



Upholster dining chairs or have loose covers made up to cover existing chairs – co-ordinate with an art work for a truly co-ordinated look.

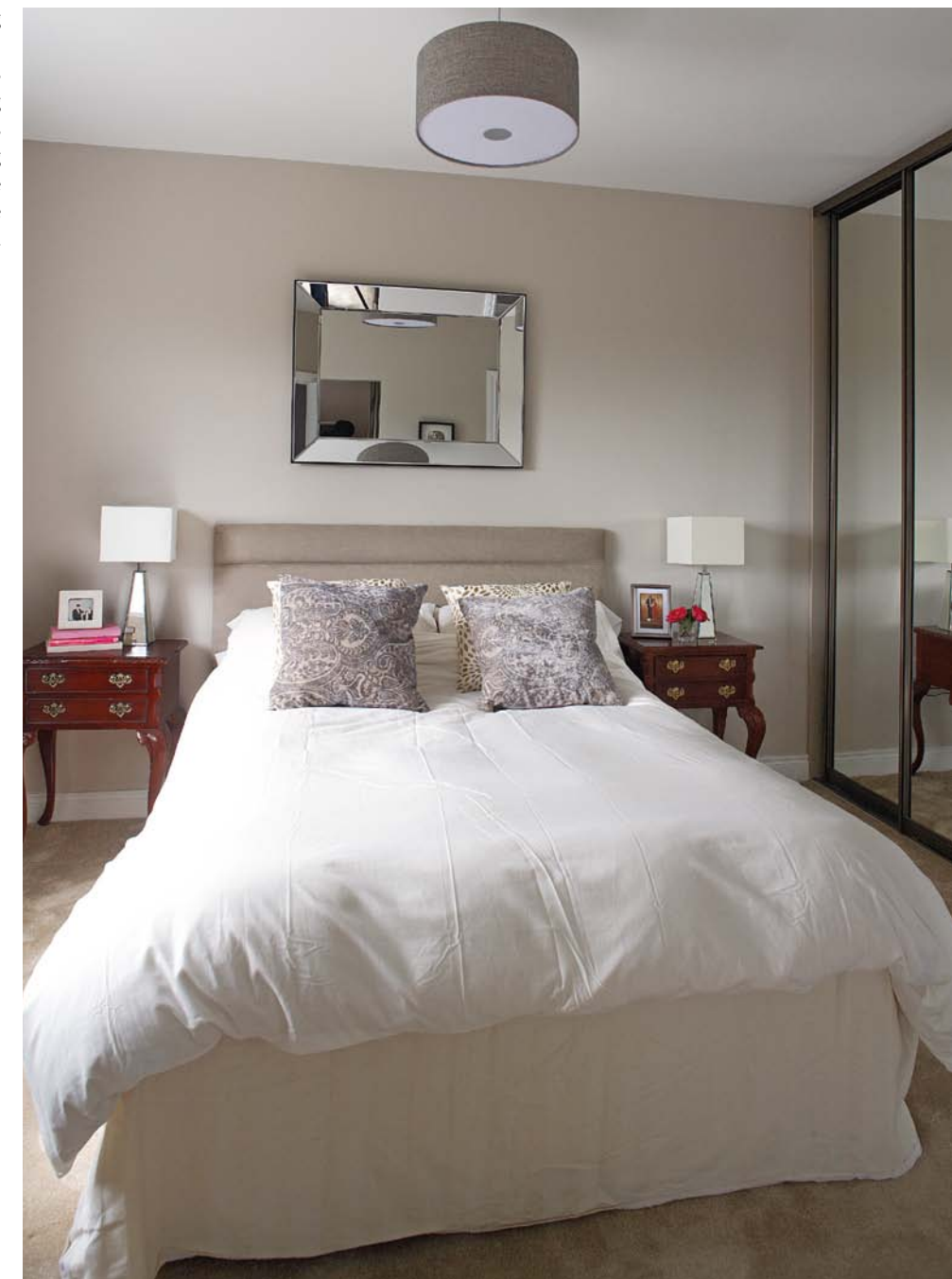
Mirrors are a great way to cover up walls – the bigger the better.

Investing in accessories such as cushions, rugs and artwork is an excellent way to brighten up your space.



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Neutral bedding will work with most schemes and updating lampshades and introducing mirrors will give the room a more up to date look.



Renting

'If you live in rented accommodation it can be difficult to know how to make your surroundings feel like home. But renting has become a necessity for many people in recent years, so it is important you make your accommodation feel like your own. Our surroundings have a bigger impact on us than we realise, so investing a little to make it work for is something you will not regret.'

BY DENISE O'CONNOR OF OPTIMISE DESIGN

I had friends who were renting a small flat in King's Cross, which was more of an address than a home. With an arrangement with their landlord they made some improvements that they offset against the rent. One furiously busy bank holiday weekend and a lot of paint later the flat was completely transformed into a gorgeous home. Before they did the work they were reluctant to invite friends over or spend any time there, but once they had put their own stamp on the place they enjoyed entertaining and hanging out at home.

If you can get permission from your landlord, repainting is the best way to completely transform any room. If painting walls isn't an option there are other ways to bring colour into your rented home. Accessories are another way to create your own look. Rugs, cushions and art works are all things that can be taken with you when you leave. These will make the property feel like yours and help to bring some of your own personality into it.

The other issue when renting is having to put up with things that you cannot change, like floors for example. An inexpensive way to have a large rug made up is to have a piece of carpet cut to size and then have

it edged in a contrasting colour. Most carpet suppliers will be able to do this for you.

Mirrors are a great way to cover up walls – the bigger the better. I invested in a large floor mirror when I lived in a one-bed apartment years ago. It worked to give the effect of doubling the room and has travelled with me over the years and now resides in my family room.

Lighting is a key factor in controlling atmosphere in a space - something which many rentals lack. Opt for different sources of lighting by using a mix of table and floor lamps to allow you to control the lighting levels in your home.

When you are planning your updates do bear in mind that you will only be living there temporarily, and you probably can't turn it into your dream house - but that's okay because it's not your house, after all. So do the best you can to make your house a home. Spend some time and money to put your personal stamp on your space. After that, just relax and enjoy the fact that if your boiler breaks or the dishwasher stops working you can just pick up the phone and call someone to come and fix it, and pay for it!