12 Ways To Find FURNITURE To Refinish

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Welcome!

Today, I'd like to speak to the *decorator* in you. This is the the part of you that creates a cozy home for yourself and your family. It's the part of you that shops for the furnishings and home décor items, chooses colors, styles, and patterns, and ensures each room functions well for your family.

Many of you may say that you are not “decorators”; but no matter how experienced or educated you are in this area, if you have a home, there's a decorator in you.

At Entri Ways, I'm focussed on function, feeling, and, of course, budget decorating. While we don't all have the same style or budget, we all have the potential to create a home that functions well and is comfortable for our families.

The largest portion of our decorating budget is most likely taken up by the furniture. That's why today I'm sharing with you ways to find free and close-to-free (aka *extremely inexpensive*) furniture for your home.

When my children were young, our decorating budget was virtually non-existent. For almost 10 years, we had rooms that sat empty because I wouldn't spend money on such expensive pieces. There was just too much risk involved.

What if I didn't like that dresser in my own home as much as I liked it in the designer's setting on the furniture showroom floor? What if that wood doesn't complement the other wood pieces in the room? What if that shade of blue isn't quite right? There was always the “what if” risk.

After 10 years, I figured out a way to try different pieces of furniture in my home, without spending a lot of money and in most cases, just pennies. It was at that time that I began refinishing furniture.

You can see on EntriWays.com all of the ways I refinish furniture and the many different colors, styles, and finishes. I learned how to procure furniture for free and close-to-free. Since little or no money was spent on the actual furniture, I didn't mind experimenting with colors and styles and then trying them in my rooms. If I didn't like them, I simply sold them.

The best part was, though, that every piece of furniture I refinished for my own home, I ended up keeping. Do you know why? It's because I was able to customize the paint, stain, and hardware to fit my home and style.

In the end, I enjoyed the creative part of refinishing furniture so much, it turned into a business for me.

I'm often asked where I get so many furniture pieces to refinish. As my business grows and changes, so too has my answer to this question; but let me provide you with some tips for finding furniture to refinish.

Whether you plan to stain or paint, these search tips can help you find the right furniture pieces for your project.

YOUR HOME

Before you step outside, take a walk around your own home. Moving furniture you already own from room to room and giving it a new color and finish, is the easiest way to furnish your home for free.

Do you have any old dressers that can be painted and re-purposed? Turn a dresser into a sideboard for your dining room or a media cabinet for your living room. Use a bench as a coffee or side table. Gain more workspace when you use a dining table as a desk.

FAMILY & FRIENDS

Family and friends have been a huge resource for me. They know I refinish older pieces of furniture and pass them along to me. I've been so lucky to be the first person my family and friends think of when they're giving away a piece of furniture.

CURBSIDE

You know the saying… One man's trash is a another man's treasure. That couldn't be more true for furniture. Most people don't know how to refinish furniture, don't have the space or the time, or just can't be bothered to bring an old or scratched piece of furniture back to new again. So they place it on the curb. Once they place the furniture on the curb, it becomes public property and anyone can pick it up.

The best days to find curbside treasures are on trash days or the day before. People will often place furniture on the curb the day before trash pick-up in the

hope that someone will take it; but if no one does, then they know the trash truck (in most towns) will dispose of it. You can find the trash pick-up schedule on each town's website so you know which streets to drive down on which day.

Before you place any piece of furniture in your truck, be sure it's operational or at least know you can repair it, give it the sniff test (some smells cannot be removed from wood), and always open the drawers and cabinets to make sure there are not any critters inside.

If you decide to pick up a curbside find, use caution. Be sure you're not interfering with traffic or putting yourself in danger.

TRANSFER STATION

Also known as the town dump, many transfer stations feature an area where residents can set items that they think someone else may find useful. You'll find everything from furniture and home décor to bikes and sports equipment all for free.

THRIFT STORES

Thrift stores have become one of my favorite places to shop for used furniture. All items are donated which means the thrift store can keep the prices very low. The store's main concern is to sell quickly and turn their inventory over often, so

they’re often willing to negotiate on price too.
The furniture you find at these donation centers may be old and scratched, but in most cases the drawers all function well and there aren’t major repairs to be made.

When you visit a thrift store be sure to check the donation drop off area. Often times donations are dropped off so quickly they staff hasn't yet had a chance to bring it in side and price it. If you see something you like, you can usually make an offer, saving the employees the time and labor of having to handle it.

One thrift store I visit has a five dollar section outside at the back of the building. I'm not quite sure exactly how they determine which furniture pieces make it to the $5 section because I've found some amazing items here. I'm guessing it's ones they think are too scratched or dated to be useful – but take a look at the my furniture makeovers on EntriWays.com and you'll see how a few scratches should not deter you!

I encourage you to read my article titled Shop For Almost-Free By Thinking Differently, where I explained how I got four dining room chairs for basically free at a thrift store by using a little ingenuity.

Donation centers also have people that can help you load large furniture pieces into your truck. I’ve picked up some pretty large dressers and armoires off the curb, but it’s so much easier when someone can put it in the vehicle for you.

Also, remember to sign up on the store’s website. They often email out information about sales where you can get furniture at 60% off their already-low prices. It’s their way of turning their inventory over often.

CONSIGNMENT STORES

Unlike a thrift store where the owner gives up all rights to the furniture when they donate it, a consignment store acts as a selling location for the original owner, then the owner splits the profits with the store (usually a 50/50 split).

Consignment stores vary in range from high-end to those that will basically take anything functional. The higher-end consignment shops usually carry antiques in perfect and near-perfect condition. I don't shop the high-end stores for two reasons. First, because the price is more than I want to spend. Second, because true antiques are best left with their original finish on them. The only time I've painted an antique is when there is enough damage to the finish that repairing it is far too costly and beyond my scope.

Depending on your budget, the lower-end consignment stores can be a great option to find inexpensive furniture for your home. I've sent several of my own refinished furniture pieces to consignment stores and know for a fact they are priced at a fraction of retail.

YARD SALES

I actually shop yard sales for fun. I love driving around, seeing different neighborhoods, and talking with the homeowners. I often find fantastic pieces of furniture to sell by shopping yard sales.

The best yard sales to shop are those with a *For Sale* sign in the front yard. A *For Sale* sign usually means the homeowner is under time constraints to liquidate and just wants it gone.

If you do visit a yard sale you can kindly ask the homeowner if they have any furniture they're selling. Often times furniture is too heavy for them to move outside, but they're more than happy to let a prospective buyer look at it or may have a photo they can show you.

ESTATE SALES

Estate sales are similar to yard sales, but the homeowner or family of the original homeowner is looking to sell everything left in the house before the house is sold.

Often times the homeowners will hire companies who specialize in estate sales. The company comes into the home, sorts, organizes, and prices every item. If you're a seller in this situation and the thought of a sale is overwhelming to you, then hiring an estate sale company is a great option.

As a buyer, I prefer sales operated by the homeowners because the prices are usually lower; but either way, estate sales can be a great place to find furniture.

The best tip I have for shopping estate sales is to go to the sale at the end of the day, on the last day of the sale. You'll get the best price on any remaining furniture. I once got a 9-piece bedroom set for only $150. It was the most I've ever spent on used furniture, but knew I could flip it for almost 10 times the price paid.

ONLINE YARD SALE SITES

You can find an online yard sale on Facebook for just about every town in the country. God bless the volunteer administrators who set these up and run them. It's a lot of work! So if you shop here, please be courteous and follow the rules they've outlined. Each site is run independently, so the guidelines may vary by site.

To find an online yard sale site on Facebook, simply type your city/town name into the Facebook search bar along with the words "yard sale". Be sure you've reached the site for the correct town and state.

These groups are usually private so you have to ask to join. Once accepted, you can set up the site to send you notifications every time someone posts; but since there are hundreds of items posted every week, I would suggest you just visit the site directly and scan it. You can also enter keywords in the site's search box to find what you're looking for. For instance, "dresser" or "table".

FLEA MARKETS

Flea markets are large, pop-up sales, that feature anywhere from a few vendors to several hundred. I only shop flea markets occasionally, but do know you have to arrive when they first open at 5 or 6:00am to find the best pieces.

CRAIGSLIST

CraigsList is a great tool for both buyers and sellers. It's a classified ad site for the average person looking to sell anything – furniture, books, lawn equipment, lamps, etc. You name it and you can most likely find it for sale on CraigsList.

Of course, businesses are also allowed to post furniture for sale on CraigsList, so if you're looking for the real bargain priced furniture pieces or furniture you can refinish, it's the 'for sale by owner' listings you'll want to search first.

CraigsList allows you to set up alerts to receive an email if someone posts an item that includes your search terms. I have alerts set up with the name of my town and a few nearby towns plus the word "free" so I'm quickly notified by email if someone in my town is giving away a piece of furniture. In doing so, I've procured dining room tables, dressers, chairs, bed frames, and lots of other pieces for free.

If you buy/sell on CraigsList please be nice and be courteous. Most everyone is a regular person that values their time and should be treated with respect. If you are truly interested in an item on CraigsList, click the "Reply" button on the listing and send the seller a kind email. Include your name and even your cell phone. Use caution, but understand that CraigsList takes trust on the parts of both parties.

CraigsList sellers understand that this operates like a yard sale and there may be some negotiating of price so they typically work a little extra into their posted sale price; but please don't insult the seller by asking them to take 50% or more off the price.

If you set up a time to pick up the furniture, please stick to that time. If you cannot make it or if you changed your mind, let the seller know. Their time is valuable too.

If you do make arrangements to purchase an item off CraigsList, use caution. I won't go into those here. These days you can usually find a safety list on any town's police department website.

CONTRACTORS & REALTORS

Get to know your local contractors and realtors. Often when a contractor takes on a home to renovate as an investment or a realtor takes on a home to sell, there will be furniture left behind by the former home owner. The old furniture is in the way of them completing their job and they often just want it out and are happy to give it to you if you will haul it away.

HAPPY HUNTING!

These are the places I find furniture both for my own home and pieces to refinish and sell. Keep an open mind and open eyes everywhere you go. Some pieces I get for free and some I purchase, but I'm always grateful for the finds and to the people selling and giving them away.

Now that you know *how* to find furniture to refinish, the next steps are obtaining the right supplies and choosing the right paint for your furniture refinishing projects. These resources will help...

Click the images to get these resources

25+ Funiture Refinishing Supplies

Painting Furniture: **Choosing the right paint for your furniture refinishing project and techniques that result in a professional finish**