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Rags to Riches

Raid your overstuffed linen closet to transform neglected treasures into **instant decorating upgrades**

THE TEA-STAINED NAPKIN and that coverlet whose pom-poms lost the cat fight are badges of a well-broken-in home. And whether it's because your beloved Aunt Clara gave them to you or because seeing things go to waste makes you crazy, you can't bear to part with them. So there they sit among all the other never-used bits in the linen closet, taking up space. But with not much more than a pair of scissors, a staple gun, and a little imagination, you can wring a second life out of old linens by putting them to new uses. The following 10 projects—from re-covering a dining-room chair with a once loved tablecloth to converting a beach towel into a shower curtain—are fuss-free, add stylish touches to your home, and keep your old favorites out of the rag bin a little while longer.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID PRINCE

“England is pretty... babies are pretty... some table linen can be very pretty.”

John Gielgud as Lord Raglan in *The Charge of the Light Brigade*





Smock

Your colorful pillowcase is mysteriously missing its mate. Instead of tossing it, turn it into a colorful smock to protect your kids' clothes from messy arts-and-crafts projects.

WHAT YOU NEED: A pillowcase, two 16-inch pieces of ribbon, scissors, a pencil, and a ruler.

WHAT YOU DO:

1. For the neck hole, cut a shallow scoop (about 10 inches long and 2 inches deep at its center) from the middle of the closed top edge of the pillowcase. Make sure your child's head fits through the hole, and adjust if necessary.
2. For the armholes, cut another shallow scoop (about 5½ inches long and ½ inch deep at its center) from each long edge of the pillowcase, starting an inch or so below the top edge (see detail).
3. Thread a piece of ribbon into each armhole and out the neck. Tie bows, gathering the fabric a bit. More than a decorative touch, the ribbons will help keep the smock from slipping off your child's shoulders.

ALSO WORKS WITH: Two bath towels. Just add a few simple sewing steps, or use the button technique from the apron project.

ALICE BLUE QUILT (Q122B)



Couch Slipcover

You could buy an ill-fitting, generic slipcover for your sofa. Or you could enlist a coverlet you actually like, but perhaps no longer use, to hide a stained or torn couch, upgrade a dull one, or just change the mood of the room.

WHAT YOU NEED: A coverlet (a king-size one works best for a standard seven-foot sofa), a wooden spoon, and six large safety pins.

WHAT YOU DO:

1. Center the coverlet on the sofa, leaving at least three inches of fabric puddling on the floor in front to allow for tucking.
2. Use the spoon to smooth and tuck the coverlet between the cushions. The deeper you tuck, the less likely it is to come undone when you sit on it.
3. For a standard roll arm, fold back the excess material at the front edges of the sofa and pin it underneath so the pins are hidden (see detail).

ALSO WORKS WITH: Sheets and blankets for a quick, in-a-pinch cover-up of stains or pet hair.

tip Bedding with decorative edges adds a finished look to a makeshift slipcover. Fringed, scalloped, and embroidered coverlets work especially well.