



# Simple Ways to Spruce Up Your Sofa

BEFORE YOU KICK THAT WELL-WORN COUCH TO THE CURB, TRY THESE WALLET-FRIENDLY UPDATES TO ADD COMFORT, COLOR, AND STYLE.

By Leslie Corona

## Refresh the Fabric

Sometimes all a dingy couch needs is a little extra attention. You can hire a service to steam-clean and sanitize dirty upholstery (including leather); prices start at about \$50. If pilling is your primary concern, try giving the cushions a face-lift with an electric sweater shaver, says Ashley Poskin, a home blogger in Chicago. (We like the Evercare Giant Fabric Shaver, \$13; [bedbathandbeyond.com](http://bedbathandbeyond.com).) Using a very light hand—pressing too hard risks damaging the fabric—move the device in circles to trim off the thin layer of fuzz. If you have light-colored upholstery, a sweater shaver can also help fade dye-transfer spots from dark jeans.



## Change the Legs

Switching out the sofa legs can upgrade the whole look. [prettypegs.com](http://prettypegs.com) has a great selection of shapes and finishes for many furniture brands, including Ikea. While you're at it, says Sklar, consider adjusting the height of your sofa. Take the style of furniture into account, though: Most modern sofas look best lower to the ground. Sklar suggests stacking some books underneath to experiment with proportions.

If your sofa's legs are permanently attached, you can paint them a different color. Poskin recommends chalk paint for this project because it usually doesn't require sanding or priming. (Try Chalk Paint by Annie Sloan, \$35 per liter; [anniesloan.com](http://anniesloan.com) for stores.) When the paint is completely dry, coat the legs with Clear Chalk Paint Wax (\$23 for 500 ml; [anniesloan.com](http://anniesloan.com) for stores) to seal the surface.

## Plump Up Saggy Cushions

Refresh deflated back cushions with some fiber fill (try Fairfield Poly-Fil Premium Fiber Fill Box, \$33 for 80 oz.; [joann.com](http://joann.com)). Unzip the slipcover and stuff layers of fill *behind* the insert—this keeps the cushion from looking lumpy in the front. Use a towel-wrapped ruler to shove the fill deep into the corners of the slipcover. The cushions may initially appear overstuffed but will flatten over time.

For the seat cushions, remove each foam insert, wrap it in layers of batting (like Mountain Mist Polyester Craft Quilt Batting, \$9; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)), and replace. It might be a tight fit, so enlist a helper to pull the fabric together as you zip. If you want a quicker fix, Poskin suggests adding thin, inexpensive pillow inserts between the sofa frame and cushions.



## Erase Scratches from Wood

Rub away nicks on sofa legs and other exposed wood with the Tibet Almond Stick (\$10; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)). Los Angeles-based designer Amy Sklar swears by it. She says it's like a Magic Eraser for wood.



## Swap Out Pillows

A couple of nice throw pillows can give new life—and a new vibe—to your sofa. Best of all, pillows cost a fraction of reupholstering, says Albert Nakash, a salesperson at Bettertext, an upholstery business in New York City. The most budget-friendly move is buying off-the-shelf options at a store like HomeGoods, but you could order custom pillow covers from an upholsterer or tailor. Prices start at about \$45 per cover—not including the fabric. To save some money, use decorative fabric on one side and a more affordable neutral fabric on the other.

STYLING BY JEFFREY MILLER

PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS. CROSS MIAO THROW PILLOW, \$165; STFRANK.COM. ESTELLE SLIM 170 LEGS IN WALNUT, \$92 FOR 4; PRETTYPEGS.COM

### Slip on a Slipcover

Reupholstering a sofa can be almost as expensive as buying a new one. For a more affordable makeover, try a slipcover. It protects your sofa from messes and wear—you can take it off and wash it!—and lets you easily vary the look of your space throughout the year. (Megan Pflug, a designer in Brooklyn, New York, has a client who adds a white slipcover to her dark velvet sofa in the summer for a breezier feel.) Check out [comfort-works.com](http://comfort-works.com) or [bemz.com](http://bemz.com) for options that fit models from many retailers, including Ikea and Pottery Barn. Otherwise, consider a custom slipcover. It can be expensive, but it might be worth it if you love the feel (just not the look) of your sofa. Go for a performance fabric, like Crypton, or a durable material, like Sunbrella, if you have kids or pets. Remember to request swatches first.



### Add Tufting


If you're feeling ambitious, you can embellish lackluster cushions with tufting (indented buttons placed at regular intervals). Fluff the filling to make sure it's evenly distributed within the cover. Then measure out where you want the buttons and mark those spots with chalk or pins. Thread a long upholstery needle with at least 18 inches of twine. Push it into each spot and all the way through the back of the cushion. Make a small diagonal stitch, then pull the twine toward the front and loop it through a shank-back upholstery button. Push the needle through the back of the cushion once again, tie off the twine, and trim the excess.

In addition to protecting your sofa from spills, slipcovers let you switch up the look of your space.



### Apply Nailhead Trim

Nailhead trim can add a sophisticated touch to a contemporary piece. Stick on a dotted line of painter's tape where you want the nails—along the base of the sofa, say. Use a spacer (like Dritz Home Space & Set Tool, \$12; [joann.com](http://joann.com)) to ensure the spacing is even. With a rubber mallet or a hammer wrapped in a towel, tap each upholstery nail about halfway into the fabric. Check that the nails are straight, then remove the tape and tap them all the way in.

 If there's just no saving your sofa, shopping for a new one is your next step. See our guide for picking the right piece at [realsimple.com/newcouch](http://realsimple.com/newcouch).



### Paint a Sofa

For leather sofas, Pflug recommends this technique, noting that leather paint is very forgiving and durable: Thoroughly clean the surface with Angelus Leather Preparer & Deglazer (\$4 for 5 oz.; [angelusdirect.com](http://angelusdirect.com)). Apply at least three thin coats of acrylic leather paint (\$25 per quart; [angelusdirect.com](http://angelusdirect.com)) with a one- to two-inch soft-bristle brush. Let each coat dry for at least 45 minutes before adding the next layer. When done, seal with an acrylic finisher (\$18 per quart; [angelusdirect.com](http://angelusdirect.com)) and let it dry for at least 24 hours.

If you have a fabric sofa, you can update the piping with an accent color. Line the piping with painter's tape, dilute chalk paint with water until it's somewhat transparent, and carefully paint with a fine detail brush. Remove the tape and dry the paint with a blow-dryer on low heat.