

# Old home, new life



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## THE DESIGN FEED

I love working with older homes — celebrating vintage character as part of a new design truly brings the best of both worlds.

Whether you've got an older home yourself or just want some old-world charm, read on for tips on how to meld a sense of the past with your home for now and the future.

### Smooth imperfections

Older homes (and honestly, even brand new construction) will always have a few natural imperfections, but these flaws can be minimized with a little colour-correction. By using one colour for walls, trim, and the ceiling, you deemphasize the places where surfaces meet, which distracts from any crooked lines.

Matte paint, besides being a sleek contemporary choice, further reduces wall imperfections, as any gloss will highlight nicks or warps in the wall. Stay matte, and you stay crisp while preserving the original subtle patina.

Get the look: I love Ben-

jamin Moore's OC-23 Classic Gray, which brings a perfect hint of warm depth (making it one of my standby hues). For a faintly cool near-white, also try 2124-70 Distant Grey — both give a stately air without being stuffy.

### Feature moulding

Got beautiful original mouldings? Make them a feature by giving them a subtle highlight. Use the same paint colour as the walls but in a slightly glossier finish, to give mouldings a subtle sheen. (i.e. washable matte for walls and satin for trim).

Then, leave them uncovered! Use in-window shades, and the trim will be seen even when the sun is not. For other options, use a curtain rod so wide the draperies can open full width to expose the trim, or if sunlight isn't an issue, use no treatment at all.

Get the look: Build up plain crown moulding by simply adding a strip of half-round one or two inches below the bottom edge and painting it

(and the space between) to match, for the illusion of very deep moulding. You can even add quarter-round where the plain moulding meets the ceiling for extra curvaceousness.

### Upgrade instead

Rather than replacing everything that sticks out as 'odd' or 'a problem,' maintain the character of your home by integrating these quirks into the new design.

In this project for example, I filled the odd pass-through between the foyer and the sitting area with a decorative grate, rather than closing it in to create a solid plain wall. Awkward niches can also be filled with antiqued mirror, or become an inventive gallery space for family photos.

Get the Look: Here's a great general tip for dealing with older wood floors (if aren't as lucky with yours as this client was). By staining a floor a very dark espresso shade, you can deemphasize the pattern of an unwanted parquet, contemporizing the finish while still maintaining the vintage wood texture.

### Mix old and new

If you let everything about a new space look old, you can feel disconnected from it personally — but the opposite is also true.

Make sure to include some furnishings or accents that feel period appropriate (with some traditional ornate flair), some true heirlooms or prized possessions, and some contemporary elements for a sense of 'now.' Whether you lean more toward historic or modern is up to you.

Get the Look: In this project, I mixed a masculine mid-century desk chair, classic Eames walnut stools, and an airy retro-style globe pendant, all with the gorgeous existing wood floors and mouldings, and a substantial desk with old-world appeal. When in a doubt, a midcentury bent-metal chair and wood desk is always a winning combination.

— Got an old-house success story to share? Tweet or Instagram me at @yanicsimard! For more inspiration for homes old and new, visit my Toronto Interior Design Group at [tidg.ca/interiors](http://tidg.ca/interiors).



Turn these original mouldings into a feature highlight by using the same paint colour as the walls but in a slightly glossier finish.



A mid-century chair is combined with classic walnut stools and a substantial desk with old-world appeal.

### QUICK BITES

1. Smooth imperfections with an all-over colour (like Benjamin Moore's Distant Gray, a new fav).
2. Emphasize mouldings by using a satin paint finish (to subtly contrast matte walls)
3. Leave window mouldings uncovered by applying an in-window shade or wide-set drapery.
4. Work with quirks, and update while preserving old floors with a deep espresso finish.
5. Mix old and new, like vintage and midcentury modern, to tell your own story.