

How to Decorate and Furnish Your Home
91 Great Furnishing, Interior Design and Home Decorating Ideas

By Judith Brown

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1. Interior Design ideas

A room will appear larger if you paint an oversized piece of furniture the same color as the walls.

A small room can be made to look larger if you install mirrors on 1 wall to reflect the rest of the room.

To give a room a soft glow, light objects in a room instead of the whole room. For example, spotlight a piece of art or a bookcase.

Hang shiny, metallic blinds vertically or horizontally to help reflect summer sun attractively. This works especially well in south and west windows where you can't construct awnings.

Decorative shades can make an attractive alternative to drapes-and may be a lot cheaper.

You can make a curtain panel from a bed-sheet by knotting the top corners around a bamboo pole.

Your old removable-slat wooden blinds can be renovated. Spread the slats outdoors on newspaper and finish with high-gloss spray paint or brush-on enamel.

To make a quick floor covering for a beach house, stretch natural-colored painter's canvas from wall to wall, stapling it to the baseboards.

If you use the same fabric on 2 different chairs, it will tie the decor of the room together.

To add color to matchstick blinds, weave rows of colored ribbon through them.

Give a floor an exciting new look: Paint it a bright color or paint on a stencil design.

A screen of hanging plants can be a great substitute for curtains.

For an unusual window covering, attach wooden rings to a patchwork quilt and hang it from a wide, wooden rod. Don't do this, however, if the quilt is an antique that could fade or otherwise be damaged by exposure to sunlight.

Extra high-gloss vinyl flooring like that used on submarines and ships' decks makes fine flooring for lofts, darkrooms, and photo studios. You should be able to get it at an army surplus store.

If you want to make a large room seem smaller or cozier, choose a wallpaper with a large, bold pattern. However, don't choose a large pattern for a small room because it will make the available space seem crowded.

When selecting a wallpaper for a particular room, keep in mind the dominant colors already present in that room. One or more of those colors should be present in the wallpaper to tie the color scheme together.

Matchstick blinds can disguise a wall of hobby or utility shelves for a clean, unified look.

They also can be used to partition off a closet or dressing area where you would like a lighter look than a door provides.

In a beach house, use roll-down window blinds to make a door for a door-less room.

A mural-pattern wallpaper makes a small room appear larger.

No shelf space in your office? Hang slatted boxes for storage of scissors, envelopes, even a cassette recorder. Drape a shade-loving ivy in the topmost box.

If you have an Indian print bedspread that you don't use, hang it full-width across a window.

Open it diagonally across half the window and secure it with a tieback.

For a quick, easy, and inexpensive way to recover a chair, drape a twin-size sheet over the chair, and tie or pin the corners to fit.

Use mix-and-match wallpapers to simplify the problem of papering adjoining rooms without visual clashes.

A pretty or unusual blanket can substitute for a table cloth.

Mexican serapes and Indian bedspreads make colorful, inexpensive table cloths-great for picnics) too.

Fasten bright and colorful paper shopping bags to the wall for storage of art supplies and other lightweight items.

To make a high ceiling seem lower) paper it with a bold pattern. To make a low ceiling seem higher) paper it with a small print or a texture.

To brighten up the office) put pencils and pens in a flowerpot and use a music stand for a magazine rack.

You'll never have trouble tightening screws and bolts if you remember that) for most) right is tight and left is loose.

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2. Decorative Ideas

An easy way to give a room a facelift is to update hardware such as doorknobs) drawer pulls) and curtain rods.

Place shells in baskets on a low table or show them off in glass canisters.

Storing your needlework or mending in a pretty basket under a side table or in the foyer keeps it tidy and looks decorative) too.

A basketful of pinecones in front of the fireplace gives a room a feeling of friendliness.

In the fall, buy gourds at the supermarket. Use them for a month or so in an arrangement, then put them somewhere warm and dry for a while. The gourds become very light as they dry) and the colors mute beautifully with age.

Add a miniature hammock to a corner in a child's room to make a place for all his or her stuffed animals.

Keep your decorative baskets looking healthy by placing them away from dry heat.

A nonworking fireplace, primed and freshened with paint, makes a comfortable niche for a sewing machine table or an aquarium.

A stairway landing is the perfect place for an armoire. Line it with attractive fabric and fill it with linens, coats, or out-of-season clothes.

Display flowers in unusual vases-a crystal ice bucket, a fluted champagne glass, a bright coffee mug or jug. Flowers, in fact, look good in almost any container.

Turn your bathroom into a miniature gallery with pictures you don't have space for elsewhere-so long as they aren't works that can be damaged by the humidity that collects in a bathroom.

If you don't want to buy furniture, you can rent it at surprisingly reasonable rates. Furniture for rent includes everything from sofas and carpets to lamps and works of art.

A silver goblet is perfect for holding candies or cigarettes on a coffee table.

To keep drying flowers dust-free, cover them with plastic bags punched with air holes. When the flowers have dried, spray them with hair spray.

This will serve several purposes: The hair spray will give the flowers a clear matte finish, keep them from shedding, keep insects away, and protect them from moisture.

When drying flowers or vegetables, most have to be hung upside down in small bundles in a dark, dry place for a few weeks. Try hanging branches by strings of different lengths from coat hangers. This allows for good air Circulation.

Some flowers and foliage can be placed in a vase without water and dried upright. Among them are pussy willows, wild grasses, and grains and flowers with large composite heads and sturdy stalks-for example, Queen Anne's lace and cockscomb.

Layer seeds and nuts in attractive apothecary bottles.

A branch cut from any blossoming tree or bush makes an unusual centerpiece on a dining or coffee table.

Glue corn pads or pieces of felt to the rough bottoms of vases and art objects to keep them from scratching tables.

Replace a drab string cord or light-bulb chain with a piece of satin piping or silver cord.

Thread a bright ceramic bead at the end of the cord for a finishing touch.

Use leftover dining room wallpaper to make matching place mats. Paste the paper onto sturdy cardboard, trim the edges neatly, and coat each mat with a plastic spray.

A handy deodorizer for waste baskets: Place a sheet of fabric softener in the bottom of each.

You can make unusual centerpieces in no time by floating flowers in clear glass dessert dishes. Fill the dishes half-way with water, cut the stems from the flowers, and place them in the dishes.

Dime store bandannas make pretty, inexpensive pillow covers. Buy assorted colors for a striking effect. These bandannas also make wonderful table napkins-especially for a picnic or a barbecue.

Hot peppers threaded on long string make a beautiful kitchen decoration while drying. Garlic and onions also look attractive braided and hung on display.

Old, carved doorknobs, attached to each end of a dowel, make an attractive curtain rod.

Paint or stain the knobs to match your furniture.

A basket of Italian onions makes a striking centerpiece when serving an Italian dinner. Pomegranates are also beautiful in bowls.

A ceramic tile or tiles make a decorative hot pad for the table or kitchen counter.

Use old pantyhose to stuff pillows and toys.

There's no need to invest in wallpaper to give your walls new life. A super graphic on the wall can make a room exciting. Or, if you have artistic ability (or just ambition) design and paint your own mural.

An old kimono can be draped on a wall for an elegant splash of texture and color.

Any combination of fruits in a bowl can double as both centerpiece and dessert.

Solve a bicycle storage problem: A bicycle hanging on a wall becomes a piece of art as well as a means of transportation. A high-tech look for a teenager's room, perhaps?

An old dining table found at a flea market can make a great sofa-height coffee table. Just cut the legs to the height you need.

Change the look of an old Formica table by laminating the surface with colorful fabric.

If you're serving messy finger food-fried chicken or ribs, for instance- provide finger bowls: float lemon slices in small glass dishes so that guests can rinse their fingers. Since finger bowls are an old-fashioned elegance and seldom seen these days, be ready to enlighten anyone who assumes that you're serving a rather odd sort of cold lemon soup.

You can make cheap floor rugs by stenciling canvas with nontoxic acrylic paints.

Make an extra closet into a book nook for quiet reading. Remove the door, and install a wall lamp, shelves, and a comfortable chair.

Place an unwrapped bar of soap in a drawer or linen closet to give lingerie and linens a pleasant scent.

You can make inexpensive bookcases out of flue tiles or conduit pipes. The cubbyholes are perfect for storing wine.

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3. Beds and Bedding

When storing linens, it's best to roll them around cardboard tubes rather than fold them.

When outfitting a guest room that's used infrequently, economize by choosing a cheaper mattress. It won't have to withstand daily use.

When shopping for a mattress, be sure that the clerk offering you advice is employed by the store and not by any particular bed manufacturer.

A manufacturer's representative will have a vested interest in selling you his or her company's brand,

which might be less suited to your needs than a product by another manufacturer.

Sometimes you can silence squeaky bed springs with a coat of spray wax. If bed squeaks are caused by springs touching the frame, pad the frame with pieces of sponge.

If bed slats sometimes slide out of place on the frame, keep them from moving so easily by slipping wide rubber bands over the slat ends.

If your innerspring mattress is showing uneven wear, turn it over and around, end to end, once a month.

Hand wash quilts filled with cotton batting; machine washing is too harsh and will cause the batting to bunch.

Launder a patchwork quilt using the method recommended for the most delicate fabric in the quilt.

When you purchase a new bedspread consider buying a larger size than you need and then cutting the excess to make a matching headboard.

To give a guest room a clean and inviting scent, place an unwrapped bar of sweet-smelling soap under each bed pillow.

When buying an innerspring mattress, make sure it has thick, strong wire along its borders and a machine-stitched tape covering its outside edges.

Before purchasing a double mattress, lie down on it with your partner to be sure it gives both of you the desired support side by side and at your heads, shoulders, and hips. If one person rolls over, the mattress definitely shouldn't sway. If it does, try another mattress.

Because handles are seldom included on mattresses today keep the mattress as rigid as possible when you turn it from head to toe or from side to side.

Make sure any mattress you buy is warranted against defects in workmanship and details for 10 to 15 years. Some guarantees aren't valid if the mattress isn't positioned on a frame that conforms to the manufacturer's specifications.

An adjustable ironing board placed beside a bed makes a perfect bed table for someone who's ill and confined to bed.

Bed manufacturers don't share a common system for rating mattress firmness. You'll have to judge each mattress by testing it, not by relying on a "soft," "medium," or "firm" tag.

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