jammed from crashing on the floor. Maybe Kobe was onto something...

Moral of the story? Don't be afraid to change things up and experiment with different solutions. And try not to get stuck thinking about what storage is "expected" for a particular space. Sure, you may go back to how it was, but there's no harm in seeing if a better solution is available.

### *Renovation Tip:*

Pay attention to how you feel when you're taking something out or putting it away. Try to organize intuitively. Ask yourself, is this convenient, easy to manage, use, access, put away, and find? If you're feeling frustrated when reaching for something, see it as an opportunity for change. Is there a better solution available?

“Good design is simply art applied  
to living.”

DOROTHY SHAVER

## Furniture & Fixtures

Time and money can quickly add up during a renovation, but thankfully, even small changes can have a dramatic effect on the overall look and feel of your home on wheels. This chapter will include upgrades you can make through furniture and fixtures that will instantly bring personality and style into your RV.

### furniture

One of the easiest ways to make your RV feel more residential is to replace existing furniture with residential alternatives. While you can add a slipcover or have it reupholstered, depending on your budget and skill level, you may want to consider replacing it with something else entirely or create a custom build. This may include the sofa, accent chairs, table, dinette booth, and any built-in storage such as dressers or media cabinets.

Before purchasing anything new, make a list of any furniture you currently own that could work or be

modified to work inside the RV, such as an existing sofa, dining table, chairs, dresser, footstools, or desk.

Don't forget to double-check the measurements of any furniture you plan to bring into the RV to make sure it will fit through a door or window or can be disassembled to some capacity so that it *will* fit.

And just because something in a retail shop seems like it will fit inside your RV doesn't mean it will. As I've mentioned before, you'll be amazed how small something looks in the store only to appear massive once inside your RV, or vice versa. This is especially true for depth, something you have to be mindful of in a small space, which is why double or even triple-checking the dimensions is essential.

Weight is another factor to keep in mind, though in my experience, most of the furniture we removed from our RV was heavier than its replacements, especially the sofa. (Refer to Ch. 2 for tips on weighing your RV.)



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Big box stores, online shops, the FB marketplace, and thrift or vintage shops are just a few resources for affordable furniture options. You can purchase wherever you like as long as it meets your needs and will fit inside the space. And not to sound like a broken record, but be sure to triple check not only the width, but the depth and height as well.

## sofa

If you plan to replace the sofa, skip RV retailers and consider buying from your favorite retailer or splurging on a custom option that will allow you to select the style, dimensions, and finishes you prefer. Alternatively, you can purchase modular designs that will enable you to combine multiple pieces for the look and size you need, and some even include built-in storage.

Don't forget about the style of the sofa, which seems obvious, but is often overlooked. This single piece of furniture can either elevate your space or take away from it. Do you want something more modern, casual, or traditional? Is there a specific sofa design style you're drawn to, such as mid-century modern, tuxedo, or chesterfield? Do you want a sofa that sits flush on the floor or one with legs, which can offer the illusion of more space? Do you prefer one with arms, or are you drawn to the more minimalistic armless options?

In addition to style, it's equally important to consider comfort, durability, and function. There's nothing worse than a pretty sofa that's difficult to clean and uncomfortable to sit on. Being practical about your

needs can help you make a purchase you'll appreciate for years to come vs. an impulse buy you'll later regret or need to replace, therefore costing more money in the long run. For example, consider who will be using the sofa and how. Do you want a reclining option, additional built-in storage, or need a sofa that can convert into a bed?

Do you want multiple cushioned seats, or a single cushion seat? Will it need to be kid or pet-friendly? If so, you may want to consider performance or outdoor fabrics, that are more durable or options with slipcovers that you can easily wash.

For safety during travel, I recommend securing your sofa in place using bolts or screws with brackets if possible, though not all RVers choose to take this approach. And if you need to re-install seatbelts in a motorhome (though it may not be necessary depending on your situation), you can likely reuse the ones from the original RV sofa. A quick google search will provide online resources to help you with this process, though you may want to figure out the *how* before purchasing a specific sofa to make sure it will work.

Alternatively, you can build your own sofa, and there are countless blog articles and Youtube videos to help you along the way.

Make sure to consider the Buy Vs. DIY guide in chapter 2 or outsource parts of the project, such as upholstery, if necessary. Another option is to build the sofa base and purchase ready-made cushions in the dimensions you need.

## Renovation Tip

By purchasing a sofa in a neutral color, you'll have more flexibility to swap out the throw pillows and blankets as the seasons change or if you choose to update the color scheme.



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Many RVers have discovered the sofa dimensions they need are similar to a daybed or twin-size bed and will use daybed cushions or a mattress for the bottom sofa cushion.

When we first purchased our RV, we knew the sofa had to go. Not only was it made of a scratchy material our cats could destroy in minutes, but it was extremely heavy, not to mention ugly. The problem was finding what we wanted, in the dimensions we needed, at a price we were willing to pay. When we couldn't find what we wanted, we decided to build our own.

I'll admit building a sofa was low on our priority list. It wasn't exactly cheap and came with its own set of challenges that required time and patience. Thankfully, my mom volunteered her time to create our cushions, which helped immensely in the overall look and feel of the finished sofa design.

While our sofa turned out better than expected, there are some things we would do differently. We originally considered making a sofa complete with a pull-out bed, storage, pop-up footrests, and folding side tables. Then we looked at our project list, our timeline, and our sofa building skills and ultimately decided to simplify our design and focus on what we *really* needed: comfort and storage.

In the end, we created comfortable seating for two with extra storage underneath. We also built a narrow console table behind the sofa that doubles as a ledge and additional storage space. We nixed the idea for the sofa to turn into a bed because we didn't plan to have guests sleep over very often, if at all. Plus, it would have required more time and money, and we didn't think the splurge was worth it.

However, if we were to replace it, we would add the option to transform the sofa into a bed, or at least include a stylish reclining option. Not necessarily for guests to sleepover, but for cozier lounging to read or watch movies. And while the added storage

was nice, I have to admit it turned more into a catchall for extra blankets and electronics that we could have stored elsewhere.

I learned from the build of our sofa that unless you need something custom, it may be more cost-effective to buy vs. DIY, especially if you have to pay someone else to do the upholstery.

Thankfully, much has changed over the years, and more stylish, functional, and affordable sofa designs are now available for tiny home dwellers.

## *dinette booth*

Most RVs include a dinette booth that can transform into a bed, though they are generally bulky and an eyesore.

In addition to reupholstering the cushions, you may want to update or replace the table or rip the whole thing out and replace it with a table and chairs, bench, L-shaped banquette, desk, or something else entirely.

Consider your needs and how the space can be reimagined to serve you better. Or perhaps you love the functionality of the dinette booth and simply want to spruce it up with new textiles and paint. Cotton dropcloths are an affordable and popular fabric often used to reupholster furniture in residential homes and RVs. You can find online tutorials on how to do it, even if you're taking a no-sew approach.

Alternatively, you can find DIY building plans and videos on constructing an RV dinette booth from scratch that will be beautiful and functional.

## *transforming furniture*

Transforming furniture may be my weakness. I'm fascinated with anything that folds, expands, or transforms. Think about how one piece of furniture can fold flat to save space or serve more than one purpose, and you'll be on your way to creating more with less.



PHOTO COURTESY OF @WHOLETHOMPSONLIFE



While it was slim pickings during our RV renovation, retailers seem to have caught on to the tiny home trend, and more options have become available in a wide variety of styles and price points.

There are ottomans that transform into beds (like the Ikea Vallentuna), beds that disappear into walls, tables that convert into art, and everything in-between. This isn't to say every piece of furniture needs to be modular, multi-purpose, or fold to be useful, but it can be extremely beneficial.

You can purchase folding desks, chairs, tables, beds, and tea carts, or go the DIY route to customize your own. Ana-white is one of my favorite resources for free furniture building plans. However, don't forget to consider weight and convenience when purchasing furniture, including anything that folds or transforms. We bought folding Adirondack chairs, which are beautiful, for our outdoor space. However, they required a decent amount of space when folded and therefore had to be stored in the car on travel days. Not a huge deal, but it did become inconvenient.

We left the chairs with Eric's parents during our last visit to Florida and picked up some inexpensive camp chairs. As much as I adore the Adirondack chairs, the new ones still fold but are lightweight, easy to clean, move around, and store. I have to admit they're also much more comfortable.

We replaced our dinette booth with a custom, multi-purpose media cabinet. Not only does it include built-in storage and an electric fireplace, but it stores our TV, which we installed on a hidden lift. We also installed heavy-duty extension slides and created a drawer that transforms into a dining table or desk in a matter of minutes yet can be neatly tucked away when not in use.

Challenges often ignite creative solutions, and with a little bit of planning, you can live big, even in a tiny space.

## *Renovation Tip*

While not transforming, consider incorporating flexible furniture such as a bar stool or folding tray that can easily be moved into different rooms when needed for other purposes.

## countertops

When it comes to the countertops in your RV, you'll want to decide if the existing finish will work with your design plan or if they will be updated or replaced. As with any RV renovation project, the factors to consider are time, budget, skill, and durability.

For example, if your budget is tight and the counters are in decent condition, you may choose to leave them as-is and allocate your budget to other areas that would make a more significant impact. Or you may decide to give them a quick refresh vs. replacing them entirely.

## *contact paper*

One cost-effective option is to add decorative contact paper on top of the existing countertops. You can take it a step further and add a protectant sealer, such as polyurethane. While this may not be the most durable or



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long-lasting option, it can serve as a simple solution that's easy on both the eyes and wallet. While some full-timers have taken this approach, it's even more popular with those who won't use the kitchen daily. You can find styles that resemble wood, marble, terrazzo, and granite, to name a few, and all in a wide variety of color combinations.

Ask yourself how often you'll be using the kitchen and if the countertops are an area you want to splurge or save on. Not only is this a project anyone can tackle, but it can be done while living in the RV and provides an opportunity to test how a material or color may look in your space before upgrading. Best of all, it can be changed out in the future if need be.

Sometimes temporary solutions are necessary to enjoy a space without spending a fortune. They can also be helpful if you need more time to figure out a better solution or source the materials you need.

### *diy vs. ready-made kits*

If you're looking for a budget-friendly option that doesn't require a lot of skill, consider painting your countertops. You can even find pre-made paint and epoxy kits that make the process easier to achieve realistic effects, such as marble, soapstone, or granite. I'm always amazed at how beautiful and expensive-looking epoxy counters turn out - it's like a piece of art! Another DIY option to consider is using a specialty finish like micro-topping, which will give your countertops the look of concrete without the added weight.

However, if budget is your biggest factor, be sure to weigh the cost of DIY kits and supplies against ready-made counters, as the cost variance may be less than you think. Or the time and headaches you save buying a finished product may be worth it. On the flip side, you may choose to hire out the work and installation process.

While we considered purchasing butcher block countertops from Ikea, we opted to create wood counters using oak flooring. We saw our RV as an opportunity to try new projects we could learn and grow from that could potentially help us with future renovation projects. Creating countertops from unfinished flooring seemed like an interesting project, plus it would cost less and help reduce our overall RV weight.

With that said, if we were to do it again, we would buy ready-made counters vs. creating our own from unfinished flooring. It didn't save us that much money or weight, not to mention it would have been easier to install and maintain.

While our wood flooring counters have held up better than expected, we went with the lowest grade quality (which I don't recommend), so they have required more maintenance and are not as smooth as an actual piece of butcher block.

**Sometimes temporary solutions are necessary to enjoy a space without spending a fortune. They can also be helpful if you need more time to figure out a better solution or source the materials you need.**





PHOTO COURTESY OF @STAGECOACHDETAILDESIGN

Only you can decide what you need from the space, and how much you want to spend. You may feel that wood counters are worth the extra maintenance, or you may decide you want something less expensive, more unique, easier to install, or that requires less attention.

While we ultimately went with wood countertops, it wasn't our first choice. We originally planned to tear out the lower kitchen cabinets and rebuild them using reclaimed wood. We were then going to install white or light grey kitchen counters to create contrast and balance the space. However, I struggled to find enough locally sourced reclaimed wood at the time, so instead, we decided to update the existing cabinets by painting them. We then installed wood counters to bring in a natural element and help break up the paint.

Even though I was happy with how the painted cabinets and wood countertops turned out, I never stopped thinking about how reclaimed cabinets would add history and character to our tiny home on wheels. And the kitchen never quite felt like "me." Then, after swinging through a salvage lumberyard, roughly a year into our travels, I found some beautiful reclaimed wood and convinced Eric it was time to make the change. There was just one caveat. I knew our wood countertops might clash once we installed the new cabinets, meaning they may need to be updated as well.

This brings me to my next point; each design decision impacts the next.

While I liked the idea of light-colored countertops, I didn't want to replace ours completely or cover them with a potentially inferior material. And because we were living in the RV at the time with limited tools, we chose to leave the framing of our lower cabinets painted black (though I also considered painting it white.)

We ultimately narrowed it down to two options. Option one, create a concrete effect using a product

such as Ardex Feather Finish or Microcement. Option two, stain the countertops black. Ultimately, we took the path of least resistance, stain. It would be easier to tackle, wouldn't require too much downtime (since we live in the RV), and I felt it would complement the reclaimed wood without being too busy.

Naturally, I was nervous going in the complete opposite direction of the light countertops I had envisioned, yet I was excited to experiment and see what happened. I figured worst-case scenario, I may have to redo our counters again, but I was up to the challenge either way. Thankfully, the countertops turned out better than expected and no longer competed with the reclaimed wood. This isn't to say black countertops were my first choice, but I kept an open mind and made them work.

I share this story to remind you how important it is to consider how materials will work together as a whole before you begin making purchases or start on projects. And even if you plan to go with a temporary solution, consider what other changes may be necessary for the future as additional updates are made. This way, you're not simply designing around a temporary decision you don't love. And even if you are, at least you're doing it with intention while understanding additional work and funds may be necessary for the future.

I don't have any regrets about the changes we made because I love DIY projects and was itching for a project at the time. Plus, the process allowed me to play around with ideas and learn more about my style, including what I do and don't like.

With that said, after living with black counters for over a year, it's unlikely I'll install dark counters in another RV or home. This comes back to the whole seeing vs. disguising dirt conversation I mention in the flooring section of chapter 4. And let's not forget, depending on where you're parked, bugs sometimes find a way inside your camper. I don't know about you, but if anything comes into our RV,





I want to know about it. In other words, black ants and spiders are difficult to see on a black countertop.

Your reasons for choosing a countertop material will depend on your own needs and experiences. Will you only be using your RV occasionally or as a full-timer? Do you plan to spend a lot of time cooking in your kitchen, or will you use the grill during trips? Thinking about how you use the space will help you decide what areas are worth splurging on and which projects to prioritize.

The good news is there are tons of countertop options to choose from in addition to the materials mentioned above. This includes reclaimed wood, edge-glued wood, plywood, peel and stick flooring, stainless steel, Corian, Quartz, and laminate. And if you plan to update your bathroom vanity, you can find options with built-in countertops, giving you one less thing to worry about.

Regardless of the material you choose for your bathroom or kitchen, be sure to do your research for the best prep and protection practices (especially if using wood), and understand your weight limits, as every RV is different.

### *Renovation Tip:*

Check with countertop companies to see if they have any remnants available, as this can save you cash on higher-end options.

## appliances

Depending on the year of your rig, the appliances may be extremely outdated or worn out. This may include your fridge, oven, microwave, or stovetop. If this is the case, you may want to replace them. Doing so can instantly update the interior of your RV while making it function better for you.

Alternatively, consider any appliances you may want to install for added convenience, such as a dishwasher or washer and dryer.

When choosing new appliances, keep in mind how you plan to camp and the type of power required. For example, do you plan to be connected to full hookups, will you be mostly boondocking (camping without hookups), or a combination of both? This can help you determine if an upgrade to residential options will be worth it, as you don't *have* to stick to RV-specific appliances.

If upgrading your appliances is out of budget, consider updating them with paint or disguising what you can. For example, you can box out your upper microwave or convection oven with a faux vent hood. The front can then lift on hinges when needed to access the appliance behind it. Not only can this add a statement to your RV, but it can hide an eyesore of an appliance without taking away the function.

The appliances in our RV were in decent condition, so we decided to designate our budget elsewhere, though we refreshed the fridge panels to make them more useful. To do this, we slid the heavy wood panels out and replaced them with sheet metal. Not only does this give the illusion of stainless steel, but it created a magnetic surface that we can also write on with dry-erase markers.

If you want magnetic fridge panels but prefer a more custom look, considering replacing your existing panels with sheet metal covered in your favorite wallpaper pattern. The metal allows the fridge panels to stay magnetic while the wallpaper brings personality to them. You can then add a magnetic fridge notepad or magnetic dry erase calendar to keep important notes within reach.

Some other ways to update the fridge panels would be to paint them or add color, texture, and pattern using contact paper, wallpaper, peel and stick tiles, or fabric.



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# hardware

Swapping out the hardware in your RV is a simple change that can instantly elevate your space. This includes knobs, pulls, and hinges used on cabinets, furniture, and built-ins. Think of the hardware as the jewelry of the space. (Your light fixtures and faucets fall into this category too.) Updating the hardware is an opportunity to add character or change the tone in your RV to something more modern, whimsical, traditional, or rustic.

Unfortunately, the cost to replace these in an RV can add up quickly, but there are ways to save cash and stay within budget. I recommend spray painting any hinges, knobs, and pulls you can reuse and splurge on areas you want to highlight or use most often. Spray paint can give your hardware a quick refresh while keeping a consistent flow throughout your RV, though using a bonding primer spray paint first is recommended for best results. If you need to purchase several knobs and pulls, you can save money with contractor or bundle packs. Even if you have to spray paint the new hardware, it may be less expensive than buying the actual finish you want.

Upgrading the hardware you touch daily, such as doorknobs, will make those areas feel more luxurious and special. If you're looking to save money or find unique pieces, consider buying from Etsy, or browsing antique stores or architectural salvage shops. While better quality hardware may be heavier, a few splurges shouldn't make that much of a difference. Even so, it's important to be aware of your weight limits and choose where you want to splurge on heavier items.

Some other ways to save money on the knobs and pulls is to create your own. You can cover the front of flat knobs with contact paper, make handles from branches, and finger pulls out of rope or leather. You can also add embellishments like marble, crystals, or wood slices to knob bases. We added stones to flat knobs for the upper cabinets in

our RV, except for those in our kitchen. I created pulls out of copper pipe fittings for our media cabinet and linen closet door that were then spray painted black. And we replaced the rest of the hardware in our RV with simple or rustic-inspired options I found online.

You can even ditch hardware altogether and instead create drawer cutouts for a clean, minimal approach.

## *Renovation Tip*

While not considered hardware, updating the fans, switch plates, outlet covers, thermostat, smoke alarm, and carbon monoxide detector in your RV can streamline the space and make it feel more residential and finished.

# light fixtures

If the light fixtures in your RV remind you of a cheap motel room, the good news is you can easily swap them out. Maybe you already planned to replace them, but can't seem to find 12v RV light fixtures that are beautiful and modern.

The good news is there is an abundance of stylish options available, and they aren't as challenging to find as you may have thought!

While you can replace the original dome lights and sconces with alternative RV options, you can also swap them with residential designs.

The trick? Make sure the light bulb matches the power supply in your RV.

For example, the hard-wired light fixtures in our RV run off 12v, so we used 12v LED bulbs. On the other



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hand, our wall outlets run off 120v power, so if we plug in a lamp or nightlight, we use 120v bulbs. After feeling the heat put off from the original RV light bulbs, I recommend switching all light bulbs in your RV to LED, not only for energy savings, but for safety precautions.

This means if you fall in love with a residential option at your favorite retailer, you can install it in your RV as long as you use the correct light bulb. And the same goes for light fixtures you make from scratch or upcycle from thrifted finds or décor like baskets or bowls. Just be sure to double-check measurements to ensure it doesn't hang too far down or get in the way of doors opening or closing.

And if you need a toggle switch on the light fixture itself, I recommend purchasing a light fixture with one included. However, you can always add one yourself, which is the route we took. With that said, if you're nervous about updating or installing any light fixtures in your RV, be sure to contact a licensed electrician.

## *Layered Lighting*

If you want to create a cozy, balanced atmosphere in your RV, it's important to layer various light sources, just as you would in a house. This includes a mix of ambient, task, and accent lighting. Certain fixtures can fall into more than one category, depending on where they are installed and how much light they offer.

**Ambient** – General lighting used for overall illumination Ex. Overhead lighting, ceiling and wall-mounted fixtures, chandeliers, recessed lights, sconces

**Task** – Used to illuminate specific tasks such as reading, working, or cooking Ex. Swingarm sconce, table lamp, under-cabinet lighting, vanity, directional track lighting.

**Accent** – Often referred to as “mood” lighting. Used to create atmosphere or highlight specific objects or areas Ex. Picture lights, candlelight, string lights, sconces

Pay attention to the color temperature and lumen count in the bulbs you purchase, which could vary depending on where you install them. For example, I prefer warm white bulbs that mimic incandescent lighting in areas I want to feel cozy but bulbs with natural daylight in areas where I want to be more productive. It's a good idea to have a mix depending on the light fixture location, though it ultimately comes down to preference.

I also recommend adding dimmers when possible to help soften the lighting when desired and create a more relaxing environment. As a result, light fixtures with dimmers are considered ambient and accent lighting, but in certain situations can also fall into the task lighting category. However, if using a dimmer, it's recommended to use dimmable light bulbs, as they may not work or could flicker.

Most of the dome lights in our RV provide ambient lighting, while the one above my desk in the bedroom provides task lighting. Additional task lighting is created from our LED puck lights below the kitchen cabinets and inside closets. The fixtures we made for the living room and bedroom provide ambient, task, and accent





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lighting because they are on dimmers. Some of my favorite accent lighting comes from our electric fireplace, LED candles, fairy lights, a vintage camp lantern, and Himalayan salt lamps.

Himalayan Salt Lamp Nightlights are one of my favorite lighting sources as they create a warm and cozy, campfire-type glow. However, they require incandescent bulbs if plugged into 120v outlets, so I don't recommend leaving them on when you're away. Himalayan salt lamps also "sweat" when they haven't been on in a while, so make sure to put them to use and don't leave them in a cabinet for weeks, or they can leak – I learned this the hard way. They also require non-LED bulbs, or they can sweat *even* if plugged in. However, you can switch the included bulbs to a lower voltage, which I recommend. I did this, and it lowered the heat they put off dramatically.

If any of your plug-in (or battery-operated) lighting will be located in an awkward or hard-to-reach area, I recommend controlling them through Smart Plugs or a remote.

### *Renovation Tip:*

If you want to install a light fixture in a location without one but don't want to deal with the hassle of wiring one in, consider the "magic light" trick. It's a simple solution originally shared by Nesting with Grace that has taken the RV community by storm. It's where you install a light fixture into the wall or ceiling (without wires), and instead of screwing in a light bulb, you attach a battery-operated LED puck light via Velcro or some other adhesive. You can then control the puck light with a remote (as long as you buy the option), and because they are LED, the batteries will last quite a while before you need to swap them out.

## plumbing fixtures

Plumbing fixtures can include sinks, faucets, showers, tubs, and toilets. Replacing some or all of these items can drastically change the look, feel, and operation of your RV.

### *sinks and faucets*

Chances are, the faucets and sinks in your RV are cheap and made of plastic. Not to mention the faucet may be using more water than necessary. Even if you choose to keep the existing sink, updating the faucet can update the look, while helping conserve water.

Both faucets and sinks come in various designs and finishes and offer an opportunity to add personality and style to your RV. Aside from style and budget, two crucial components to keep in mind when purchasing new ones are weight and dimensions.

While you can purchase these fixtures from any online retailer or home improvement store, some slight modifications may be necessary to connect the residential fittings to those in your RV (I highly recommend looking into SharkBite products to make this easier). When picking out a faucet, it's also important to pay attention to the GPM – gallons per minute, as this can help your gray tanks last longer. I'd recommend going



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with a faucet that uses no more than 2.2 GPM or adding a low-flow aerator, which you can generally pick up from a home improvement store for a few bucks. This is especially important when replacing your RV showerhead.

For dimensions, make sure to determine the max faucet height and most convenient spout reach before heading to the store or purchasing online. Another important factor is whether the faucet will be installed through the wall, through pre-made faucet holes in the sink itself, or installed directly into the countertop, either with or without a deck plate. Don't forget about function either. Do you prefer a bridge, single-handle, touchless, or pull-down option?

For sinks, determine the length, width, and depth you need, and make sure to leave space for the faucet if installing it into the countertop behind it. You'll also need to decide if you prefer an under-mount, drop-in, or vessel sink. Farmhouse sinks are a popular option for kitchens and make a huge statement in a tiny space, but installation may require additional customization to the lower cabinets or countertop. Drop-in sinks are generally the easiest to install if you plan to do it yourself, though you can also find bathroom vanities with a built-in sink.

These are just a few factors to consider when purchasing a new faucet or sink, but don't forget to make sure they work with one another in the space you plan to install them.

It wasn't until we started planning our RV renovation that I realized how many faucet designs and mounting options are available. I originally purchased a vintage-style kitchen faucet after seeing it go on deep discount, only to discover the spout reach was too far. So back it went. You would think that experience had taught me to pay closer attention to our RV measurements, but soon after, I purchased a copper sink online for our bathroom, only to realize it was too deep and not quite the right color. So back it went. This is why keeping

measurements handy and holding onto receipts is so important. Some adjustments may be necessary to make something work, but only you can determine if it's worth it.

You can purchase faucets and sinks just about anywhere, although Ikea and Amazon tend to be popular amongst RVers. You can also save money by shopping at eBay, Habitat Restores, or discount, surplus, and architectural salvage shops. And if you're looking for an RV-specific sink or exact replacement, you can contact your RV Manufacturer or visit a website like etrailer.com or RVupgrades.com. However, in my experience, RV-specific options not only leave much to be desired but, at times, are more expensive than residential alternatives. Regardless of where you purchase, I highly recommend getting a warranty, as both low and high-end options can become faulty or leak.

If you need a more budget-friendly fix that doesn't involve replacing what you have, consider spray paint or specialty paint made for these types of applications. This is an easy fix anyone can do that will instantly change the look and feel of your RV. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions, and keep in mind that prep and protection will be essential for quality results.

While a painted sink, shower, or faucet may not last as long as a brand new one, it can last several years, depending on the amount of use it gets. Minor touchups may be necessary over time, but the amount of money you save could make it worth it, even if it's a temporary fix. The same goes for painting items such as cabinet hardware, light fixtures, and countertops.

For our RV, we planned to replace the double-basin sink in our kitchen with a single-basin option. I wanted a farmhouse-style sink, but this was before Ikea, and other retailers offered compact, affordable options. So when that didn't pan out, I turned to eBay, where I found a simple, stainless steel RV sink for only \$20. While used, it was a great



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find and in decent condition. Not to mention way under my original sink budget!

If you're struggling to find a sink or faucet in the dimensions you need, consider looking at bar sinks and faucets. The sizes are generally much smaller than standard sinks and faucets, but be extra mindful of the faucet's spout reach, as it may be too short.

As for our bathroom, we replaced the plastic sink with a copper one, and this time it actually fit. Copper sinks are beautiful, but they also require more maintenance. We knew this before purchasing, but it's something you may want to keep in mind.

## *shower*

While Oxygenics and Ecocamel are popular showerhead options for RV bathrooms, you don't need to limit yourself to them. You can install a luxurious showerhead inside your RV, just as you would inside your home. The key is to look for a showerhead with a shut-off valve or diverter switch. This is a switch that "diverts" the water or temporarily turns it off, making it easier to take "military showers." In other words, it saves water.

If your RV is extremely compact and you want to replace your shower doors, consider installing a retractable shower screen, which is compact and lightweight. Or, if you would rather use a shower curtain, consider removing the doors and installing a folding shower rod. The hinges allow the rod to extend out for more shower space or pivot inward to save space or dry wet clothes.

You can paint the frame of RV shower doors for a quick refresh or use electrical tape in a grid pattern on the glass to give the illusion of a high-end update.

More luxurious shower options can also be purchased or built. You can take your RV shower to the next level by incorporating corrugated metal for

a more rustic touch or replacing the shower wall surround with an updated, modern glass option. You can also install vinyl wall tiles, like those from Dumawall or Palisade Tiles, that are waterproof and don't require any grout. While this isn't a project for the faint of heart, tutorials are available on Youtube and Instagram to help walk you through the process.

## *toilet*

Most RV toilets are low profile and made of plastic. If you want to update your toilet, some popular options include Gravity, Macerating, Vacuum, and Composting. For a more residential vibe, consider updating to a higher-profile RV toilet made of porcelain, which is easier to clean than plastic.

And while we are on the subject of toilets, I have to share my absolute favorite holding tank cleaner, Happy Campers. While this may not have anything to do with how your RV looks, it can help keep your RV smelling fresh, which is just as important.

## *Renovation Tip*

When it comes to hardware and fixtures, don't be afraid to mix metals and finishes for visual interest. The key is to be consistent with style or have the different pieces feel connected somehow, then repeat this throughout your RV. For example, the hardware or fixtures in your bathroom may be one type of finish, while the lighting is a different metal. You can also play around with texture and finish in the same family, such as matte, glossy, or hammered.

# “An interior is the natural projection of the soul ”

COCO CHANEL

## Style

Adding fresh textiles and décor to your RV is a fun way to create a space that reflects your unique style and interests. It's amazing how different an RV looks and feels once you swap out the outdated wall decor, throw pillows, bedding, and rugs. Not to mention replacing those plastic blinds with curtains or woven shades.

Ever since I was a little girl, I've loved decorating my room. Some of my favorite childhood memories are snuggling up on the sofa with my mom to watch HGTV or Bob Villa. My mom has a knack for repurposing, and I'll never forget the time she transformed an old waterbed base into bookshelves for our living room. Her creativity and resourcefulness inspired me (and still does!)

When I was 7, I would sit at the breakfast table with the Sunday paper sprawled about, scented marker in hand. I'd thumb through the glossy department store catalog inserts advertising furniture and home décor and circle which items would be in my

"grown-up" house someday. It was a fun game, even if each category's "winner" was based on the results of a children's counting rhyme.

I share this story because decorating makes me happy just as it did as a little girl when I would dream up my "someday" home. I see it as playtime, and an opportunity to let our imaginations run wild.

Yet decorating is more than just how a space looks. I believe our environments have the power to affect us mentally, physically, and spiritually. While this is true in a residential home, I think it can impact us quicker in an RV because there isn't as much space for energy to flow or expand.

As mentioned earlier, your decorating choices and priorities may be affected not only by the type of RV you have, but who you plan to travel with and how often. However, one of my favorite aspects about decorating is that it's subjective, so there's no right or



PHOTO COURTESY OF KARLEE AND WESTON MARSH

wrong way to do it as long as you're happy with the results. Besides, how boring would it be if all our homes looked the same?

## *Renovation Tip*

Regardless of your traveling plans, I highly encourage you to think deeply about who you are, what you value, what you need, and what you want your space to say about you.

Think of it as a journey of self-discovery, self-love, and self-awareness. Give yourself the freedom to be curious, take risks, make mistakes, and embrace imperfection.

And don't forget to have fun!

## **window treatments**

Have you ever wondered where RV manufacturers get the fabric for their window valences? And does anyone actually like them?

While the valences in our RV were in pretty good condition, they left much to be desired. The good news is that valences are pretty easy to remove, which can make your windows instantly appear larger and brighter. With that said, if you prefer to keep them, consider reupholstering them, painting them, or reimagine them with wood.

Valences aside, there are various window treatment options available, depending on your style and needs. The most popular options installed in RV renovations tend to be roller shades and curtains. Some other options include blinds, shutters, and window film.

With so many windows to cover, the cost can quickly add up. However, there are options available for every budget and design aesthetic, including DIY window treatments that anyone can make. You may choose to use the same window treatments throughout your RV or mix different styles depending on the area.

Not only will replacing the old blinds provide a cozier vibe, but it can help make the space feel less like a camper and more like a tiny home on wheels. This is especially true when you layer window treatments, such as woven shades with soft curtains. You can even go a step further and add decorative wood trim around the window frames or build them into the design.

We initially replaced the busted cellular shades in our RV with cut-to-size vinyl roller shades we purchased from the local hardware store. The cost ranged from \$8-24 each, making them one of the most budget-friendly shades we could find in stock that could be picked up locally and cut to the width we needed. While the quality wasn't the best, they certainly got the job done, which is all we cared about at the time. They practically disappeared when rolled up, allowed light to come in when down, yet provided privacy from the outside world.





PHOTO COURTESY OF @WHITEHOUSEMUDDYFEET



PHOTO COURTESY OF @SHELBYADRIFT

While we originally planned to upgrade the shades with new window treatments, we replaced the vinyl on our roller shade mechanisms with burlap fabric instead. Not only did this save money, but the burlap added texture and warmth to our RV. If you're looking for an affordable upgrade, you may want to consider replacing the fabric on your existing roller shades for something more custom. (Though I don't necessarily recommend using burlap, at least not on every window, since it tends to shed during roll-up.)

Another super budget-friendly option, especially if you just need a temporary fix, is to use cordless paper shades. These are often available at your local hardware store, can be cut to size with scissors, and don't require any tools to install due to the peel and stick design. However, you may need additional mounting tape to keep them in place, especially under extreme heat or humidity.

Additional options include making curtains from tea towels, blankets, or canvas drop cloths. Depending on the dimensions needed, you may even be able to create multiple sets of curtains from a single curtain panel you purchase or already own. If you're nervous about sewing, you can take the no-sew approach using products such as liquid stitch or adhesive fabric tape.

Curtain rods can be purchased from your favorite retailer or assembled using wood dowels and leather straps or cup hooks. We created partitions in our RV using curtains, both of which were hung from tension rods, though an actual curtain rod would have worked just as well.

When installing curtains, it's best to hang them high and wide, just as you would in a residential home, to create the illusion of larger, taller windows. And unless you're making short café-style curtains, allow the curtains to "kiss" the floor, or they may resemble a sloppy puddle or high-watered pants. Curtains can also be used to create partitions or in place of doors. If you plan to create a partition in your motorhome by installing curtains behind the captain's chairs, make sure the panels are wide enough to close, or you may need to purchase extras. For example, we hung two camp blankets as curtains at one point, but when we switched back to curtains, we needed four panels due to the width of the curtains we were using.

Regardless of the window treatments you purchase, it's important to consider function alongside aesthetics. For example, do you need something that merely filters light vs. blocking it, or are you installing them in an area where privacy is required? Insulation is another essential aspect to consider, especially in RVs, as traveling through various climates can dramatically affect the interior temperature. Looking back, I wish we would have added a liner to our windshield shade, especially on sunny days when it feels blinding and extra toasty. We can close the curtains if necessary, but a liner would have helped control the light and temperature better.

## *What to consider when purchasing or making new window treatments*

**Type** - roller shades, roman shades, cellular shades, zebra shades, shutters, curtains, blinds, etc.

**Style** - bamboo, linen, jute, rattan, seagrass, vinyl, wood, fabric, etc.

**Function** - sheer, light-filtering, blackout, solar, thermal backing, day/night, etc.

**Lift** - manual, pull-cord, cordless, motorized, voice-control



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Finally, there's the lift type to consider. I prefer cordless shade options because they're more streamlined, but they're also considered safer for those with kids or pets compared to a pull-cord lift. If you plan to go the DIY route, consider Swedish-style roll-up blinds that you control manually, which lend themselves to a rustic, vintage style. On the other hand, if you're looking for something fancy, motorized lift options exist and can be controlled through voice activation or a remote.

Another option is to order drill-free solar shades that snap on the outside of your RV. These allow you to see clearly out while preventing others from seeing in but need to be removed during travel. They may be a great option if you plan to be stationary, but not if you move around frequently.

## soft goods

Aside from updating the textiles on your RV windows, you will likely want to update the bedding, throw pillows, and rugs. Even your towels can double as décor, so choose something that not only gets the job done but does it while looking good. For example, both Turkish and waffle towels are super absorbent, and dry quickly.

When mixing patterns, don't be afraid to play with scale and contrast for a more interesting, layered look. This will allow the designs to play off one another without competing or feeling chaotic. And let's not forget about texture. Incorporating a variety of tactile materials will bring more life, depth, and visual interest into your RV, especially if you're sticking to mostly neutrals or solid colors.

### *bedding*

Think of your RV as a luxurious hotel room or Airbnb. What kind of sheets and comforter would you like to snuggle up in after a long day? You want to sleep well, so this is an area I recommend splurging on, especially if you're going to be RVing full-time.

If you purchased a used RV, chances are you'll want to replace the mattress. I recommend purchasing a compressed option that comes delivered in a box. This will make it easier to bring into your RV because it won't expand until opened.

You may want to consider natural, non-toxic bedding for healthier sleep, though you can also find synthetic materials or blends made under eco-friendly standards. With that said, not all materials and brands are considered equal, so further certification research may be necessary if this is important to you.

While I haven't used their products, Beddy's zipper bedding is well-known amongst RVers because of how easy it is to make a bed in tight quarters. However, my favorite bedding is flax linen. It's soft, breathable, eco-friendly, durable, casual, cooling, and looks good wrinkled (at least I think so.)

### *throw pillows*

Throw pillows tend to be a weakness of mine (and I know I'm not alone!), but the key to keeping a variety on hand, whether you want to refresh your space periodically or seasonally, is by using pillow covers. This way, you can re-use the existing pillows without taking up valuable space in your RV.

And if you're looking to save money on throw pillow inserts, be sure to check the clearance section at your favorite retail shops. You can usually score a pretty nice pillow at a significant discount but swap out the unappealing cover for something you love.

### *order samples*

When ordering textiles online, whether it be bedding, window treatments, or throw pillow covers, I highly recommend ordering swatches first if you have the option. I learned this lesson the hard way on more than one occasion. And this can be incredibly challenging if you're trying to find specific products while traveling, as availability and shipping will need to be considered.



PHOTO COURTESY OF @CONNIETHECARAVAN\_



PHOTO COURTESY OF @TROOPNASHVILLE



PHOTO COURTESY OF @STAGECOACHDETAILDESIGN

## *Receiving packages when you don't have an address*

If you plan to order products online during your travels, ask the RV park or campground if they can accept packages for you. Otherwise, you can search for a local Amazon Locker (if buying from Amazon) or sign up for a mailbox service that can provide an actual street address for you to use temporarily (not a PO Box). Another option, other than asking a friend or family member to receive a package until you can pick it up, is to request General Delivery at your local post office, just be sure to call ahead to confirm availability.

## *rugs*

Not only do area rugs add warmth to a space, but they can help ground it, make a statement, and tie everything together. And if your RV lacks wall space, think of incorporating a beautiful rug as the visual interest you may otherwise find in art. Then again, rugs aren't just for floors either, so don't be afraid to reimagine how you can use these textiles in other areas of your RV, such as a headboard.

The variety of design styles, patterns, colors, materials, craftsmanship, and sizes are endless, but I would make durability and maintenance two important factors to keep in mind. You may even want to consider an indoor/outdoor rug or vinyl mat, which will make cleaning up spills or pet fur a breeze. Washable rugs, like those from Ruggable, RugsUSA, and Boutique Rugs, are popular amongst RVers because you can easily throw them into the washing machine -though you may need to use a laundromat depending on the size.

Vintage rugs are another great option as they have already proven their longevity through decades of wear yet often hold up better than their newer counterparts. They can also work with any design aesthetic, hide dirt well, and tend to only get better with age.

We have pets, so I knew we needed a rug that could be easily cleaned and vacuumed. After going through a few rugs, one of which shed more than our dog, I finally splurged on a handmade wool rug that I spent over a year obsessing over. It's beautiful and easy to clean, but when our cat was diagnosed with renal kidney disease a few months later, I chose to roll up the rug and move it out of the way to avoid his weekly accidents. And while I couldn't have planned for future events, my advice is to buy something you love that's easy to clean, doesn't require much maintenance, and won't make you feel guilty if something happened to it or you had to store it away. Also, keep in mind what furniture may cover up the design because the last thing you want to do is splurge on an expensive rug you will rarely ever see.

Not all rugs are created equal, and some are made with harmful chemicals, so do your research, read reviews, and post questions if necessary to help you decide if it will work for your situation.

We are all in different seasons of life, so what may appeal to us at one time may have the opposite effect in another.

One misstep many homeowners make that can translate to RVs is buying a rug too small for the room. To avoid this, be sure to double-check the measurements and consider splurging for a bigger size when possible. The good news is



PHOTO COURTESY OF @WISCO\_FLIP



PHOTO COURTESY OF @PLACE\_OFMY\_TASTE

because you're decorating a smaller space, your rug will be smaller too, and therefore less expensive. And if you purchase or plan to use an existing rug that's too small, you can always layer it on top of a larger, more neutral rug.

When choosing an outdoor rug, you'll want to make sure it's weather-resistant and easy to move, clean, and store. We made the mistake of purchasing a rug made of polypropylene, a material often used in outdoor rugs, only it wasn't *actually* rated for outdoor use. While it held up well during our extended stay in California, it eventually became a nuisance to move, especially after several days of rain.

If you plan to travel often but prefer a large outdoor rug, I recommend using one made of straw-like polypropylene. However, if you need more design options or plan to be stationary most of the time, then a standard outdoor rug could work (be sure it's an actual *outdoor* rug.) And if you're looking for something smaller, then a coir mat may work, especially when layered over a slightly larger outdoor mat or rug.

## wall decor

Updating the wall décor in your RV will make it feel more current and personal. Mirrors can make your RV feel larger and brighter, though you'll want to be mindful of what's being reflected in them. Mirrors can also be on the heavy side, so be sure to check the weight before finalizing any purchases.

When it comes to purchasing art, I recommend skipping big box stores unless you come across something you feel you absolutely can't live without. Art doesn't have to be pretentious or expensive, it simply needs to be meaningful to you in some way. Don't buy something because you think someone else will find it interesting or pretty, make sure YOU find it interesting or pretty. The easiest way to do this is to dig a little deeper and ask yourself one simple question, "What does this mean to me?".

There's no right or wrong answer, but exploring the *why* behind a purchase can help you better understand why you love something or find it special in the first place. I tend to be drawn to landscapes, abstracts, and oil paintings and love browsing antique shops during our travels to see if anything catches my eye. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of horizontal wall space in our RV because of the windows, but this makes it easier to eliminate what won't work.

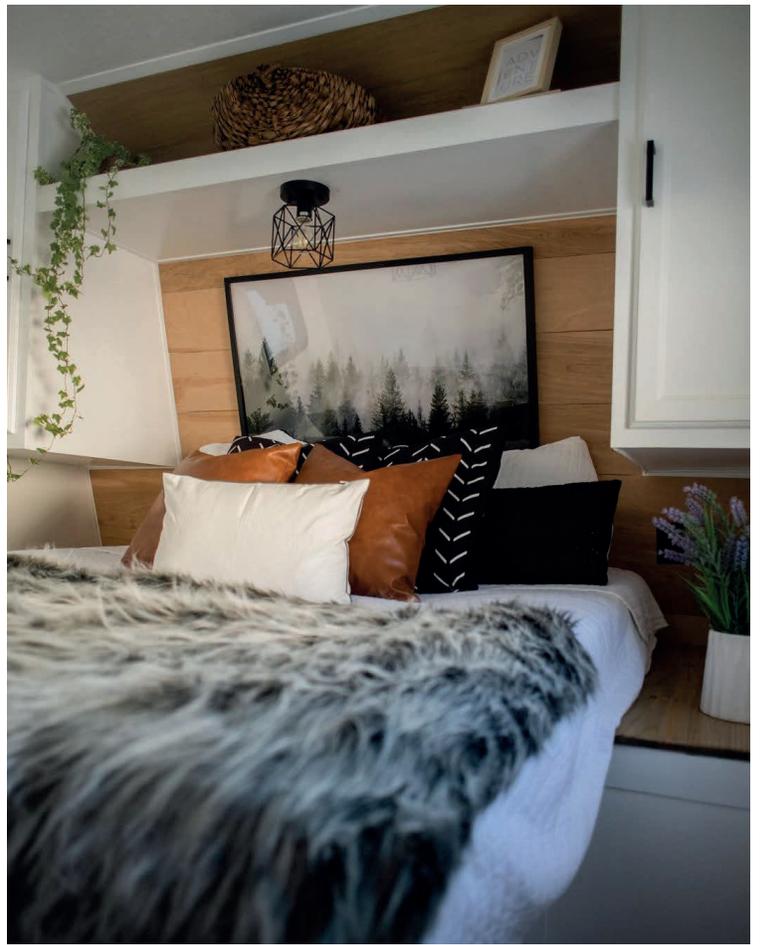
You can find unique yet affordable prints, paintings, and wood art by seeking out local artists and art fairs or searching Instagram, Etsy, or other online marketplaces such as Mint and Juniper Print Shop.

Another affordable way to bring meaningful artwork or wall decor into your RV is to make it yourself. We have photos of our travels scattered throughout our home on wheels, and I love the memories they hold. If you have a print you love but worry it's too small, consider using a larger matboard in a larger frame, which will make it feel more intentional.

True confession, I removed all of the glass from the photo frames in our RV out of an overabundance of caution, then kept them that way because it was easier to take photos without the glare of glass. However, as long as you secure your wall décor, you can keep the glass or replace it with acrylic or plexiglass, though I recommend purchasing quality, glare-free options that won't create a hazy effect on top.

### *Renovation Tip:*

Black and white or sepia prints are not only easier to style by creating a cohesive flow throughout your RV, but they can also hide amateur photography flaws more easily.



TOP LEFT: @PURPOSEBLOG / TOP RIGHT: @NEWLOOKRVRENOVATION / BOTTOM: @MOUNTAINMODERNLIFE

## *how to secure wall decor*

Unsure how to hang decorative items in your RV? This is not only a hot topic of conversation in RV forums, but it's one of the questions we get asked the most often. We've used various methods depending on the situation, including using our nailgun, screws with hollow door anchors, adhesive hooks, and industrial strength Velcro.

While some people are nervous about adding nail holes to their RV walls, I am not one of those people. Okay, I may have been nervous at first, but I didn't let that stop me. Besides, I figured it's nothing a little spackle and touchup paint can't fix.

Of course, there are precautions to take when securing items to the walls of your RV with screws or nails, so be sure to use common sense. You don't want to screw into plumbing or electrical lines or use screws so long they bust through the exterior of your camper. Every RV is different, so the types of screws you use may differ, especially if you're screwing into a wood frame vs. one made of aluminum. We always pre-drill our holes and use the shortest nails or screws we can get away with.

The more projects you tackle, the more confidence you'll gain moving forward. When removing fixtures from your camper, note the countless screws, bolts, and staples that come with them. You'll be surprised at the length of these fasteners, which may bring you some peace of mind when it comes to installing new fixtures and décor. Ultimately you only want to do what makes you feel comfortable, so if that means you want to stick to drill-free methods, that's perfectly fine!

Because we removed some of the interior walls in our RV, we had a sense of what was behind them. However, as mentioned in Chapter 2, anytime we weren't sure, we reached out to our RV manufacturer, who told us what to expect or if it was safe to drill into or attach something. Also, most manufacturers have RV schematics available so you can quickly locate electric, plumbing, and water lines. Some you can find online, or you may need to contact the manufacturer directly.

Be sure to use a stud finder, preferably one that can detect electrical lines as well, and use anchors when necessary. Pop toggle hollow door anchors are my go-to because they work well with super thin walls, like those in an RV.

If you prefer drill-free methods, several options are available, many of which we've incorporated into our RV. Some of my favorites include using stylish adhesive hooks, industrial strength Velcro, and sliding S hooks over our slide-out to hang plants, aprons, or market totes. And while it creates a tiny pinhole, I've also been known to use thumbtacks to hang items quickly, especially when Eric's not looking.

Most of the frames in our RV appear to be hanging from a cup hook using twine and eye hooks, but this hanging hardware is purely decorative, as strips of industrial strength Velcro are what secure the frames to the wall. Even if you choose to hang something with screws or nails, Velcro can prevent swaying while traveling. The same goes for command strips and acrylic mounting tape.

Museum putty or wax can also help keep items secure when driving down the road. Just be careful if you plan to be in very humid areas, as it can melt out a bit. For this reason, I recommend following the directions, not using too much, and not placing it too close to the edge of items. Regardless of the drill-free option you choose to use, be sure to follow the directions for the best results.



PHOTO COURTESY OF @NEWLOOKRVRENOVATION

## *Tips to secure loose items for travel*

Safety is a top priority, especially during travel. Before hitting the road, make sure everything is secure in one form or another. The amount of time it takes will depend on how many loose items you have.

For us, this is a quick job because most everything on the walls is secure, and most of our loose décor is secured using museum putty/wax, or velcro. Items left out on the kitchen or bathroom counter generally fit inside the cabinets or drawers, and everything else gets wrangled into a collapsible bin, the kitchen sink, or shower.

You can use grip shelf liner inside drawers, cabinets, and the fridge to prevent shifting, and the same goes for baskets, bins, and tension rods. In addition to the magnetic latches that help keep cabinet doors closed during travel, you can use rubber bands, small hair ties, or twine around the knobs to keep them shut. Items can also be secured using gorilla ties, zip ties, bungee cords, or laid down flat on the bed.

Sometimes this takes trial and error, but the more you travel, the easier it will get.

## seasonal decorating

My husband and I have always enjoyed decorating for the holidays, and going tiny didn't change that. The good news is you don't have to spend a ton of money or store boxes of decor to create a festive RV.

If decorating for different seasons or holidays is your jam, and you plan to RV full-time, make space for your favorite décor, even if that means dedicating a cabinet or storage bay for it. Otherwise, you can keep décor simple by swapping out pillow covers and infusing nature through seasonal food, flowers, herbs, and plants.

When it comes to decorating for Christmas, we enjoy mixing in non-holiday items we can keep up year-round, including lots of fairy lights, remote-controlled flicker candles, and cozy blankets.

And while we've kept a dedicated "Christmas" bin in the basement storage of our motorhome, we primarily use live greenery we don't have to worry about storing. Trader Joe's is one of my favorite places to find affordable garland and wreaths, which we hang with Command or S hooks inside the RV, or with suction cups on the outside. Another eco-friendly option is to create your own holiday decor by incorporating nature with tree clippings, cinnamon sticks, pinecones, cranberries, or dried orange slices.

And if you visit any tree lots, be sure to ask if they have extra tree trimmings because some places are happy to give them away for free.

We haven't let tiny living prevent us from getting a real tree either. One of my favorite Christmas traditions is searching the national forest for our tree (even if it's a tiny one). As long as you follow the rules and guidelines, cutting a tree in the national forest can benefit the land and help the growth of other trees. If you're up for the challenge, contact your local National Forest to see if they sell Christmas Tree Permits. They generally cost a mere \$5-10, and searching for the perfect tree will be an adventure you'll never forget!

## sacred rituals

When it comes to setting up your space in a way that supports you, consider any habits, routines, or rituals you want to bring into your life, and what will help create the atmosphere you need to succeed.

For example, if you want to cook healthier meals, consider how you can organize your kitchen in ways that inspire you to be in the space, or what cooking supplies will excite you to try new dishes. Maybe you can play your favorite music, audiobook, or podcast in the background. You can even turn the simple task of making coffee or tea into a beautiful ritual.

And if you want to make space for reading, writing, meditation, or prayer, carve out a dedicated space for this ritual, even if it's a spot on the sofa. How can you set the tone to make this experience even more enjoyable? Maybe you'll need an extra cozy blanket to cuddle up in when reading, and a surface to set down a hand thrown mug or light your favorite scented candle.

While some people are against real candles in campers, I use both real and faux candles in our RV. Natural candles made of beeswax or soy and those infused with essential oils will be better for your health, though it's still a good idea to leave a window cracked to let out any smoke. Of course you want to practice common sense – never travel with a lit candle, leave one unattended, or keep them near anything that can catch fire.

### *Renovation Tip:*

Before beginning a ritual or routine, consider smudging the space to clear the energy or set an intention. Palo Santo is one of my favorites, but you can use any other smudge bundles made of dried flowers or herbs. If the smoke bothers you, consider a smudge spray.



PHOTO COURTESY OF @PURPOSEBLOG





## slow decorating

While planning our RV renovation, I tried to make space for decor that could be collected over time through our travels. I loved the idea of browsing local shops and antique markets for meaningful pieces. Unfortunately, as our travel date approached, I began to lose sight of this vision. I started filling the RV with random décor and making impulse decisions based on convenience that only got worse once we hit the road. And it didn't help when family members asked for a tour, or I was asked to share photos on other blogs.

While I was honored to share our tiny home on wheels, I also felt anxiety creep up and the pressure to make it look "finished." Of course, I was the only one responsible for this added pressure, but my decisions were clouded by fear of judgment.

That's when my plan of slow decorating went out the window.

Then, to not be wasteful, I spent a good chunk of time returning items or frantically trying to make them work. Thankfully, I eventually learned to get out of my own way, embrace the missteps, and not take decorating too seriously. While my ideal shopping scenario didn't work out exactly as planned (I didn't always find what I was looking for), I learned to be more flexible while still being intentional. After several years on the road, we now have more meaningful pieces scattered throughout our RV that will eventually be weaved into our future home.

I share this story because I want you to feel confident in who you are and what you want, so you don't get stuck trying to impress others or compare yourself to someone in a different season of life. And if your space isn't working for you, I want you to feel empowered to turn it around.

Rather than fill an empty space with meaningless, disposable decor, learn to be at peace with things

not being 100% finished. Besides, empty spaces help you keep an eye out for the right thing to come along, rather than buying more of what you don't need. In other words, consider slow decorating. Slow decorating helps you purchase with intention and layer your home over time. I understand you may be less likely to take this approach if traveling spontaneously vs. full-time, but I still encourage you to consider this in your own home.

However, if you decide to use a temporary placeholder, keep in mind that every decision has a ripple effect, so try to avoid accidentally decorating around a temporary solution you don't love. Otherwise, you could end up straying from your design vision, and run into new challenges once you finally splurge on the solution you really wanted. Yup, been there done that more times than I'd like to admit.

While I've gotten better over the years, I also have an old habit of buying massively discounted items, which makes me feel like I'm getting some amazing deal I can't pass up or am afraid I'll never see again.

If you struggle with this, the next time you're contemplating buying something because of the price, ask yourself if you would still want it if it was 2x or even 3x the price. This simple question can help you recognize whether you love the item or are just excited about the price tag. In my experience, sometimes the answer is yes, but more times than not, it's a resounding no.

While there are times when price and convenience are the driving factors for making a purchase, other times, it's just bad habits kicking in, especially when buying décor, and this exercise may help.

If you want to avoid shopping temptation, consider unsubscribing from retailer emails that entice you to make unnecessary purchases.



@MOUNTAINMODERNLIFE

## Renovation Tip:

Make sure you're solving the right problem. For example, if the rug is the problem, replace it instead of replacing everything around it, trying to make it work.

## understanding your motivation

If you're struggling to find what you're looking for, consider taking a break. Sometimes the harder you look for something, the less it tends to show up, so let it go and let it flow.

From my experience, this rings especially true if shopping is accompanied by negative or low vibe emotions such as stress, frustration, or anxiety, which is more likely to show up when you're on a time crunch or FOMO (fear of missing out) kicks in. So pay attention to how you feel and listen to your body. This process should be fun, so slow down, take a deep breath and be present.

And if you feel the urge to buy something ASAP, ask yourself, "why?". Sometimes it takes a little digging to understand what drives us. Maybe it's as simple as needing pillows for your RV to be more comfortable or outdoor chairs to sit around the campfire. On the other hand, perhaps you're worried someone will judge you if you don't have "xyz" when they come over to visit or that your photo of the space won't get as many likes on Instagram.

Once you understand the motivation behind your intentions, you can still choose whether you want to move forward with the purchase or if it can wait. This is about doing what feels right for you.

## mindful consumption

When it comes to fabrics and materials, I recommend incorporating natural options whenever possible. Not only can these be better for the planet and your health, but they often last longer than synthetic options, which can save you money down the road.

Some examples of natural materials are linen, cotton, hemp, burlap, bamboo, wool, metal, iron, clay, rattan, wood, and leather. The main exception I make to this is with sofa upholstery. While natural fabrics are beautiful, they're not always the easiest to keep clean on a sofa, unless you have slipcovers that can be removed. This is when you will want to weigh the pros and cons of the fabric used.

As consumers, we have a voice, and our purchasing decisions are a vote for what we want and value. The more we expect better and safer products for ourselves and the planet, the more accessible these products will become. I've seen a huge shift in the last 5 years!

A few years ago, I spent days searching for simple flax linen bedding, only to come home empty-handed. At the time, I could only find it at high-end retailers, boutiques, or from shops based in other countries. And while I was ready to splurge, I still had a budget.



PHOTO COURTESY OF @WHOLETHOMPSONLIFE

In the end, I ordered bedding from an Etsy shop based out of Europe and had to wait a month for it to arrive. Thankfully, much has changed in the last couple of years, and more big-box retailers have options available, including Target and Amazon. While the quality can vary from one vendor to the next, it's a step in the right direction and exciting to find better materials at a price point most consumers can afford. Not to mention more convenient, especially for those with a changing address.

Moral of the story? The more we demand better products, whether based on materials, origin, ethics, or sustainability, the more accessible these products will become. It's about better, not more, and progress, not perfection.

Yet, I'll be the first to admit the idea of buying better products nearly paralyzed me from making decisions and practically sucked the joy out of decorating. I became consumed with making the "right" purchase that if something didn't check all the boxes, I felt like I failed.

I had lost sight of why I was decorating in the first place - joy.

This process taught me a valuable lesson: Don't let society dictate what you think you need to buy in order to feel good enough, because you already are. It's one thing to buy something because you want to, it's another because you think it's expected of you. Yes, as humans we can all do better, but we don't need to do it at the expense of our mental health. So embrace any and all steps you make in the right direction, even if it's a baby step you make just a couple times a year.

If you find yourself overwhelmed with making the "perfect" purchase, whatever that means, give yourself grace and let it go. It won't serve you, your family, or your space to have shame, guilt, or resentment around anything you do or don't purchase. Instead, understand what's important to you in this season of life. Spending some time going over your priorities can also bring clarity and help eliminate overwhelm.

Once I gave myself permission to make "imperfect" purchases, I could finally enjoy our RV (and decorating it) even more.

**As consumers, we have a voice, and our purchasing decisions are a vote for what we want and value. The more we expect better and safer products for ourselves and the planet, the more accessible these products will become.**





PHOTO COURTESY OF @ERICA\_CURTIS

## *Questions to ask before making a purchase*

While you may choose to buy or hold onto items that don't check every single box, asking yourself these questions can shift your perspective on what to look for in the future. You'll notice several of these are the same questions you may ask yourself when decluttering, as mentioned in chapter 3.

1. Can I afford it?
2. Do I love it?
3. Do I need it?
4. Do I already have something similar?
5. Does it reflect who I am or who I want to be?
6. Do I have a place for it?
7. Will I want this in 1 year? 5 years? 10 years?
8. What's my current emotional state? And how will I feel if I make the purchase?
9. What's the story behind it and does it align with my values? (How and where was it made? Is it sustainable? Is it a company or brand I want to support?)
10. What's the symbolism behind it? Consider both personal and universal symbolism. Is this something I want to infuse into my space energetically?



PHOTO COURTESY OF @DEBANDDANELLE

## Renovation Tip:

Allow space for purchasing mistakes. If you buy something and it either doesn't work or makes you feel guilty because you don't love it as much as you thought, return it. I used to be embarrassed to return things because it made me feel like I failed, but I now see each return as an opportunity to learn something about myself, my style, or decorating in general. Not to mention it's one less thing I have to store, which frees up space for something better.

## give your space some soul

In my opinion, a home is created in layers over time, with a mix of old, new, and handmade pieces that come together to form your own personal sanctuary. This goes back to the slow decorating approach I mentioned earlier.

While it's easy to fall back on disposable décor out of convenience, I encourage you to mix in items you feel connected to or have some soul. Some ways to do this are through antiques, vintage finds, handmade decor, artesian goods, family heirlooms, or sentimental pieces that conjure happy nostalgic feelings.

The story of an object can stem from different sources. It doesn't have to be expensive to be meaningful. Here are some things to consider:

- Where it came from
- How it was made
- Who made it
- How it was used
- Discovery in how it was found

One way to make purchases more meaningful is to tie them to celebratory events or milestones. As an example, while RVing in Florida a couple of years ago, my mom came down to celebrate my birthday. We spent the day in St. Augustine, visiting the beach, going out to eat, and browsing the historic district.

At one point, we found ourselves at a local antique shop, where I was instantly drawn to a primitive-looking clay vase, which my mom bought for me as a Birthday gift. The vase isn't an actual antique, but I love the texture and imperfections in the clay. Plus, it now reminds me of my mom and that special day we spent together in St. Augustine.

I've collected several items during our travels that make my heart happy every time I look at them. I love how a handmade rug reminds me of a day spent in California, a piece of pottery reminds me of Florida, an oil painting reminds me of Wisconsin, a printed photo reminds me of Oregon, and a mug reminds me of Georgia. Every time I look at these items, I'm able to re-live and re-cherish those moments during our travels.

Even some of the mass-produced décor I picked up on our travels feel special to me, so this isn't about making "perfect" purchases that tell "perfect" stories. It's about the lens through which you choose to see it.

Adding soul to your space isn't limited to décor either. It can be weaved into the structure and design of your RV through the materials used and projects created. Our renovation was a labor of love filled with challenges that tested our marriage. We poured ourselves into creating a home we could enjoy on the road, and it's an experience we'll never forget.

We brought history into our RV through 19th-century barnwood and other reclaimed materials from family,



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PHOTO COURTESY OF @PLACE\_OFMY\_TASTE

friends, and various salvage yards and sawmills we've come across during our travels.

While I think it's fantastic to look around a room and see the stories weaved throughout, I think it's important to recognize that this can take time, and not every single purchase has to tell a story. You're constantly evolving, as is your home, so enjoy the process.

However, keep in mind your home *is* on wheels, and items may break during travel. I didn't let this sway me from buying handmade mugs and pottery, but none of my pieces were expensive, or I may have thought twice about them. While we haven't had any issues, I try not to buy anything too precious or fragile unless I can make peace knowing it could end up damaged. Otherwise, it will only bring nervous energy into the space, something I prefer to do without.

## Renovation Tip

It's easy to fall back into old habits and routines, even while traveling. Get out of your comfort zone by exploring new shops, areas, and artists. Or consider purchasing from artists or shops based in a location you love to vacation or hope to visit one day.

## biophilic design

biophilic design relates to the human desire to associate with nature. I believe we all crave connection to something outside ourselves, and by bringing the outdoors in, we can create a more nourishing, nurturing, and healing environment. Nature can breathe life into your space, and it's also a budget-friendly way to bring soul to your home on wheels.

Not only can plants help reduce stress and anxiety, but some studies suggest they can also

clean the air, elevate your mood, and make you more productive. While not considered biophilic design, an air purifier can also help clear the air of toxic chemicals and allergens, which can be beneficial both during and after a renovation. Some can even help eliminate pet fur!

I love plants, but sadly I've sent more to the graveyard than I'd like to admit. And sure, I could blame my cat for thinking my plants are his salad bar, but I've also had my fair share of overwatering/underwatering/not enough sun, too much sun, or just straight-up neglect. Yet this hasn't stopped me from browsing nurseries and bringing home more plants.

As a matter of fact, I enjoy browsing nurseries during our travels just as much as I enjoy browsing antique markets. It's fascinating to see the different plants available in other regions at different times. I felt spoiled after spending a good chunk of time in California and Florida, where an abundance of plants are available year-round compared to other parts of the country.

I'm happy to report I've made progress in my plant-care abilities over the years, but I've also learned which plants are easier to keep alive. In my experience, this includes snake plants, rubber plants, English ivy, philodendrons, and pothos. You can also seek out plants that thrive in high humidity, like birds nest ferns, as RVs are known for this. Of course, cactus and succulents are always popular options, though you'll want to be extra careful with any cactus you have, especially on travel days or if you have kids or pets. Another fun way to bring in greenery is through a propagation tube plant wall.

If you do have pets, keep in mind that several plants are poisonous to cats and dogs, so please be cautious when adding plants to your RV or make sure they are out of reach. You'll also want to use caution when making DIY repellants for plants, as some essential oils can be dangerous for pets. Do your research and use your best judgment.

How often you travel can also impact what you bring into the RV, as practicality will be a factor.



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Understandably, someone who travels full-time is more likely to have living plants than someone who travels sporadically.

The good news is you can substitute real plants with faux ones when you're craving greenery without the hassle. We have both, but to make the fake plants appear more realistic, I've added dried sphagnum moss to the pots.

Some other ways to bring nature into your RV are with flowers, pinecones, rocks, pebbles, crystals, twigs, moss, stones, acorns, seashells, and sea glass. You can use branches, driftwood, or eucalyptus poles to hang plants, pots, or display macrame. And if your location allows, many of these items can be foraged during walks, making for a fun activity that won't dig into your wallet. Another way to incorporate nature is through textures, patterns, images, and even aromatherapy.

And let's not forget food. A bowl of lemons will instantly bring color and vibrancy into your space.

I like to take this one step further and consider what I may need mentally, physically, or spiritually and then bring that into my environment energetically based on my current knowledge and experience with the Chakra system, essential oils, and crystals. For example, if my self-esteem is low or I'm feeling unmotivated, I know this relates to my solar plexus (or 3rd chakra). To combat this, I may bring the color yellow into our space through flowers or fruit, diffuse oils with sandalwood or vetiver, and set out a crystal, like citrine or tiger's eye.

While there's no scientific proof that these practices work, I personally find this approach helpful and fun. I've also used it as part of my healing journey when I have autoimmune flare-ups. And while I'm no expert on these topics, I enjoy learning more about them. If this doesn't resonate with you, no worries as it's not everyone's cup of tea. And if it does, I encourage you to follow your curiosity to research it further.

## harmony

Design rules such as balance, scale, focal points, repetition, and proportion can provide you with a good place to start regarding space planning and purchasing decisions. These principles can also help you understand why a space is or isn't working and what tweaks you can make to improve the overall look and flow.

However, these rules are meant to be nothing more than a guide, so feel free to bend them however you choose. I encourage you to become curious about your interior, take advantage of what design rules work for you, and let your intuition take it from there. It's better to have a space you love than one that sounds good on paper.

I like to sum up my favorite design rules into one word: Harmony.

To me, harmony encompasses several design principles because it's about creating an interior with balance, connection, and contrast.

The best way to accomplish this, in my opinion, is through juxtaposition, and more specifically, to complement styles, eras, fixtures, textures, and decor with their opposites.

For example, if you love rustic design, mix in some modern pieces. And if your style is more boho, sprinkle in minimalist-inspired décor. You can mix periods by pairing a vintage rug with a modern coffee table, mix textures like rough wood against something smooth and painted, compliment a patterned pillow with something solid, and balance rigid shapes against softer options. Contrasting styles will allow elements to shine without competing.

It's easy to go overboard when we fall in love with one specific style or design idea, but it's easier to find balance in the mix when you keep harmony in mind. It's like solving a problem by process of elimination.



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If you're struggling with this, take a glance through your favorite photos saved to your style board. Make a note of the variances in design styles or periods in the furniture and décor. There is likely contrast amongst them, which creates harmony and balance versus everything reading as one specific style or feeling too "themey" or "cliche."

You can also look at this from the Taoist concept of Yin-Yang, which I find both fascinating and helpful when it comes to creating harmony throughout our home. For example, square corners, rigid furniture, bold patterns, and bright colors are considered more Yang (masculine) or have active energy. In contrast, circular shapes, muted tones, upholstered furniture, and softer textiles are considered Yin (feminine) or have more passive energy.

You need both to create a harmonious space, though you can play up one over the other in certain areas depending on what you need. For example, because a bedroom is where you rest and relax, you may want to play up the Yin energy to help achieve this, whereas an office will require more productivity, so you may want to play up the Yang.

By mixing styles, textures, forms, and scale united by repetition, you will create a more layered home that feels unique and collected. And by paying attention to how items relate to one another, you can create a better flow of energy and alignment. In essence, you will create a more harmonious space.

## *Renovation Tip*

Don't be afraid to make bold choices and play with scale. Living in a smaller space doesn't mean you need to fill the rooms with small-scaled items. In fact, doing so can make the area feel cluttered. Not only do large-scale items create a focal point, but they're often more impactful and useful.

## re-evaluate over time

Unless you've lived in less than 300 square feet before, chances are you'll be experiencing a lot of trial and error. Not to mention, as our priorities shift and the seasons change, the way we use our RV will change too. Even as I've written this book, I've gone back through to update sections with the changes we've made. And who knows what our RV will look like by the time you read this.

For example, when we first hit the road, we had a couple of folding ottomans that could be used as extra seating and storage. We also enjoyed propping up our feet when lounging on the sofa.

This was back in 2015 when stylish, collapsible furniture was a challenge to find. The ottomans may not have been my style (or anyone's for that matter), but I figured they would be functional, and I could upgrade them later. So I covered them with a throw blanket and called it a day.

They were later replaced with a folding coffee table I absolutely loved! It was stylish, lightweight, and was easy to fold up and tuck away.

However, a year later, I felt the coffee table was no longer serving our needs. Sure it was nice to have a surface to display books or set down my coffee cup in the morning, but the truth is, I didn't actually use it, and instead, it became a piece of furniture I had to constantly move or clean. As much as I enjoyed having a coffee table, the space it occupied wasn't earning its keep. And tiny living has taught me to keep things convenient, so they are easy to use and maintain.

Not quite ready to let it go, I stored the table behind our sofa. It was replaced with faux leather ottomans that came unstuffed, allowing us to stuff them with seasonal clothes and blankets. They may have been a little heavy, but they were multifunctional, and we loved them (as did the pets!). However, as the sofa morphed into my favorite reading nook, and those



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storage ottomans became an RVers version of a "junk room," I missed my coffee table. Before long, it was back in action.

Life isn't stagnant, and neither is your home. Sometimes it takes a little trial and error to figure out what you need or how a space can serve you better, which may change in different seasons of life.

In my experience, tweaks in our homes generally happen for one of five reasons:

- For fun
- To freshen up the look (either seasonally or to try something new)
- To change the energetic flow
- To limit or reduce annoyances
- When there's a change in habits or lifestyle

I'm utterly fascinated by how the slightest tweak can change the energy of a space or affect our daily habits and rituals. Think back to the last time you re-arranged a room and how the flow felt lighter afterward. While most of us don't have multiple furniture pieces to move around in an RV, we do have décor, storage, and necessities that, when shifted or swapped out, can instantly change the way the interior feels and how we move through it.

There's no "right" way to decorate or arrange your space, but I encourage you to play, experiment, and take risks. This is how we learn, grow, and evolve. Plus, taking risks at home can help you take risks outside the home. When in doubt, follow your gut. If it feels good, leave it, and if it feels off, tweak it.

## *Renovation Tip*

Take photos on your phone if you're struggling with certain décor choices or arrangements, which can help you compare options and choose what feels right. In my experience, seeing the room through a different lens can help you view it with fresh eyes. You may also want to ask yourself if you would "pin" or like the photo if you came across it online. This may help you gain a new perspective and understand what you prefer aesthetically.

While I often cringe looking through older photos of our RV, I'm also grateful for experimenting with different colors and styles. If nothing else, it's helped me realize what I don't want. And sometimes knowing what you don't like is just as helpful as knowing what you do.

Most of the changes in our RV have stemmed from frustration with flow or function, which is simply a reminder that a better solution may be available. Our RV serves us better when we remove or limit annoyances.



For example, after removing the original TV from our motorhome, we replaced it with a custom cabinet. I created an abstract mountain design on the cabinet door and attached it with standard cabinet hinges. However, it didn't take long to realize how much I hated getting into that cabinet. Not only was it awkward, but I practically had to balance the cabinet door on my head while trying to shove something inside.

Eventually, I ordered pneumatic lift support hinges so the cabinet door could stay propped up while I accessed the contents inside. This wasn't an expensive or time-consuming project, but it made our space work better and my life easier. These are the little things I encourage you to pay attention to and become curious about in your own RV so that it can better support you.

One of my favorite ways to do this is to sit in each room and scan every single item. I know this sounds tedious, but it goes much quicker than you would think.

While evaluating each item with fresh eyes, ask yourself a few questions such as:

- Do I use this or is it simply taking up space?
- Do I love looking at this?
- Am I spending more time protecting/cleaning/worrying about this vs. enjoying it?
- What kind of energy does this carry?
- Could something better work in its place?

Over time, we become accustomed to how our interiors look and function, which can leave us living with things we no longer like, use, or need. However, by occasionally re-evaluating your space, you'll be able to make changes that better reflect your current needs and lifestyle.

“Your sacred space is where you can find yourself over and over again.”

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

## 10 Wabi-Sabi

True confession. The original title for this chapter was "thrive." While my husband and I no longer live in our RV, I wrote most of this book during our time on the road. This chapter, however, remained unfinished because every time I sat down to write, I felt like a fraud.

Thrive?

How could I write a chapter about thriving when I felt I was barely surviving? This is what held me back.

Sure, I remained optimistic and curious about the challenges thrown my way, but I was *far* from thriving.

The truth is, the first time I started finalizing this chapter, I discovered I was pregnant, which was incredibly exciting! Then fatigue and nausea took over, and I hit the pause button. Unfortunately, that pregnancy ended in miscarriage, and finishing this book took a longer pause than I had intended.

It was nearly a year later when I started diving back into this chapter. During that time, I fell pregnant again, but sadly, we suffered yet another miscarriage.

A couple of weeks later, as I lay in bed, I thought about this chapter. I thought about how I've waited years to finish this book because I was waiting for the *perfect* time - when everything in my life would come together, and I could tell you how I'm thriving and how my home has been there every step of the way.

Then it hit me.

Thrive *isn't* the name of this chapter. Because while we all want to thrive, there are times when we're simply trying to survive. Life isn't always wrapped up in a pretty little bow. It can be messy and complicated. We all experience heartbreak, challenges, lessons, and spiritual growth in one way or another. Yet we also experience love, beauty, connection, adventure, peace, and joy. In other words, it's perfectly imperfect, as are we.



Yet regardless of what's going on in our lives, our homes are there for us. They support us, comfort us, and hopefully provide a safe space for us to rest, replenish, and nourish our souls so we can confidently get back out into the world.

We all have seasons of thriving and perhaps seasons of *not so much* thriving, and that's okay.

That's life.

Despite my own personal challenges, I can truthfully say that coming home to our RV did provide comfort, even if it was in different ways at different times.

So yes, I believe our spaces can support us if given a chance. Our homes aren't meant to be perfect. They're meant to be lived in and to evolve as we do. I think this is why I've fallen in love with the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi, which relates to finding beauty in imperfection, and acceptance and appreciation in the transience of life. It's helped me focus less on things being perfect and more on the connection and experience being had. Whenever I worry about perfection within our interior (or myself), I silently say, "wabi-sabi" and instantly feel a sense of peace wash over me.

I know firsthand how easy it is to get lost in what other people are doing or how many likes a photo gets on social media. But at the end of the day, that's not what matters. YOU matter. So remember to be grateful for the space you have, who you share it with, and where you're at in this season of life.

My dream is for you to decorate not only for the joy it brings but also for the wisdom of seeing how it can impact you mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Become curious about this connection, dig a little deeper, and look for opportunities to incorporate more of who you are, what you value, what you need, and what you want to attract into your life. This awareness can help you make more conscious choices that outlast trends and fads. It can also help you create a sacred space that offers comfort and healing, especially on the days, weeks, months, or even years when you need it most.

No renovation is perfect. It can be super exciting at times and overwhelmingly stressful at others. It may test your relationships, and things will likely go wrong at one point or another, but this is completely normal. Try to remember why you're doing this in the first place, appreciate the process, remain flexible, and most importantly, enjoy the journey. You've got this!

My dream is for you to decorate not only for the joy it brings but also for the wisdom of seeing how it can impact you mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Become curious about this connection, dig a little deeper, and look for opportunities to incorporate more of who you are, what you value, what you need, and what you want to attract into your life.

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*Thank you to everyone who contributed inspiring renovation photos.*

*This book wouldn't be the same without them!*

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