

# The fix is in

Local design pros solve five common Chicago apartment problems

By Jenn Thompson and Cecilia Wong Photograph by Calbee Booth

## 1. Tiny bedroom

A small, claustrophobic space, with little room for furniture and décor items

### SOLUTIONS:

**1. Use space smartly.** **Melissa Lewis**, a junior designer with *jamesthomas* ([www.jtliving.com](http://www.jtliving.com)) and the designer of this project, took this "tall" bedroom and did her best with the verticality and small space. "The shelf acts as a stacking and display area, pairing well with the credenza in terms of look," she says. "By using this area to display multiple pieces of art, you are freeing up more wall space, which can become cluttered by separately hung pieces." Conversely, **Suhail** ([www.suhaildesign.com](http://www.suhaildesign.com)), a local architect and designer, gives a tip on what to do with the opposite problem—a "squat" bedroom. "Verticality can be implied by taller furniture pieces; also, the use of vertical blocks of color can accent the space." *Pavilion credenza*, \$350, available at CB2. *Lack shelf*, \$15, available at IKEA.

**2. Color schemes and lighting matter. A lot.** "Keep it low and neutral with some accent colors, patterns and textures," Lewis says. "To combat the feeling of claustrophobia, neutral and soothing colors were paired with textured materials and low floor lamps in order to bring both the level and overall feel of the room closer to the ground, making it feel less vertical." **Christina J. Birkentall**, instructor at Harrington College of Design in Chicago, concurs. "Lighter finishes on all items or similar tones throughout will be soothing on the eyes, along with minimal pattern and just some texture." *Thomas O'Brien Collection large classic silhouette lamp*, \$50; *modern standing floor lamp*, \$60; both available at Target on Oct 15. *Bon Bon bed linens*, \$55; *Tokyo coverlet*, \$110; both available at CB2.

**3. Dress up the walls.** "Select a wall to become the accent wall and use a darker color for it to give the room depth," Lewis says. "The addition of something tactile such as wall-covering adds dimension to the space." *Ralph Lauren paint in Mombasa Mist* (accent wall) and *Cymric Silver* (other walls), \$24 per gallon, available at Home Depot. *Utill Dawn paper cut-out curtain*, \$90 per 42 x 96-inch panel, available at CB2.

**4. Turn the regular bed into a daybed.** "By switching the orientation of the bed, it opened the space up, and the differentiation in bed type adds a visual stimulus to the room," Lewis says.

**5. Minimal but significant furniture additions.** "Conceptually, chairs are viewed as extras only allowed if space permits," Lewis explains. "Here, it creates another 'area' of the room where one could sit and read." *Custom-made W+F=CH felt chair* by *Gerry Christensen*, price upon request.

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## 2. That '70s kitchen

Linoleum and synthetics rule. The color scheme: mustard and brown. Cabinet doors are made of cheap metal.

### SOLUTIONS:

**1. Cover up the floor.** "If replacing the floor isn't an option, the old flooring could be covered in a new vinyl remnant or even a painted floorcloth (a treated canvas rug), done in a funky abstract pattern, one that marries all the earth tones together," Birkentall says. *Custom floorcloths*, right, available at *Design Village*.

**2. Easy hardware touch-ups.** "Upgrade the knobs by replacing only doors or pulls," says Cynthia Vranas, architect and interior designer at *Olsen Vranas Architects* and instructor at Harrington College of Design. *Coral Knobs*, \$12 (set of two) at *Anthropologie*.

**3. Painted palette.** "To make the color scheme [i.e., browns and neutrals] to minimize attention to unattractive elements," adds Birkentall: "The good news is, those colors are actually 'in' again!"



**4. Direct attention elsewhere.** "Strategically place a vintage poster or find an affordable French antique table to provide some form of quality visual distraction," Vranas says. She suggests finding an antique table at *Architectural Artifacts*.

**5. Take advantage of countertop appliances.** They can double as functional items that also look good and maintain the color scheme. Suhail suggests appliances from *KitchenAid* or *Wolf*. *Artisan Series blender in Tangerine*, right, \$130 at *KitchenAid*.