

How to get your home guest-ready

Reorganise the tea and coffee cupboard and get a new rug — the best ways to make your space welcoming again, by **Victoria Brzezinski**

Quick, get the fancy soap out and the aperitivi ready — house guests are coming! If you're feeling a little out of practice, you're not alone, but there's no need for the idea of entertaining to whip you up into a week-long panic. Here are our tips to be home guest ready in no time.

Step one: blitz the kitchen/dining/living areas. The imminent arrival (read: threat) of guests is motivation enough to cross the things off your list you never got around to doing in 2021. Dry-cleaning the sofa covers? Yes. Reordering the coffee and tea cupboard? Why not. Changing the filter in the cooker hood? Whatever works for you. From low-level decluttering to a full-on spring clean, a bit of home cleansing will get you back in a hosting mentality — but there's no need to go all-out. "No one is going to notice that you didn't get around to mopping the floor or plumping every cushion," says Lucy Breton, an interior designer based in London. "The best stays are the ones where you feel at home wherever you are."

Hooray for the return of food sharing and Noughties nibbles.



The Rebel 3 Seater Sofa in olive with brown legs, £1,299, snugsofa.com
ANDREW WHITTON

OTT tablescaping was 2021's top Instagram-inspired trend, but even a simple tablecloth will make it look as if you've pulled out all the stops. Try a striped no-iron-required linen tablecloth from JaujaLinen (£38.66, etsy.com) or a woodblock-printed cotton floral design from Svenskt Tenn (€76, svenskttenn.com). Matchy-matchy table settings are so pre-pandemic: adopt a laissez-faire attitude and freely mix your great-aunt's gravy boat with platters and bowls in all shades and patterns. Favourites include a wooden Ajuru platter, from £30 nkuku.com; a stylish serving bowl with handcrafted decorative edge detail (£100, conranshop.co.uk); and Anthropologie's burnt orange Old Havana platter (£68, anthropologie.com). You can

never have too many bowls: if storage space is tight consider this hand-painted stacking set from Our Place (£40 for four, fromourplace.co.uk).

Nice lighting and a new rug are the speediest decor fixes. Create ambience with some multi-level lighting: this opal-globe floor lamp is reduced from £99 to £69, lightsandlamps.com and you can expect delivery within five days. Splurge on a statement lampshade, such as the handmade wavy woven lampshade, a collaboration between Eleanor Cording-Booth (@aconsideredspace) and Alex John, of Munro and Kerr. Each lampshade is made by hand in London, available to ship in about two weeks (£222 including VAT, munroandkerr.co.uk). With

floor coverings, bigger is generally better. Zara Home's multicoloured wool rug would suit almost any space (£429.99 for a 160cm x 230cm rug, [zarahome.com](https://www.zarahome.com)), or for something super-practical, Weaver Green's range of machine-washable rugs are woven from recycled plastic yarn (180cm x 120cm Gooseberry Juno rug, £235, [weavergreen.com](https://www.weavergreen.com)).

If it's finally time to update the sagging sofa, you'll need to factor in the agony of 12-week waiting times. For a pre-owned statement piece, consider renting from [rehaus.co.uk](https://www.rehaus.co.uk), a new online platform for designer and vintage furniture available for next-day delivery. The collection includes brands such as Ligne Roset, B&B Italia and Mies van der Rohe. Customers can sell their furniture back through the platform once they're ready for a new look. You can also pick from a profusion of sofa-in-a-box companies for rapid dispatch: models from Plushy, Snug and Swyft can be easily assembled and transported up flights of stairs. Snug's three-seater Rebel sofa is available in three new shades: olive, blue steel and grey (£1,299, [snugsofa.com](https://www.snugsofa.com)).

Likewise, these days you can get a spare bedroom set up quicker than you can say crudités, thanks to the rise of online-only mattress-in-a-box companies. Eve's original hybrid mattress (reduced to £454 for a double, [evesleep.co.uk](https://www.evesleep.co.uk)) and Emma's original mattress



Freya two-seater sofa, £250, [homebase.co.uk](https://www.homebase.co.uk)



Four-piece outdoor furniture set, £1,250, [Rose & Grey](https://www.roseandgrey.com)

(reduced to £384.45 for a double, [emma-sleep.co.uk](https://www.emma-sleep.co.uk)) come stamped with the "Best Buy" accreditation from *Which?* magazine. Head to the Futon Company for Japanese-inspired bed frames with secret storage. Its Mirage double storage bed has a solid pine frame — reduced by £140 to £505, [futoncompany.co.uk](https://www.futoncompany.co.uk). No space for a bed? Invest in a sofa bed for the spare room instead — sales of Homebase's Freya soared 1,488 per cent last year. A two-seater costs £250 and is available in charcoal, grey or peacock [homebase.co.uk](https://www.homebase.co.uk) and looks inviting with an artfully

placed patterned throw, such as this recycled cotton design from Oliver Bonas (from £23, [oliverbonas.com](https://www.oliverbonas.com)).

Get ready for outdoor entertaining 2.0 — if you haven't got your spring/summer 2022 garden furniture already, get cracking. Rose & Grey launches a smart four-piece outdoor furniture set on February 15 (£1,250) or nab yourself a bargain four-piece bistro set from Habitat (£166.65, [argos.co.uk](https://www.argos.co.uk)).

Need to get rid of your guests? The best thing Katrina Burroughs, the *Times* interiors editor, bought for entertaining was an Apple HomePod speaker, "so that lunch guests can take it in turns choosing the music. We never knew our friends had such horrible taste in music, but we have achieved playlist democracy. We can signal the end of the evening by choosing Whitney, *I Will Always Love You*, or that terrible James Blunt song." ■