

If your fireplace has lost some of its appeal due to an outdated look, it might be time for a makeover. Creating a unique look can make it enticing to buyers. Fireplaces can be eyesores or focal points in a room. So, take a look at your fireplace and decide if it will spark buyers' interest.

"If anything is out, it is brick. Nobody is really doing brick anymore. It's mostly concrete or stone," says Rick Gardella, president of Concepts in Concrete Construction.

## STYLE

Of course, every home décor style is subjective. As times change, the mass appeal of certain materials fluctuates. Gardella says concrete is now being used for many areas in the house – from indoor flooring to fireplace surrounds. If you're thinking of giving your fireplace a facelift, Gardella says to consider these factors:

## THE BIG PICTURE

Your fireplace should complement the rest of your home. Be sure to consider not just the type of material you will use to cover the fireplace, but also the mantel and what you will place next to the fireplace. Take a look at the room and see what statement you want to make with the fireplace. For instance, a stone surround that extends up the fireplace and the entire wall to the ceiling can create a bold and rustic look.

## TWO-SIDED FIREPLACES

This is a look that's popular and provides double the enjoyment. It's not always practical or possible, but this feature can create appeal and warmth in multiple rooms. Use cardboard boxes to gauge the true size of your new surround. Sometimes it's difficult to determine how it will fit into your room. Experts recommend using cardboard cutouts and placing them around the existing fireplace so that you can see exactly how much space is taken up and how the new fireplace surround will affect your living area.



# Make Your FIREPLACE A CENTER OF INTEREST

BY PHOEBE CHONGCHUA

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## CHOOSE THE RIGHT COLOR

You put a splash of color up on the walls – and then realize you hate the color that you had loved so much in the store. Let that be a lesson. Be sure to take samples of the materials you will use for your fireplace surround. Take them home and let them sit next to your fireplace for a few days. Give it time to see the materials in different lighting and through your changing moods. Taking the time to test the materials in your home will likely save you disappointment and extra cost in the future.

## STRAIGHT OR CURVED?

Typically, curves and more intricate designs will increase the cost of your fireplace surround. So if budget is a concern, you might consider replacing curves in the design with straight lines and also minimizing small details. This can be done without compromising the overall appeal.

## WHAT SHOULD IT COST?

The price can vary considerably. However, Gardella says, size, materials, design, and the inclusion of other décor such as hearths and mantels contribute to the overall price. "If you're remodeling your existing fireplace you're probably going to pay \$2,500 to \$5,000," he says.

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## Organize Your Space

The majority of Canadians consider themselves disorganized at home, with 27% are interested in working with a professional organizer.\* This year, let's change our habits and cut through the clutter to free up space and improve our home environments. Here are great tips and information intended to help you get organized and bring out the best in each room of your home. While page one provides general guidelines to help you create a practical system for nipping clutter in the bud, page two offers specific tips and tricks for organizing each room of your home.



## Early Spring Market Heats Up

February saw a 15.4% increase in local sales over the previous year, with 500 detached homes and 137 condos exchanging hands. "It should be borne in mind, however, that, while February 2011 had 28 days, February 2012 had 29 days," says Barb Whitney, President of LSTAR. "The extra day skews the numbers somewhat. If we leave out the sales that took place on February 29 of this year, 478 detached homes sold, up 9.6% over the previous February; 132 condos sold, up 13.8%; and total sales were up 10.5%. Even so, there's no doubt that the year is off to a great start.

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