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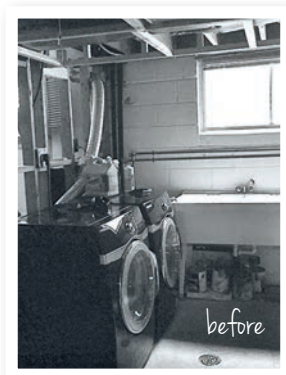
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**PROBLEM**

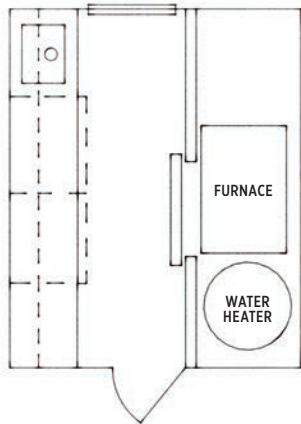
An unfinished, uninspiring laundry room

**SOLUTION**

Make the job a priority by accepting a challenge

**FLOOR PLAN**

**100**  
sq. ft.



# high *impact*

A dreary laundry room turns into a dreamy space in just six weeks.

TEXT LESLEY YOUNG | PHOTOGRAPHY ASHLEY CAPP



**ABOVE** The One Room Challenge was the perfect thing “to light a fire under our butts,” says homeowner and designer Sarah Walker of her basement laundry room reno. She rallied her handy husband, Graham, to do all the construction. “He’s the real star here,”

she adds. The work area’s varying counter heights create more rhythm and interest than a straight run would have; the brass accents along with the white oak help warm up the cool palette.

**DESIGN**, The Curated House by Sarah Walker, [thecuratedhouse.com](http://thecuratedhouse.com);

**CABINETY**, IKEA; **COUNTERTOPS**, Silystone; **BACKSPLASH & FLOOR TILES**, Creekside Tile; **WASHER, DRYER**, Samsung; custom **FLOATING SHELF**, The Curated House by Sarah Walker; **CABINETY HARDWARE**, Upper Canada Specialty Hardware; **BINS**, Toofifteen; **VASES**, Black Rooster Decor; **TOWELS, CANDLE**, rock **SOAPS**, Anthropologie.

Designer Sarah Walker found herself facing the same dilemma as the proverbial shoemaker with no shoes. She'd finished countless fabulous design projects for clients, while her own Oakville, Ont., basement laundry room sat dark and unfinished. "It was such a depressing space, nobody wanted to do the laundry," says Sarah with a laugh. What she needed was a deadline, and Sarah found the perfect one in the spring 2015 edition of the One Room Challenge, an online event where 20 designers have six weeks to complete a project. Design caution: Six weeks is an unrealistic timeline for any major renovation. "It was madcap," she says, pointing out she had to leverage all the tricks of the trade to get the space done in time.

**The planning process** To eliminate one of the most time-consuming tasks of the design process, Sarah finalized the floor plan and sourced her most important materials before Day 1 of the challenge. "The biggest layout problem was the furnace and water heater," she says. "They were the first things you saw when you walked in the room." She landed upon the ideal solution to strike a visual balance: a wall of white oak-veneered sliding doors to conceal the "guts" of the home on one side counterweighted by a work area on the other. Originally, she planned for a bank of cabinets above the work surface. "But with the sliding doors, I didn't want to close off the space completely." Instead, she opted for a chunky floating shelf in matching white oak.

**The design decisions** Sarah's design style is approachably sophisticated injected with high-contrast statements. Here, the visual pow comes from the handmade cement floor tiles. "They feel modern and traditional at the same time – I love them," she says. Black base cabinets ground the space, while the white oak of the sliding doors and floating shelf help balance the dramatic qualities of the floor and cabinetry.

**The result** "It sounds comical, but now when people come over, they ask to see the space. I feel like I could serve tea down there and my friends would be pretty happy," says Sarah.



SLIDING DOORS CONCEAL THE FURNACE AND WATER HEATER.

**ABOVE** "I went with a subtle subway tile for the backsplash so it wouldn't compete with the graphic patterned floor," says Sarah. Grey grout brings out the tiles' bevelled edges and complements the veining in the quartz countertops.

**SINK**, The Home Depot; **FAUCET**, Delta Faucet; **TRIM**, Metrie; **TERRARIUM** (filled with detergent), West Elm.

**LEFT** Sarah splurged on white oak for the sliding doors. "I waited six years to do this room, and I wanted to do it right," she says.

**SLIDING DOORS**, Metrie; **SLIDING DOOR HARDWARE**, Upper Canada Specialty Hardware.

FOR SOURCES, SEE OUR WORKBOOK