



The UNIVERSITY of
WEST ALABAMA

Redecorating on a Budget

For most college students, a college dorm room or shared apartment is the first chance to live on your own. That means it's probably your first opportunity to display your own style in your personal space.

While you no longer have to battle with mom and dad or siblings about paint color or furniture placement, you may face a bigger obstacle: a budget.

But with some careful planning – and a bit of craftiness – you can let your style shine through without breaking the bank:

Reuse – Naturally there's no reason *not* to bring your favorite things from home: a rug, some pillows, a comforter. Maybe even the sofa from your parents' game room. Check with friends and relatives for pieces they're willing to part with, then consider heading to the thrift stores. Look for solid pieces with little or no damage, even if it's not exactly the perfect shape or color. You can always add your own touches with accessories to make it work. Thrift stores are a great place to look for things like dishes, lamps, or glassware, particularly if you don't mind a mismatched set (which, by the way, is super in!).

Repurpose – As you're scouring your parents' garage or the local thrift store, keep in mind that a table in one house can be a desk in another. Patio furniture can become a kitchen dinette. Even things that aren't furniture at all can find a place in your design: Use crates or boxes as end tables or nightstands. Shower curtains can become room dividers or turn a corner into an extended closet. You can even use landscaping pallets to make a whole litany of [furniture items](#).

Recycle – This is where the craftiness comes in. If you can use a needle and thread (or sewing machine), you can transform curtains into pillows, or repurpose a comforter into a smaller living room throw. Invest in a few yards of inexpensive fabric, and you can create matching curtains, throw pillows, even a complete chair or sofa cover to upgrade a hand-me-down. You can even find some no-sew patterns for pillows and other items if sewing just isn't your thing. A quart of paint and a paint brush can turn a table and four mismatched chairs into a kitschy dining room set. And if you're handy with power tools, you can take on some really ambitious projects like cutting down barstools to make kitchen chairs – or vice versa, replacing chair legs with longer, bar-height legs to make stools.

When you get creative on sourcing the large items – beds, sofas, tables and chairs – you'll have money left for things like lamps and wall hangings, not to mention things like towels and bed linens. Remember, it's not important for your first apartment or dorm room to look perfectly decorated. It just needs to reflect your personality and give you a sense of home away from home.