

The Complete Decorating Handbook

By: Angie Bolognese



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Introduction

Home is a place you should feel 100% comfortable and able to be yourself. You should be able to look around at things you love, things you've created, and memories made that all bring joy. It's easy to make a list of the things we love and assume they simply won't fit together, but I'm here to tell you otherwise and to teach you how. Your home shouldn't feel like a designer created each room from start to finish without any input from the family living there and the lifestyle that reflects their personality; it should reflect you and your family, in an organized, and well-balanced way. Although I go on to discuss many design "rules", it's important to remember that what makes sense to you doesn't have to make sense to others, and the rule breakers are always the ones that stand out the most. So, if you need a bit of guidance on the basics, and how to truly reflect your style while creating a beautiful and functional space, this eBook is for you. Following most chapters are also very helpful resources from apps to measure and plan your space, to places where we source our favorite products. It'll help you make informed decisions that simply make sense for YOU. Now who am I? I'm Angie Bolognese and I've been an interior designer for about 5 years. In the last year, my husband Keith and I launched a new business called TopComp in Scottsdale, Arizona. At TopComp, we make targeted updates to homes before listing them, sourcing out finishes that are current and up to today's buyers tastes. I lead the design team and absolutely love everything to do with interiors.



Via [Walmart](#)

Chapter 1: Defining Your Home Decorating Style

It may seem like an impossible task to put a label on what you love and the pieces you've chosen for your home. If you've thought about freshening up your space but not sure where to start without actually getting rid of everything you own and starting from scratch, the best way to start is by looking around the room you want to transform, and identify the pieces you already own that you love and hate. Decide what it is that you love about that accent chair, is it the color? Fabric? Rolled arms? And what is it that you hate about that coffee table? Does it just feel dated? Does it not go with anything else that you own? Write down a few characteristics about each of these pieces that you have strong feelings towards and keep this handy.



Via [Décor Hit](#)

A modern and minimalist Scandinavian living room with minimal accessories and a muted color scheme.

The next step is to determine how you'll be using the space and how you want it to feel. Is it a sitting room that will only be used in formal settings? An office that you'll use daily as you work from home? Do you want to feel relaxed, energized, or inspired? If you don't already have a Pinterest account, please create one as soon as possible! This

handy tool will be your best friend and worst enemy (since it will consume all your time in a good way). Create an inspiration board on Pinterest of your favorite living rooms, bedrooms, office, or whatever other room you want to start with. Take a week or two to do this, and have anyone else whose input matters do the same so you can both have a say in the matter.

After a couple weeks of gathering information, go back through these photos and try to determine why it is that you saved it. Was it just the chair you liked? The texture of the pillows? Remove anything that doesn't speak to you the second and third time you scroll through these photos. With the ones that are left, determine what they have in common – are they all modern with straight lines, clean surfaces, and minimal décor? Are you drawn to geometric patterns or mostly neutral colors? How does this common theme make you feel? If it's inspired and you're using this method to design your home office, then we are on the right track. But if you just see something as pretty and it doesn't have the effect you want for the space, move on.

I'm a strong believer in also looking at your taste in clothing; is your closet full of neutral basics? Or florals and bright colors? The fashion industry and interior design industry truly run parallel as you can see trends crossing over from one side to the other. For example, this year we're seeing lots of layered patterns and bold colors in both fashion and interiors. Both avenues can be used to express your personal style and what speaks to you.



Via [Desire To Inspire](#)

A modern yet coastal living room shown above stays true to the clean lines, crisp white color, but adds some natural elements such as the wood framing of the accent chairs and greenery to add to the coastal color scheme.

By taking the time to complete the steps of defining your personal style, it'll save you a lot of time and money later on – making it easier to determine if you just think something is pretty or if it will fit into your home and style well. A common mistake that is often

made by first timers is trying to fit into a single style box and not explore anything beyond that. You actually CAN mix modern and traditional, and mid-century and industrial; sticking to only one definition of your style can make your space appear impersonal and stale. It's always the unique, unconventional, never before seen, spaces that draw the biggest crowds.

Let's now take the time to define each of the interior design styles so that you can determine where your taste lies and where you'll be shopping.

Classic or Traditional Style: curves and tufting, warm neutrals, dark wood tones, muted florals and colors, symmetrical design



Via [Clari Decor](#)

Taupe, brown, warm off-white walls, rustic light fixture, the symmetry, and natural wood all add to the traditional style of this room.

Modern: minimal textures, asymmetrical, reflective and hard surfaces, clean lines, minimal accessories



Via [Etsy](#)

The abstract art, geometric design of the light fixture, clean straight lines of the sofa, glass surface of the coffee table, and lack of “warmth” is all contributing to the modern design of the room.

Rustic or Industrial: a mix of textures (wood, stone, brick), exposed piping, brick walls, and wooden support beams, repurposed pieces



Via [Houzz How](#)

Distressed wood coffee table, iron railing, exposed brick and beams, and the warehouse pendant lighting are all in line with a rustic and industrial space.

My style for example, I describe as modern farmhouse: I love clean lines, soft textures, natural elements, but avoid warm tones, rolled arms, and extreme symmetry. Are you noticing any elements from the groups listed above that you're drawn to? Which one dominates and which is a secondary? This is how you'll be picking pieces for your home by using the 80/20 rule of mixing your dominant (80% of the stuff) and secondary (20%) style. Now, go around your home, and anything that doesn't fit into this style that you've determined is yours, must go. Once you've cleared out what no longer serves you, you can decide what it is that needs to fill the gaps and get to work.



Via [TopComp](#)

A glimpse of our mixed style living room (and Dwight & Marshall) – The RH Cloud sofa is the softest ever, in a white Belgian linen with straight edges feels much more modern, while the Ralph Lauren leather club chairs and trunks (that I had painted in navy) are on the more traditional side with curves, worn leather, tufting, and gold nail heads.

A couple basic rules to live by when blending styles and creating balance is that visual weight needs to be distributed evenly: do you have an oversized couch on one end of the room and two small rattan chairs on the other? The room will feel totally lop sided if this is the case. Another important thing to remember is that everything should have a mate – if you're adding three modern glass vases in one corner of the room, tie it into the space by adding a glass bowl to the coffee table. And remember – distribute style throughout, don't group all the modern pieces in only one area. This same rule goes for color, if you want to add a pop of color, a single pillow is not the way to do it. Also add the same color in another place like a tray or plant to balance it out and not seem out of place.

Now that you've got a clear idea of your personal style, next we'll discuss how to make it work in your space, mistakes to avoid, and so much more before you start spending money and realize you've purchased pieces that are way too large for your room, or worse.

Chapter 2: Biggest Interior Design Mistakes to Avoid

As an interior designer, it's easy to walk into a space and spot something out of place, inappropriately sized, or a room that's off balance. For those without the professional training, it may not be as easy right off the bat, but here's a few tricks of the trade and things to look for if your space seems a little off and you can't quite tell why. This short list will also help you avoid these mistakes if you're starting to decorate a new space, and hopefully it'll save you a little time and a lot of money along the way.

1. Hanging art too high.

3

Art Hanging Mistakes You Might Be Making



PureWow

Via [Pure Wow](#)

This is probably the most common and toughest mistake to spot especially in your own space. There are a few general rules to follow when hanging art in any space, whether it's standing alone or above a piece of furniture or mantel.

Rule 1: If a piece is the only thing on a bare wall, or above furniture that is less than 32" in height, the CENTER of the piece should hang around 58-62" from the floor; a gallery wall is treated as one collective piece – so center of gallery should be at the same height.

Rule 2: Hanging extra-large pieces on a bare wall, (over 48"), the center should be around 48-56" from the ground. This is a rule that you can bend, however, because depending on the shape of the piece, and the size of the wall it's going on, you may choose to adjust that number. When in doubt, either cut brown paper (or whatever you have lying around) into the same size and tape it up, see how it looks, adjust, take pictures, and compare, or tape an outline of the size with painter's tape to get a feel for it before making a hole.

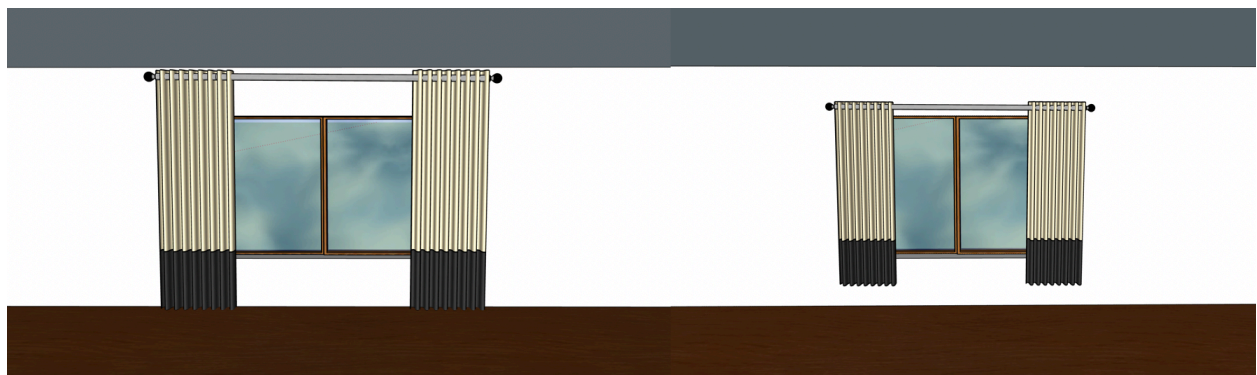
Rule 3: Art hanging above a sofa or a headboard should be in the range of 5-12" above said furniture. I use this as a rough guideline because that's a pretty broad range and can completely change the look of your space. For example, if you have high ceiling and a low back sofa, I'd go closer to 12", as not to cause a disconnect between the two pieces, but also not to allow too much empty space above. While if it's a high headboard, I'll stay right around 5" so as not to kink your neck every time you look at the photos.

Rule 4: Hanging art above a mantel is pretty basic – 3-6" from the mantel to the bottom of the piece – the taller the mantel, the less space to leave.

Rule 5: Art or mirrors above any other furniture that is taller than 32" should be hung 3-8" above the "anchor" or furniture beneath it.

2. Curtains that don't go all the way to the floor, or rods that aren't hung high enough.

Do & Don't



Via [TopComp](#)

Rule 1: The general rule for hanging a curtain rod is to hang it 2/3 of the way up in the distance between the window and the ceiling, rather than the common misconception of hanging it directly above the window. This will draw the eye up, making your ceilings appear higher, and the room appear larger.

Rule 2: Another basic rule for hanging the rod is to extend it out 10-12" on either side of the window. This frames the window nicely without covering up any light coming in. Be sure to measure before purchasing a rod to ensure it'll extend this far.

Rule 3: The curtains themselves should just touch the floor for most spaces, although there are some exceptions to this rule with some very lavishly grand spaces that's curtains "puddle" on the floor. This works best in rooms with very high ceilings since it brings the eye and the weight of the room down.

3. Everything matches.



Via [Home Depot](#)

Nothing makes us cringe quite as much as seeing a three-piece living room set that all matches. Why these sets were created to begin with is beyond me. Although pairing a few items helps balance a space, if you want to display your style and personality, avoid having everything match. In a traditional space, having a pair of matching chairs, table lamps, and more symmetry in the room than not is totally okay, but avoid going too far beyond that. In a more modern space, asymmetrical rooms are preferred, and minimal matching will look best. Grouping similar candle holders or vases is still very much okay. The rule of "everything should have a mate" from the last chapter still applies. But remember, a mate is not a twin!

4. Too small rugs.

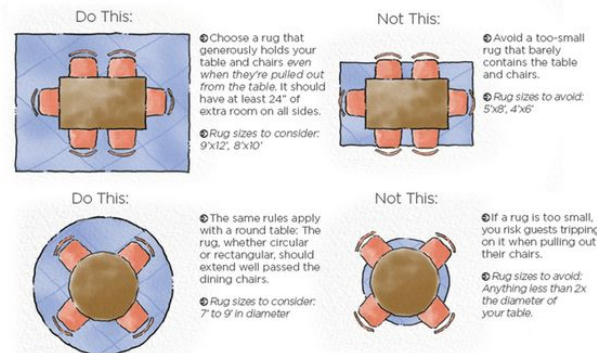
Nothing will make your space look smaller than a rug that doesn't fit the room properly. This is an easy rule to follow and very difficult to mess up once you've seen how it looks when it's an appropriate size. So, the minimum sizing for a rug in a living room is for it to fit under the front feet of all the furniture grouped in this room. Rugs are a powerful way to define and separate spaces without walls. In a dining room, you should be able to pull out all chairs around a table and they're still on the rug, this measures roughly 24". The uncovered flooring should still be visible around the rug, at least 12" so the rug doesn't appear to take up the whole room and look like wall to wall carpet. In a bedroom, the rug should fit under the majority of the bed (leaving the nightstands off the rug), and extend 24-36" on either side, depending on the size of the room and flooring left over, as well as at the foot of the bed. If you have a bench or seating at the foot, ensure the rug still extends a couple feet past any other furniture on the rug. (Example: for a queen bed with a bench at the foot, an 8 x 10 rug will be a great size)

the Dos + Don'ts of
Rug Size & Placement

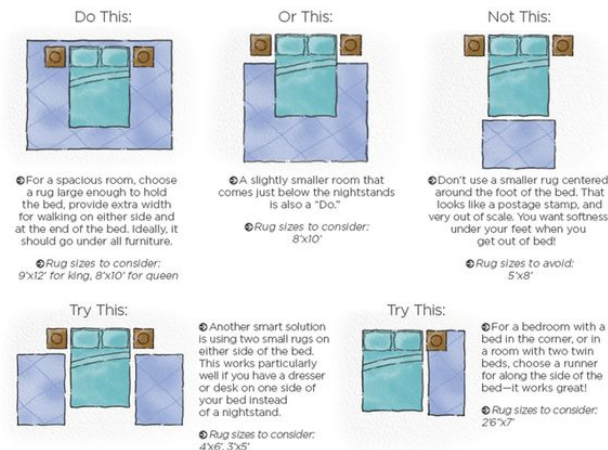
LIVING ROOM



DINING ROOM



BEDROOM



Via [Apartment Therapy](#)

5. Not planning for storage.

No matter which room in the house, there'll be items that you'll want to tuck away most of the time, or when guests come over. Planning for appropriate storage in each room is incredibly important. If you're working with a small space, I like using functional pieces that double as storage, such as a coffee table trunk for extra pillows and throw

blankets. In a bedroom, you'll have to plan for a place to put extra bedding, and sliding it under the bed doesn't always look great unless you get the narrow storage boxes. In an entry, you'll need an area for mail, keys, and anything you pick up or put down at the front door. I like having a console table with a shelf for these items, or if you're like me and need even more storage at the front door, I have an entry bench that holds a whole bunch of stuff I don't want on display.



Via [Culture South West](#)

6. Inappropriately sized light fixtures.

Lighting is like the jewelry of the room, so let it stand out! It can sometimes be a tough item to choose for your space if you're not sure where to start or how to decide what will look good. Style can be determined by what you've done with the rest of the room, but size is a rule to follow with any style.

Rule 1: Dining room. First, the correct height to hang a chandelier above a dining table is about 30-34". If your ceilings are quite low, stay on the lower hanging end, if your ceilings are higher, hang your chandelier a bit higher. The size of the light fixture depends on the size of the room mainly and can be figured out with a very simple math problem. Add the length and the width of the room (measured in feet), and switch (don't convert) that number to inches to get the diameter you should aim for in your fixture.

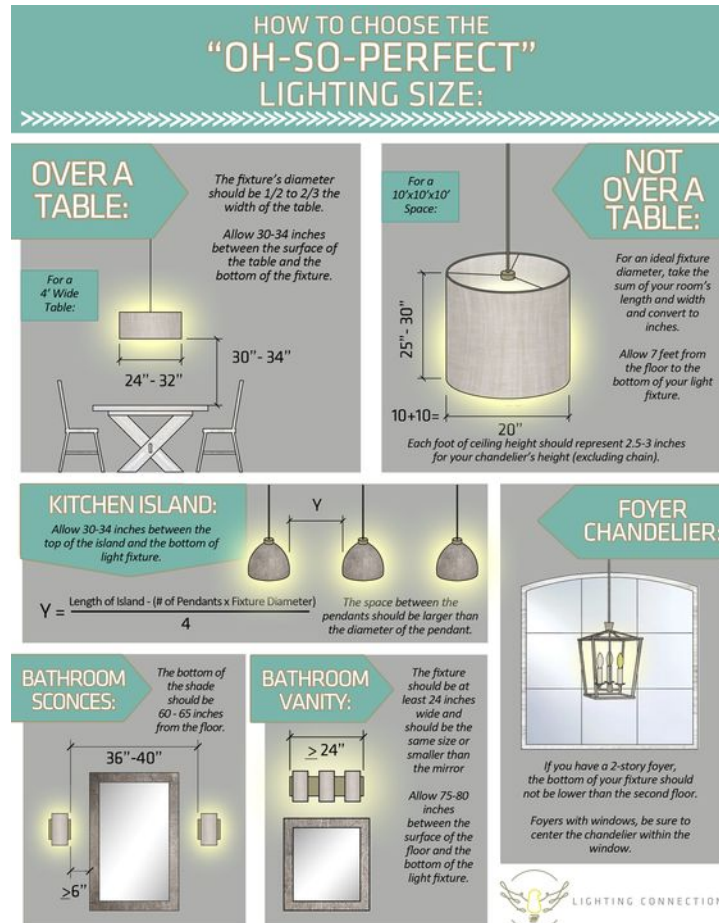
Rule 2: Island pendants. As the rule goes with the dining room, height is more based on ceiling height here as well, but the most common window to hang pendants above an

island is 30-36", and about 12-18" apart, depending on their size. If the pendants are larger, hang them a bit further apart, smaller, closer together so they still appear to be "grouped".

Rule 3: Entry chandelier. The entry is another area where it may be difficult to know at a glance how big, small, high or low a chandelier should hang, but it's also an easy formula. The diameter can be determined using the same formula as the dining room, length plus width in feet of the space, (and if the ceilings are vaulted, add the height of the ceiling to the formula), turn into inches, and ta-da, you're done! The average height for most rooms with typical 9-10' ceilings is that the bottom of the chandelier should be 7' from the ground. If you have really high ceilings, you could go to about 8' from the ground. Just remember to always hire a professional for anything that involves electricity.

Rule 4: Living room. This room can be a bit different for everyone, so let's first discuss WHERE the light should hang. Just because there's a canopy over a hole the builder installed in the dead center of the room, does not necessarily mean that's where your light should go. The general rule is that it should be dead center to the focal point of the room, typically a fireplace, accent wall, or over the coffee table. It's not hard to move that hole, and you'll be so glad you did. Use our same diameter formula to determine the size you want. The height here is the same as the entry, about 7' off the ground to bottom of the chandelier, but you can lift it a little higher if you have really high ceilings.

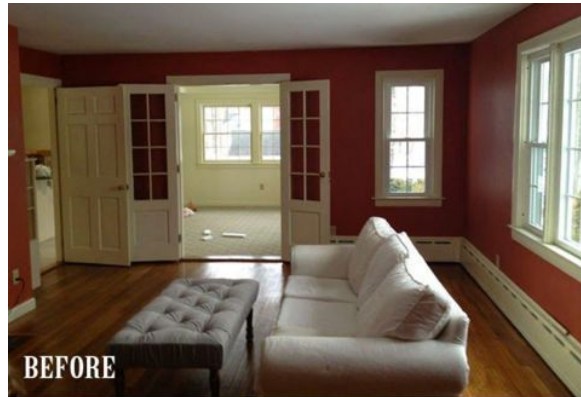
Rule 5: Bedrooms. I'll avoid repeating myself by just telling you to reference the living room. Light should again be centered to the focal point, in this situation it's the bed, and the diameter rule and height is also the same.



Via [Lighting Connection](http://LightingConnection.com)

7. Furniture is not to scale.

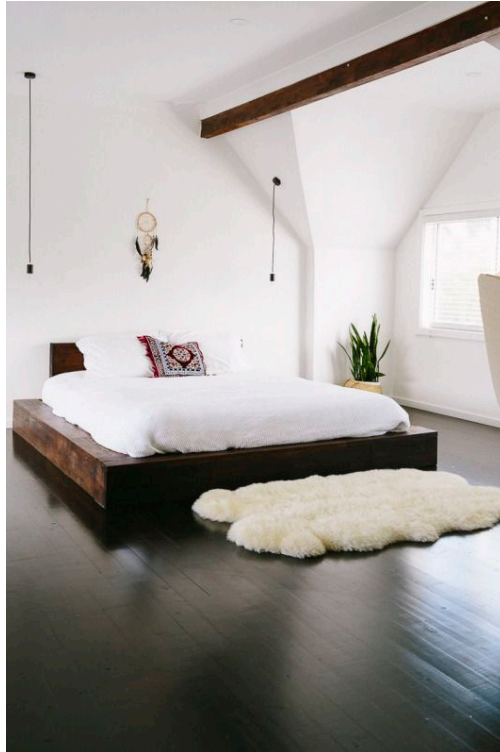
Have you ever walked into a room that felt way bigger than it actually was? Think the little studio set ups at Ikea that boast 345 sq. ft. total and if literally feels bigger than your 800 sq. ft. one-bedroom apartment. This is basically an optical illusion that's fairly easy to achieve. Reference Chapter 4 for more details on space planning, but the importance of measuring, drafting a plan, and choosing pieces that are perhaps lifted off the floor for the illusion of a larger room, or oversized sectionals that sit flat to the floor to create some weight in an otherwise emptier large room, should not be ignored.



Via [Prima](#)

8. Lack of accessories.

I'm not bashing minimalism! In most cases, less is definitely more especially because too many accessories can easily make a space look cluttered. But, let's consider a model home and how stale and impersonal they appear by trying to appeal to the majority. They simply lack personality and those unique touches that speak to you and reflect your style, as well as add memories and feelings to the room. Think your favorite designers as coffee table books, photos of the dogs you've had over the years, that set of handmade bowls you bought on your trip to South America.



Via [Stylecaster](#)

9. Pointing all furniture to the TV.

I am currently semi-guilty of this – my living room doesn't have the space to add extra seating, I don't have a fireplace or another focal point, but because we are just renting, I'm willing to overlook this mistake that usually makes me cringe. Whenever possible, choose a focal point in the room, whether it's a statement chandelier, a perfectly styled coffee table, or a piece of art that's instantly noticeable when you walk in. The TV is not décor that balances your room, and it certainly shouldn't be the first thing you look at since it has literally no visual interest especially when turned off. If you absolutely need the TV to sit in the middle and have all your pieces point towards it, consider looking into options for a "hidden" TV. There are ways to flip it into a framed mirror, or piece of art that you love so it's not just a black screen when turned off. Or you can also treat the TV as a piece in a gallery wall by decorating the wall around it, treating the gallery as the focal point. See below for a couple examples of how you can solve this problem in your own home.



Via [Driven by Decor](#)



Via [A House Full of Sunshine](#)

10. Pushing all your furniture up against the walls.

This is a common mistake when you don't consider space planning before purchasing pieces to ensure they'll fit nicely in your space. When everything is up against the walls, it feels impersonal and disconnected. Pulling your sofa even just a few inches away from the wall will actually make the space appear larger by creating more than one dimension.



Via [Cozy Little House](#)

11. **No contrast in color, texture, or style.**

Lack of contrast reads lack of interest! It's just that simple. If everything looks the same, blends together, and matches, exactly what are we supposed to look at or like about this room? Why not add some of your personality to it? I'm a big lover of neutrals and don't care for many large patterns, so I create contrast by mixing modern and traditional pieces, mixing textures like Belgian linen and worn leather, and other surfaces like upholstered trunks, a wooden bench with a sheepskin across the top. I also like to mix up the fabric and style of my pillows and throw blankets because they are the easiest to switch up when you get sick of them.



Via [Instagram](#)

Although the room above is not very colorful, it certainly doesn't lack interest due to the combination of several textures, patterns, and use of height within the space.

12. No greenery.

Have you ever looked at a room and saw a huge potted plant that just gives it life instantly and how it would look off without the greenery? That's what you should think of in literally every room in your home. Just add some life. Even if you're like me and can't keep anything alive, faux plants have been getting better and better and looking less like the shiny silk plants from the 70's. So, although many designers insist this is a major faux-pas, I strongly believe that a decent quality fake plant is ALWAYS better than no plant. Even in the bathroom!



Via [Instagram](#)

This corner would sure be a bore without that oversized plant!

13. Scattered accessories. (lack of grouping)

Think your grand-mother's collection of crystal creatures scattered along as many armoires as were in the house – it lacked focus, you didn't know where you should look, and they all start to look the same. The trick to collections, or lots of small accessories is to group them together, whether they're displayed on one or more shelves in the same area, or all grouped on a tray, it'll feel a lot more organized and focused.



Via [Jamali Garden](#)

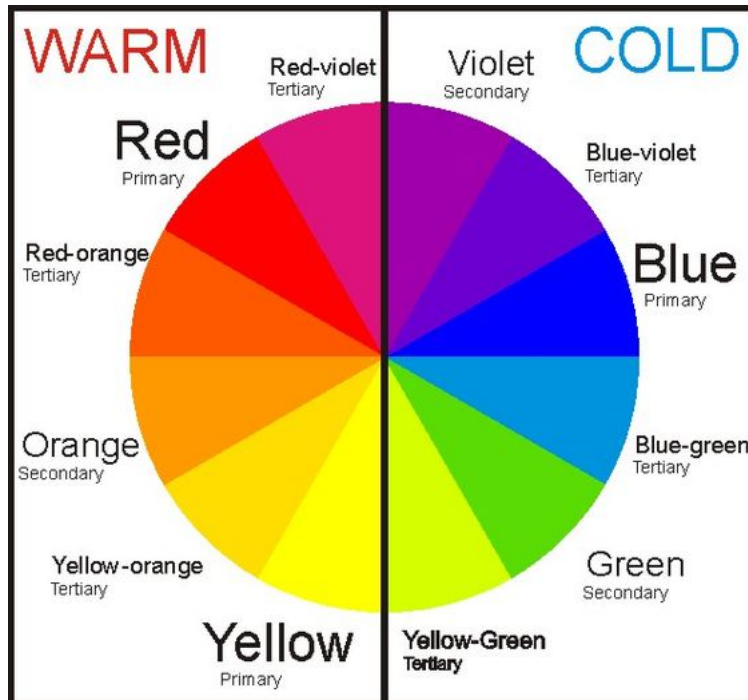
Chapter 3: Incorporating Color: What Goes and What Clashes?

This part seems to be one of the most challenging amongst our clients, but it doesn't have to be with this little cheat sheet we've created. We've got you covered on everything from the psychology behind each color, how to create a palette that doesn't clash, and of course even our favorite apps for color including painting a room, professional color palettes, and virtually testing pieces in your space.

First thing to be done when choosing colors to incorporate is deciding just how many colors you'll use throughout the entire home. I generally recommend no more than four otherwise it can get a little chaotic feeling. Of course, there are many exceptions to this rule, but unless you have a serious design eye, it can be a bit more challenging. The next step would be to choose just how bold or subtle you'd like the colors to appear in your space – are you planning for a bright blue sofa that's the focal point of the room? If that's the case, perhaps just using different shades of that blue and some patterns in that space would be sufficient without being overwhelming.

If you're still not sure which colors to commit to, check back to your Pinterest inspiration board and see which colors appear and reappear throughout the photos you're drawn to. Or perhaps you'll notice that you're not drawn to colors at all and that the majority of the photos you've saved are mainly neutral palettes. If that's the case (much like myself), there's an easy way to still add visual interest to your home. Some of my favorite ways to do this are through neutral patterns and of course a lot of texture! If it still seems like it needs a little extra but you're not sure if you can really commit to a few colors for good, try only incorporating color in small pieces of décor that are easy to swap out with the seasons or whenever you get sick of them, such as accent pillows, candles, throw blankets, etc. And never, ever, forget to add greenery – it'll bring extreme life even to the most neutral of spaces.

The next thing we must discuss, which many people tend to overlook not knowing the importance, is how different colors make us feel. Yes, that's right, there's some pretty serious psychology behind the colors we use in our home, but even more so with colors used to market different products to us. We can have some fairly extreme physical reactions to certain colors. So, if you want your bedroom to be calm, don't add a red accent wall, for example.



Blue:

Pros: Intelligence, trust, tranquility, love, loyalty

Cons: Coldness, fear, masculinity

Where to use: bedroom

Green:

Pros: healing, freshness, money, growth

Cons: jealousy, guilt

Where to use: kitchen

Purple:

Pros: royalty, spirituality, ambition

Cons: moody, mystery

Where to use: home office

Turquoise:

Pros: healing, protection, sophisticated

Cons: feminine, envy

Where to use: walk in closet, bathroom

Red:

Pros: love, energy, power, passion

Cons: danger, anger

Where to use: front door, statement furniture

Pink:

Pros: happy, feminine, healthy, playful

Cons: immature, weak

Where to use: easy accent color in any space when used as a pastel pink; master bath

Yellow:

Pros: energy, sun, happy, creative

Cons: unstable, irresponsible

Where to use: anywhere you need creativity – kitchen, office, closet

Orange:

Pros: success, confidence, friendliness

Cons: sluggishness, ignorance

Where to use: a stimulating color like red, so use anywhere but the bedroom

Brown:

Pros: earthy, outdoors, natural

Cons: conservative, dogmatic

Where to use: natural pieces such as leather or wood finishes (mix with white, black, and color to avoid looking too monochromatic)

Gray:

Pros: security, solid, reliable

Cons: gloomy, conservative, sad

Where to use: can be used for large-scale pieces as a great neutral, but not to be over-used within one room

Black:

Pros: formal, dramatic, protection

Cons: mystery, death, evil

Where to use: literally anywhere – makes a dramatic impact in any space, especially when used in a dramatic way such as an accent wall, large bed frame, or powder room

White:

Pros: purity, clean, fresh

Cons: sterile, emptiness, isolation

Where to use: acts as a clean canvas, use anywhere you want to spark creativity, or create a light and airy feel such as a bedroom

I'm not suggesting adding a different accent color in each room, but if you're stumped on where to start and how you want a particular area to feel, the above is a good guideline. You can absolutely carry the same accent colors throughout the home as well, but consider using a muted version of a vibrant color if it sparks an emotion you don't want for that space.

Color Schemes and Palettes

There are no real “rules” when it comes to color schemes, but the easiest way to avoid clashing is by choosing multiple colors from the same end of the color spectrum: cool or warm. However, be careful that you don’t choose colors too close together that feel like they’re a shade off and don’t have any real contrast. These will blend together in an awkward way that will make one look like the washed-out version of the other.

UNDERSTANDING COLOR THEORY



WWW.SARAHRENAECLARK.COM

Via [Sarah Renae Clark](#)

A bolder way to pick a color combination for your home is through using the triangle, square, or rectangle method. These colors complement each other, without being too close and blending.

The only real decorating habits I have when it comes to using colors in different spaces, is to avoid ones that spark very particular emotions such as red and green which are associated with Christmas, or orange and black which immediately make us think of Halloween. This is simply to avoid having a space that appears too themed and out of season. Another way I like to incorporate color that isn't too bold is by only selecting one accent color and tying it into each room, but in a slightly different way. Whether it's through a paint color, curtains, a patterned rug, etc.

If you truly love a color, it's completely okay to be very bold with it. However, I generally recommend avoiding going too trendy with any large-scale items or colors as you will feel like your space is outdated in just a couple years. If you're head over heels with a new trend and find that you're not a person that jumps on every bandwagon, then go for it!

Our favorite color planning apps:

Pantone Studio: used to build and create palettes to test on 3D-rendered materials and designs

Paint Tester: virtually try paint on your walls

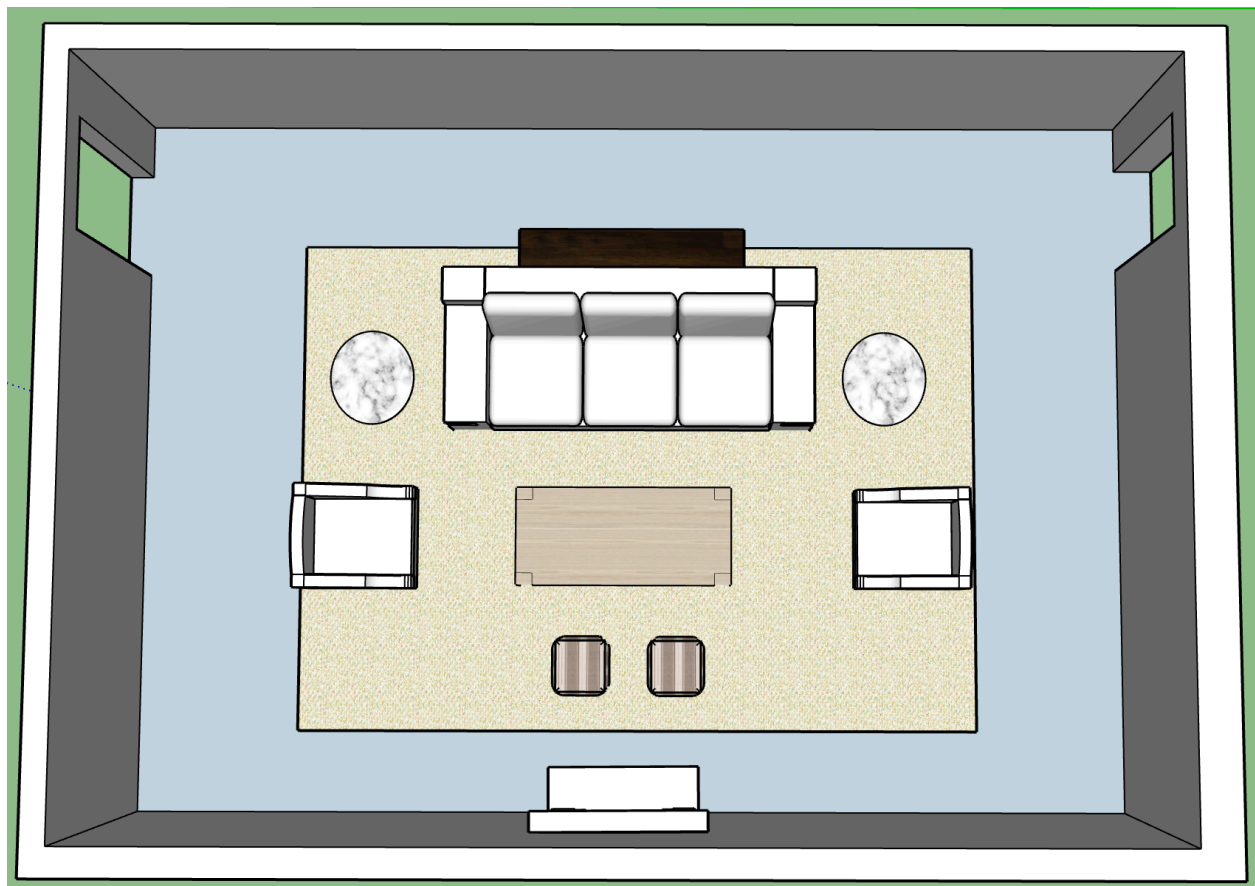
Color Capture: app by Benjamin Moore that lets you take a photo of anything and it will match you to a paint color that's closest

Color911: professionally picked and custom color palettes

Houzz: can virtually place items in your home to see how the color, size, etc., looks

Chapter 4: Space Planning 101

Planning a room before purchasing any furniture is absolutely crucial in order to avoid purchasing pieces that are too big or small for the space. Quickly drafting a floor plan and playing around with the furniture arrangement is the single easiest way to ensure your focal point stands out, the visual weight is distributed evenly, and the flow of the space works. This may seem like a job for a professional, but with so many beginner apps out there, it really isn't as hard as you may think anymore. Magic Plan is one of my favorites to use when measuring a room as it literally uses your phone camera to measure and draw a floor plan to scale. Print out a few of the floor plan outlines and try to sketch a few pieces of furniture or cut out 2D furniture and move it around the floor plan and see what feels right. We'll discuss other apps that help you place real pieces within your space to visualize it, and even purchase within the app, towards the end of this chapter.



Via [TopComp](#)

When you're creating a plan for a room, it may seem like the most important thing to focus on is the things you intend to fill it with. This is only as important as the empty space you intend to leave: this is called negative space. Not to be confused with negative energy or "bad vibes", it's simply a way to create the balance between things that take up visual weight, and the space around them. Have you ever walked

into a room and although it wasn't cluttered, it somehow felt "heavy"? That's the result of oversized furniture, or too many pieces in one room, and lack of balance between negative and positive space. If you're uncertain about how a room will feel from a quick draft of a floor plan, try the 50/50 rule, half the square footage filled with things, other half to be "walking paths" or empty space.

Standard Dimensions of Furniture

	width/length	depth
Sofa (3-seater)	78-90"	34-38"
Love seat (2-seater)	56-68"	34-38"
Chair-and-a-half	54-60"	36-40"
Chaise longue	72-90"	30-36"
Club chair	30-36"	30-36"
Slipper chair	22-28"	22-28"
Dining chair (with arms)	22-24"	16-24"
Dining chair (armless)	18-22"	16-24"
Coffee table/ottoman (square)	24-48"	24-48"
Coffee table/ottoman (rectangle)	24-48"	16-28"
Coffee table/ottoman (round)	18-32" in diameter	
End table	14-24"	14-24"
Dining table (square)	36-48"	36-48"
Dining table (rectangle)	60-84"	34-42"
Dining table (round)	36-60" in diameter	
Drop leaf table	36-72"	21-63" (with leaves)
Console/sofa table	48-72"	15-20"
Card table	30-36"	30-36"
Desk	28-48"	24-30"
Low cabinet/buffet	48-72"	16-26"
Armoire	36-60"	20-30"
Chest of drawers	30-74"	20-24"
Nightstand	14-24"	14-24"
Bed (twin)	80"	40"
Bed (double/full)	80"	55"
Bed (queen)	85"	61"
Bed (king)	85"	79"
Rug (runner)	24 x 48"-36 x 120"	
Rug (rectangular)	36 x 60"-108 x 144"	
Rug (round)	72-96" in diameter	

Via [Buzzfeed](#)

If you haven't picked out exactly what you want to use in your space just yet, use the above dimensions to help you plan your space before you being shopping so you know what you're looking for and what will fit nicely in the room.

If the room you're planning for is on the smaller side and you absolutely need that living room to act as a sitting area, entry, and home office, the best way to plan this space is by not only using appropriately sized pieces, but incorporating pieces that don't take up as much visual space, such as a glass coffee table, acrylic desk, and seating that is higher off the ground. Utilizing your vertical space in these situations is also essential – use a leaning desk with a small footprint, add a narrow but tall bookshelf, or a wall mounted shelf.



Via [Crate and Barrel](#)

Now that you've got the basics on balancing a room out, it is also important to know how you'll use the space. Will it be a sitting area and a dining area? How will you create divide without putting a wall up? The best way to define areas in a space is by adding rugs (ensure these are size appropriate – reference back to Biggest Interior Design Mistakes to Avoid). Now it's time to play around with furniture and see how the flow of traffic will work, and how to best position your pieces around your focal point. This can be an interesting chandelier hanging over the middle of the sitting area, a beautiful fireplace, a piece of art, or an accent wall (again, avoid pointing all furniture at the TV).

Best Space Planning Apps

Magic Plan – Measure a room using your phone camera, creates printable floorplan

Photo Measures Lite – Take a photo of your space, and add measurements right on it

HomeStyler – user friendly way to add furniture to a photo of your empty room (all brands you can shop)

Home Design 3D – draw your home in 2D and 3D, add furniture indoors and out, every piece is customizable

Hutch (relaunching soon) – send a photo of your room for them to clear existing furniture before testing out pieces also available for purchase within the app (thousands of retailers available)

Houzz – try before you buy - same idea as Hutch but cannot remove current furniture; simply upload photo of empty room to play around with pieces for purchase

Chapter 5: Flooring & Floor Coverings

When it comes to flooring, this is a major decision because not only is it an expensive update or potential mistake, it's also a huge project that will likely keep you out of the house during this time, so it's best to make the right choice the first time around with no regrets. In this chapter, we will discuss durability, budget, common uses of flooring types, along with rules and fabrics when it comes to choosing a rug.

Flooring Types

Whether you're building a home, updating your current one, or buying a new home, few things matter more than the type of flooring that will suit your needs, family, climate, and of course budget. We've broken down the most popular types of floors and what to consider when deciding on what suits your family best. If you have young children or dogs, perhaps durability is most important, or if you're looking to upgrade your lavish home and add value, perhaps the look and price alone will determine what you're going to choose. Either way, we're here to help when making these decisions. It's also important to consider the longevity of your time in the home you're updating, because there may come a time when you'll have to replace those inexpensive and durable vinyl floors because at your home's price point, buyers won't settle for anything less than tile or hardwood.



Via [The House of Silver Lining](#)

Hardwood: Flooring that is milled from a single piece of wood – made from several species including maple, oak, walnut and hickory being the most common.

Pros: They are very durable in the sense that they can be sanded and refinished any time. They also create a warm and inviting feel in any home. Very easy to clean.

Cons: Expensive, and time consuming to install. Echo noise especially if installed on second story. Easily scratched by pets and kids.

Engineered Wood: A veneer of hardwood on top of several layers of different wood.

Pros: Significantly more resistant to moisture than hardwood. Easy to install and can be installed on top of any subflooring.

Cons: Quality varies with each brand. Can typically only be sanded and refinished once. Not as long lasting as hardwood. Easily scratched by pets and kids.

Ceramic/Porcelain Tile: A durable hard surface for indoor or outdoor living.

Pros: Very durable. Wide variety of colors and patterns (including a wood grain look). Stain resistant and scratch resistant. Easy to replace just one tile. Easy to sterilize. Very affordable. Great choice for a household with children or pets.

Cons: Hard underfoot. Grout can stain and may be difficult to clean.



Via [Home Bunch](#)

Floating Wood Tile: A synthetic material that duplicates the appearance of wood and is then laminated.

Pros: Easy installation. Stain resistant. Easy to clean. Easy to replace pieces.

Cons: Hard underfoot. Can show scuff marks. Cannot be sanded and refinished. Slippery when wet.

Carpet: Intended to be a cozy underfoot for dry spaces such as bedrooms. Comes in a variety of fabrics, both synthetic and natural.

Pros: Warm and cozy on feet. Can act as insulation. Dampers noise. Comes in a variety of colors and patterns. Inexpensive. Stain resistant options now available but much more expensive.

Cons: Stains easily. Traps dander from pets. Can be expensive to clean and maintain. Wears easily in high traffic areas.

Cork: An environmentally friendly option made from cork oak.

Pros: Eco-friendly. Highly durable. Stain resistant. Soft underfoot. Can dampen noise. Many options for color/style now available.

Cons: Expensive. Durability depends entirely on the finish used.

Bamboo: An eco-friendly, natural flooring option made from bamboo reeds.

Pros: Hypoallergenic. Very durable. Easy to clean and install. Works well in a household with children and pets. Variety of stain colors available.

Cons: Expensive. Few color choices. Can fade in direct sunlight. Susceptible to water damage. Can emit volatile organic compounds into the air over time. Cannot be refinished.

Stone: Natural rock such as granite, limestone, slate and marble cut to use for flooring.

Pros: Most durable of all flooring options. Looks better and better over time. Timeless appearance.

Cons: Extremely expensive. Installation is very labor intensive. Can trap dirt and stains in porous stone. Very difficult to clean. Not recommended in a household with children or pets.

Vinyl: A synthetic flooring option that can come in any color or pattern.

Pros: Least expensive of all other flooring types. Easy to clean. Water resistant. Very durable. Great for kids and pet areas. Can be created to look like wood planks, tile, or almost any other surface through pigmentation.

Cons: Sharp objects can cut through. Can emit volatile organic compounds into the air over time.

Floor Coverings

Rugs are by far a favorite choice for warming up your home and defining a space. If you recall, we mentioned choosing correct sizes for your rugs in the "Mistakes to Avoid" chapter, but we'll do a quick recap here. The minimum sizing for a rug in a living room is for it to fit under the front feet of all the furniture grouped in this room. In a dining room, you should be able to pull out all chairs around a table and they're still on the rug, this measures roughly 24". The uncovered flooring should still be visible around the rug, at least 12" so the rug doesn't appear to take up the whole room and look like wall to wall carpet. In a bedroom, the rug should fit under the majority of the bed (leaving the nightstands off the rug), and extend 24-36" on either side, depending on the size of the room and flooring left over, as well as at the foot of the bed. If you have a bench or seating at the foot, ensure the rug still extends a couple feet past any other furniture on the rug.

Now that we know which size will work best in your space, it's time to discuss fiber. If you have kids or pets, a high-performance fiber is critical, while if it's a formal room only used on certain occasions, you can go for a more luxurious natural fiber without

hesitation. However, you must keep in mind how much maintenance each requires, initial price, life span, and even sunlight exposure.



Via [Dash and Albert](#)

Natural Fibers:

Natural fibers such as wool, cotton, jute and silk are the more environmentally friendly choices because they come from sustainable sources that don't emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs). However, they are a lot more difficult to maintain, more susceptible to stains, and can easily trap allergens. Often this leads to either expensive products or having the rug professionally cleaned regularly. Durability is one that's a little tougher to compare because wool, for example, is incredibly durable while cotton isn't. When it comes to cost, natural fibers are generally more expensive than synthetic ones. Natural fibers are the best choice for households with no pets or kids.

Synthetic Fibers:

These are machine-made fibers from various chemical compounds. They have become increasingly popular among all major retailers because they are more cost effective and practical for the typical homeowner. Synthetic fibers include nylon (most durable), polyester, Triexta, olefin (least durable). Nylon is stain-resistant, soil resistant, soft, and

durable in high-traffic areas. However, depending on the dye, it can fade in direct sunlight. Polyester is also soft and stain resistant, but doesn't hold up as well in high-traffic areas, is less expensive than nylon, and doesn't fade. Synthetic fibers are all around less expensive than natural ones, are easier to maintain, and best in households with kids and pets. With the wide variety of different blends, you really can find synthetic fibers that feel natural.

Favorite Flooring Apps:

ID Wood – identifies wood types, colors, and functionality

Style My Floor – take photos of your space and it'll be turned into a 3D rendering which you can use to try out different flooring/carpet options

Floorvana – capture color and match to flooring

Just Imagine by Arizona Tile – try out tile and stone in several different rooms to help you visualize patterns, colors, etc. in larger spaces

Favorite Rug Retailers:

Wayfair – incredible inventory of styles, sizes, fibers, delivered to your door

West Elm – modern and high-quality products at a reasonable price

Overstock – wide range of styles, prices, fibers

World Market – great deals and great products, changing inventory

Ikea – most inexpensive, great for first apartment or budget conscious buyer, surprisingly wide range of choices

Rugs USA – biggest selection and affordable prices

Chapter 6: Upholstery and Textiles

Choosing textiles in your home may seem like a simple task because most people just pick what LOOKS best to them, rather than leading with the more practical needs such as durability, comfort, and style that suits your lifestyle and home. The first thing to ask yourself is how you intend to use this piece: will it be the main sofa in your TV room that your family and pups will all pile onto several nights a week? Is it just a headboard for your guest room that won't exactly get worn out? Or is the piece sitting in direct sunlight and will you be okay with discoloration over time? Because at the end of the day, regardless of how good something looks for the first week, if the way you use it leads to extreme wear, stains, and snags, it simply isn't worth purchasing.

A Household of Kids and Pets

If your upholstered pieces or rugs will have kids doing cartwheels, dogs wrestling, and the more-often-than-not spill, your best choices for durability and easies to clean are: faux suede, aged leather, Sunbrella (indoor/outdoor) and Crypton Home fabrics that can literally repel stains and spills. If you're looking for something a little more in between and on the natural side, slip covered sofas are still fairly easy to clean from the *occasional* mishap. The easiest way to choose is to opt for the tightly-woven fabrics like micro suede, performance velvet, canvas and twill. Velvet now comes in either a blend of cotton and polyester, or 100% polyester and I assure you, it doesn't look anything like the plastic and shiny surface it used to about 10 years ago. It can withstand spills, stains, and nearly repel water completely; while washing also won't shrink or change its appearance.



Via [Kelley Nan](#)

Pottery Barn Crypton stain resistant fabric in ivory

The Luxurious Room

If over-use, kids, and pets bouncing on and off your upholstery is not an issue, you can go for a more decadent fabric like Tibetan wool, or Belgian linen (which is durable, but can wrinkle after some lounging). In this space, you can really let your creative side out, if you love silk, tufting, or cotton velvet, the sky is the limit in a space that will be well cared for.



Via [Full Bloom Cottage](#)

Belgian linen upholstery

Chapter 7: How to Choose Art and Lighting

Choosing the finishing touches in a nearly complete room is like putting on your jewelry after you've chosen your outfit – it's the last thing on and first thing off, as they say. I've spoken a lot about fashion and interior design being parallel industries, so it only makes sense to compare a perfectly styled outfit to a perfectly styled room. If your outfit is colorful and busy, you'd likely go for a simply and muted necklace, earrings, and perhaps skip anything else as not to make it feel too busy. The same general rule goes when it comes to art and lighting.



Via [Pinterest](#)

Line art is one of our favorite current trends for any wall space

Choosing the Perfect Wall Décor

First and foremost, don't listen to what anyone else has to say when it comes to choosing art for YOUR home. You have to walk by it, stare at it daily, YOU have to love it. Don't worry about if it's "in" or not, how much it costs, or who it's by. Spend time looking at all the different styles and figure out what you're drawn to – what will inspire you in your home office, what will calm you in your bedroom, what will compliment your style most in your living room.

Your next task once you've determined what you like is to find it in an appropriate size. There's a simple golden rule to follow in almost any space that you're adding wall décor: art should be more than $\frac{1}{2}$ and up to $\frac{3}{4}$ the size of the piece that it's hanging above. For example, if you have a sofa that's 80" wide, your statement piece or pieces above it should total about 45"-60" in width. I recommend using the same rule if you're working with a bare wall, but intend to cover $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the bare wall. Nothing looks more out of place than inappropriately sized art that either gets lost in the room or completely overwhelms it.

Here is a quick recap of Chapter 2 on how high to hang art:

Rule 1: Only piece on a bare wall, or above furniture that is less than 32" in height, the CENTER of the piece should hang around 58-62" from the floor; a gallery wall is treated as one collective piece.

Rule 2: Hanging extra-large pieces on a bare wall, (over 48"), the center should be around 48-56" from the ground.

Rule 3: Art hanging above a sofa or a headboard should be in the range of 5-12" above said furniture.

Rule 4: Hanging art above a mantel – 3-6" from the mantel to the bottom of the piece – the taller the mantel, the less space to leave.

Rule 5: Art or mirrors above any other furniture that is taller than 32" should be hung 3-8" above the "anchor" or furniture beneath it.

Favorite Art App:

Artfully Walls – try art on your wall with in app purchase option

Etsy – affordable, original art of all kinds, from around the world

Choosing Lighting

Much like choosing art, lighting is something that should complement the room in an inviting way. For example, if your space is totally minimalist, consider a fixture that will be a focal point. And again, if your space is busy, keep the fixture clean and simple. It's important to keep in mind the function of each space as it will have a major impact on how you choose to light it. There are typically 3 types of lighting to account for in each space: ambient lighting, task lighting, and accent lighting. Ambient is more functional such as recessed lights and typically most common in utilitarian spaces like kitchens and bathrooms. I like to choose cool light bulbs with wattage around 60 for a well-lit space. Task lighting is intended to light a specific area for a specific purpose such as bedside sconce lights, a table task lamp, or under cabinet lighting. Depending on the task it will be lighting, choose wattage and warm/cool tones accordingly. Accent lighting is mainly decorative and intended to compliment the style of your home and act as a focal point. This is where you can get creative and display your style much like a piece of art.



Via [Home Bunch](#)

Adding lighting where it counts may seem a bit daunting if it's your first go at it, but the most important place to start is think of how you'll be using the space. For example, an entry may just need a cool chandelier that sets the tone for what is expected to follow in the rest of the home, while a living room that's used to entertain, relax, and read in may need lighting for different occasions and moods. In this situation, I'd not only include a chandelier to group the focus of the room, but also table or floor lamps with dimmer switches to easily change the ambiance. Function is always first, then you find something that's your style and works to support that function.

Here is a quick recap from Chapter 2 of how to choose the size and hang a chandelier:

Rule 1: Dining room. The correct height to hang a chandelier above a dining table is about 30-34". The size of the light fixture depends on the size of the room mainly and can be figured out with a very simple math problem. Add the length and the width of the room (measured in feet), and switch (don't convert) that number to inches to get the diameter you should aim for in your fixture.

Rule 2: Island pendants. The most common height to hang pendants above an island is 30-36", and about 12-18" apart, depending on their size. If the pendants are larger, hang them a bit further apart, smaller, closer together so they still appear to be "grouped".

Rule 3: Entry chandelier. The diameter can be determined using the same formula as the dining room, length plus width in feet of the space, plus the height of the ceiling if it's vaulted, and turn into inches. The average height for most rooms with typical 9-10' ceilings is that the bottom of the chandelier should be 7' from the ground.

Rule 4: Living room. The general rule is that it should be dead center to the focal point of the room, typically a fireplace, accent wall, or over the coffee table. It's not hard to move the builders intended lighting hole, and you'll be so glad you did. Use our same diameter formula to determine the size you want. The height here is the same as the entry, about 7' off the ground to bottom of the chandelier.

Rule 5: Bedrooms. Use the above diameter rule and height is also the same.

Favorite Lighting Sources:

Wayfair – allows you to try fixtures in your space using your phone camera; extensive choice of products, across every price point, purchase in app

Shades of Light – large inventory, unique pieces, excellent quality

Chapter 8: Splurge or Save

When it comes to investing in your interior, it's very important that you not only love the space you call home, but that it's a wise investment as well. There are a few pieces in your home that you should absolutely invest the majority of your budget in, while others can be inexpensive pieces that still compliment the space and your style wonderfully. That brings us back to function – how will you use the room? How much time do you spend in it? Is it your home office that you'll be sitting in for 8 hours a day? The living room your family gathers in every evening? The dining room that hosts at least one large family function a month? The way I like to look at investment pieces is by price per use: if you use that sectional every day of the year and you're asking yourself if you really should spend \$8,000 on the highly durable, stain resistant fabric, and reputable brand that's known to last years, the answer is HELL YES. Deciding where to spend is a bit more specific to each family, but the easiest way to answer that question for yourself is simply where do I spend most of my time, and what gets used most frequently in my home. However, if you just had a baby or got a new dog, investing in ANY upholstered furniture may be risky, so consider the wear and tear that it will endure in a way that it may not be fit to handle (think dog chewing through the couch cushions).

In a typical household, the items I generally suggest investing in are the following:

A fresh coat of paint – a massive impact and a clean canvas for your space to be updated, and certainly worth paying a professional to tackle the task rather than attempting a DIY on this

Master mattress – can't put a price on the quality of your sleep every night for years to come. I usually suggest high quality bedding as well (not ridiculously high thread count, but natural fibers, and high-quality duvet and pillows).

Family room sofa – generally gets used daily, can take a bit of a beating but doesn't show every scuff and spill so it won't need to be cleaned daily, something that doesn't look sloppy after each movie night, and doesn't dip in your favorite reading corner long after you've gotten up.

A statement piece – if there something you've been wanting for years and you can't get it out of your head, it's a piece worth investing in as long as it won't get worn out in the next year or two, and you can plan your room around it

Wall art – when you find a piece you love, it's okay to splurge because you don't have to worry about it standing the test of time, as long as you don't get sick of looking at it

Where to save:

All textiles - accent pillows, blankets, drapery, and area rugs – many of these styles change quickly and it becomes an easy way to refresh your space by swapping them out

Accent colors – don't splurge on that teal color that you're obsessed with right now and want to add some to every room, find the look for less because it'll be fleeting

Décor items – vases, candles, bookends, trays, etc., you get the idea. There's no reason why you need to purchase original, hand painted, Indian vases unless it's a true passion of yours. These items can be found in so many discount shops and several online stores that have many affordable choices. Some of my favorites include Wayfair, Overstock, H&M Home, Urban Outfitters Home, and Zara Home.

Chapter 9: Finishing Touches

As you look around at a well-planned, and perfectly balanced room, you should feel incredibly proud that you got to a place where you chose each item in a way that will serve the space for many years to come. In this last chapter of your decorating bible, we chat about the fun finishing touches that will make your home cozier, more personal, and totally unique to you. This includes styling shelves, tables, adding greenery, and textured pieces to add interest and really make it feel like home.



Via [The Pink Dream](#)

First let's talk about filling flat surfaces – coffee, end, console tables and shelves. For the coffee table, these five steps should be easy to follow and leave you with some balance. I like taking up about 2/3 of the table surface, but there is no right or wrong.

1. **Use a tray** – I can't stress this enough; a tray acts as one object visually which makes your table appear decluttered and organized even if you add a few items to it.
2. **Stacked coffee table books** – they look neat all on their own so keep them off the tray, but stack 3 of your favorites for a conversation piece and something to flip through when the significant other is watching 6 hours of golf.
3. **Something green** – alive or not, it adds life to your table and helps make it appear warm. I'm a big believer in adding plants to every room as it is, so on the coffee table makes it a perfect centerpiece. This can also be the item that you use to add a little height so that not everything is at the same level.

4. **Candles** – whether you just use one interesting one, or a cluster of a few, opt for some that's exterior also has some visual interest. My favorites can be found at Anthropologie.

5. **An interesting piece** – finish off your table with a unique item, whether it's a brass elephant, or spiky sphere, this is where you can get creative. If your greenery didn't add any height, it's wise to consider adding height with this piece.



Via [Cuddles and Chaos](#)

For open shelving, similar rules apply, however, horizontal and vertical books are a must, and of course many more than a couple large pretty ones. Top books with either a décor piece, candle, or plant. Play with the height here as well and aim to have either some pops of color with your greenery, or a color scheme in mind. If the book covers start to make it look too scattered and messy, consider turning them around. This is also a great area to display framed photos, or pieces that can lean against the back wall.

For every other flat surface, keep all of the above rules in mind along with any functional décor that's appropriate such as a table lamp.

Next, adding texture everywhere else – pillows, blankets, lamps

Texture needs to be treated like everything else in design: balance is key. For example, if you have a glass coffee table, leather sofa, and brass accents, you NEED to add some warmth with texture. So, in this situation, I'd add a bunch of fringe, knit, and other textured pillows, a soft throw over the back of the couch, a wicker tray with candles, books and greenery, and a wool rug. Another great way to add warmth and dimension to your space is through warmer light bulbs, adding wicker baskets, perhaps velvet

accent chairs, a wood beaded chandelier, and pretty much anything else without a reflective surface.



Via [Katrina Lee Chambers](#)

Last thing to do in each space is to add greenery, whether you opt for real or fake depending on your lifestyle, here are a few that are VERY difficult to kill/low maintenance and also have many benefits for your interior air quality.

1. **Snake plant**

Snake plants come in a variety of shapes, sizes and even colors; they are great air purifiers for your home that also add a great deal of height anywhere you may need it. These plants need minimal water and thrive from a lack of attention. Snake plants can survive without direct sunlight, and even in places without any natural light.

2. **ZZ plant**

The ZZ Plant is one that looks so stunning it can be mistaken for fake. This plant doesn't need direct light or a lot of water. It prefers to completely dry out and can even flower.

3. **Aloe plant**

Aloe plants are succulents, and much like cacti they thrive in a dry environment, so allow them to dry out between deep watering. Place in a bright location with a lot of indirect light. Aloe cuttings can also be used to heal cuts and sunburns.

4. Cactus

Cacti come in many shapes, sizes and colors, they are desert plants so they don't need a lot of water at all – think once a month. Cacti do need to be in a bright location in your home however.

5. Air plants

Air plants are very unique in that they don't need dirt at all and can be placed almost anywhere. You can mist the air plant and if it seems to be dry you can soak it for an hour every few weeks. These look great in glass planters on a coffee table or bookshelf.

Our favorite places to shop décor and more:

Joss & Main

- inexpensive lighting
- unique decorative objects
- huge collection of trays
- pillows
- throws
- baskets

Target

- faux plants
- lamps
- outdoor furniture
- pillows

Hayneedle

- lanterns
- mirrors
- curtain rods
- area rugs
- wall art

Ballard Designs

- bedding
- drapes
- mirrors
- wall art
- floating shelves

Wayfair

- console/coffee/end tables
- bookcases
- benches
- barstools

World Market

- unique chairs and tables
- candles
- trays
- towels
- dinnerware

Ikea

- candles
- frames
- floating shelves
- vases
- real plants and planters

H&M Home

- linens
- bathroom accessories
- kitchen accessories
- pillows

Urban Outfitters Home

- accent chairs
- lighting
- unique dressers
- wall hangings

Conclusion

I hope this helped you better understand your personal style that is so unique to you, and create a functional yet beautiful space that your family can enjoy for years to come. And remember, although there are many decorating "rules" that have made it to the catalogs and magazines over the years, there is no better choice for your space than one that suits you and your lifestyle. Just as you are a unique being, your home should reflect that unapologetically.