

INTERIOR DECORATING

DECORATE LIKE A CELEBRITY

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INTRODUCTION

Courtney Cox loves to buy homes, refurbish and redecorate them and then re-sell. Countless other celebrities do the same thing. In fact, celebrities spend thousands of dollars just to have professional decorators come into their homes and re-decorate them.

Still other famous people choose to get dirty themselves so they can realize their dreams of a home that is decorated the way they envisioned it to be. In fact, the television show "Trading Spaces" has actually taken interior decorating to a whole other level.

People have visions of how they want their lives to be and how they want their living space to be. Celebrities and regular Joes alike possess these thoughts and dreams and want to see them come to reality.

What's the difference? Obviously, it's because most celebrities have an unlimited budget when it comes to their interior decorating views. We "regular people" generally don't have that same luxury.

If 'Trading Spaces' and segments about celebrity-inspired home decorating appeal to your creative senses, take a stand and create the home of your dreams! Interior decorating has taken new heights with the cost-effective styles and today's trends available at most local chains and department stores.

Luxury living is a combination of eclectic, traditional, and unique styles with a contemporary but inspirational look. Even antiques can be transformed into vital accessories for today's modern home, and add an air of distinction and originality to any corner.

Who needs a Hollywood designer when you can create great spaces on your own? Construct and build some versatile and chic domains on a variety of budgets and themes. Whether it's the bedroom, living room, or elegant dining area that needs some updating, think like a celebrity to create some dynamic and unique living spaces!

Now, I should take a moment to let you know that interior decorating is definitely a matter of personal preference and style. What appeals to one person may be disgusting to another. But there are many, many decorating styles out there, and what we're going to

do in this book is present a lot of those styles and ways to recreate them affordably.

Let's start with some basic premises about interior design and what it takes to make a great space.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF DECORATING

The rules of interior decorating can be as solid as a rock or as open to interpretation as the sky. But many experts agree that learning the rules can be the first step toward freely breaking those rules when necessary. Here are some of the decorating dos.

- **Do sketch your floor plan** and record the room dimensions, window sizes and placement, and the location of special features, electrical outlets, and so on.

Take your floor plan with you when you shop.

- **Do take the time to discover your personal style** by reading shelter magazines, attending show houses, and browsing online and in stores to learn what styles and colors really appeal to you.
- **Do identify the focal point of the room** (a fireplace, a view, a bed, an armoire).
- **Do define a room's style in writing**, being specific. (Not just "country French", but "French Country with a rooster motif, chicken wire cupboard fronts, and a color scheme that includes black and gold.")
- **Do pick a signature piece** to focus your decorating decisions. It could be a beautiful fabric, an area rug, a picture, a piece of pottery, dishes, or a postcard. The item should embody both the color scheme of the room as well as the style and mood you hope to create.

- **Do coordinate fabric and flooring choices** *before* making any major purchases, and before choosing exact paint colors.
- **Do purchase large elements first** (rugs, draperies, upholstered furniture) whenever possible, and use the exact colors and style of those major pieces to coordinate all other choices.
- **Do use a mix of patterns** -- large-scale, small-scale, checks, stripes, geometrics, plain -- when coordinating a room.
- **Do allow for natural pathways in a room** (such as from the door to the closet) and try to arrange furniture with those walkways in mind.
- **Do consider the uses and function of a room** before deciding on furnishings and arrangements. For example, if your dining room will also be your study, then you'll need room for a desk, books, lighting, and files as well as the dining room table and chairs.
- **Do consider using unifying elements** such as trim color, wood tone, flooring, motifs, fabrics, or materials.
- **Do use the principle of repetition** when planning shapes, colors, fabrics, and patterns. One red accent in a room may look like an afterthought whereas several red accents here and there will contribute to the color scheme.
- **Do plan ahead for appropriate task, general, and dramatic lighting** by using a mix of light fixtures on dimmers for maximum control.
- **Do purchase the best quality furniture you can afford.** Learn more about quality construction and materials that can prolong the life of furniture and make it a better buy in the long run.
- **Do use contrast to add interest** to a space. Placing furniture and accessories against a contrasting background will highlight each piece.

- **Do crosslink your rooms** by repeating colors, fabrics, and themes in varying combinations. |
- **Do balance a room's furnishings** by paying attention to scale and visual weight.

Balance a large stone fireplace with a large sofa or armoire placed opposite.

- **Do arrange conversational areas** to be within an 8 to 14 feet square area.
- **Do anchor spaces** in open floor plans with area rugs and furniture groupings to define each space.
- **Do pair seating in conversation areas with side tables** and lamps so that there is a place to set drinks, books, etc. as well as adequate light for reading.
- **Do choose accessories that reinforce** the color and style theme of a room.
- **Do use scale and pattern** to create interesting focal points.
- **Do use pairs of items** to underscore symmetry and balance.
- **Do use odd numbers of items (3, 5, 7)** when grouping accents for table-scapes. Do place items (high, medium, and low) within an imaginary triangle to add interest.
- **Do use symmetrical arrangements** in formal rooms. In more casual rooms go for **asymmetrical arrangements** of furniture and accessories.
- **Do emphasize the important elements of the room** and play down the unattractive or unimportant elements.
- **Do use a variety of textures** (smooth, rough, shiny, dull) when you want to add interest to a room.
- **Do use line** to underscore a room's style. Horizontal lines emphasize length and underscore a calm mood. Vertical lines will emphasize height, and diagonal lines emphasize space and

provide a dynamic and exciting feel.

- **Do reinforce the style** and theme of a room with appropriate details and accessories.
- **Do install more details** in a plain boxy room. Consider crown molding, wainscoting, and other applications to add interest and character.
- **Do consider the location of your home** and the architectural style when planning interiors.

Decorating "rules" are made to be broken. Not every project will lend itself to every so-called rule.

However, following the rules can help give your project a focus that a more haphazard approach may not. Here are some of the decorating "don'ts".

- **Don't paint your walls then go out looking for fabrics to match.**

Paint can be mixed in any of a thousand colors, so select the final shades after upholstery, carpeting, and curtain fabrics are chosen.

- **Don't paint a room without trying a sample of the color in the room.** Tiny paint chips can be deceiving as to tone and depth of color, so always paint a test board to confirm your choices.
- **Don't line up the furniture around the walls** except in the smallest of rooms. Pulling furniture into attractive groupings in the center of the room will add warmth and be inviting to guests as well.
- **Don't turn your back on the focal point of the room** by arranging furniture away from this important feature.
- **Don't place furniture where it will interfere with doorways,** cabinet doors, natural traffic patterns, or other everyday activities.

- **Don't clutter up a room with a million little collectibles** unless you're in love with that look. Most of us will feel it is too crowded.
- **Don't try to construct a color scheme from wildly disparate objects.** First find a print fabric or rug with all of the colors you want to use, then edit out, repaint, or recover items that don't fit with the plan.
- **Don't keep something you hate.** Do you have a hideous orange sofa from Aunt Zelda? Either slipcover it, recover, or remove it. You'll be happier.
- **Don't decorate around an item that just isn't "you".** If your new home came with gold shag carpeting when you love roses and lace, believe me, you'll never love that carpet. Get rid of it.
- **Don't forget the details.** If your theme is Mediterranean, look for iron lamp bases, weathered iron drawer pulls, and tile tables. If you love Cottage then use painted white accessories, floral accents, and lace.
- **Don't fall in love with cheap furniture** just because it has an appealing color or exciting fabric. Look for good lines, quality construction, and elegant details first. Then have those pieces covered in a fabric or finish that you love.
- **Don't choose colors standing in a store.**

Try to take samples (of paint, fabrics, and floor coverings) back to your home and look at them in daylight and at night.

- **Don't spend a lot of money on expensive items that are "trendy".** Try out trends that truly appeal to you by experimenting first with inexpensive accessories.
- **Don't live with a lot of mismatched furniture orphans.** Unite pieces with color -- either by painting everything one color (white, pale gold, or black for example) or by recovering everything using identical or a mix of coordinating fabrics.
- **Don't always choose backgrounds in your favorite color.** Sometimes providing a softer background will make your favorite

color stand out as the brightest accent color in the room.

- **Don't choose everything beige if you really love color.** Remember, color doesn't cost more than white. Wouldn't a pretty mango, soft coral, or lovely green wall make a terrific backdrop for your white sofa?
- **Don't ignore the mood effects of color** -- red is exciting, pale blue soothing, green calming, and yellow is happy -- so choose color schemes that underscore the feeling you want to create in your home.
- **Don't disregard the undertones of a color.** Every color can be either light or dark, cool or warm, clear or muddy. Look for these color cues when choosing color.
- **Don't blow your entire budget on something that isn't functional, classic, or long-lasting**, unless you're completely smitten and can't live without it. In general it's best to start with the basics and build from there.

Some people feel clueless when they begin a decorating project. They know they want to re-design a room, but they have no clue where to start.

GETTING IDEAS

The easiest way to find your style is to start collecting ideas. Flip through decorating magazines or home improvement websites and collect pictures of things that catch your eye like a particular sofa style, a really cool lamp, a wall color, window treatments, a fabric, or maybe just the feeling that the whole room gives you. Make notes right on the pages so you remember why you saved it.

Also, start collecting samples of existing fabrics or colors that are going to stay in the room. For instance, say you're not changing the carpeting and you want to keep your grandmother's side chair. See if you can clip a little bit of extra fabric off the chair where you won't see it. Clip a small square of the carpeting out of a closet. If it's a painted piece, you can use paint chips from your local paint store to match it as closely as possible and have those with you.

You will also want to take measurements of the room and any furniture that is staying. If you can, make a simple floor plan to scale for reference. And finally, take photos of the room and any of the pieces you will be keeping.

Now as you collect all these samples and notes you will need to organize them in a way that makes sense for you; either by room, or by idea such as furniture ideas, lighting, colors, fabrics, or window treatments. Then keep them in your car so when you are out shopping you won't have to make another trip back home to see if it's the right color, size, or if it will "go". Decorators always have samples with them when they shop.

As you start to collect a fair amount of items you will start to see a pattern or similarity in what you like. And a style, that you didn't think you had, will soon emerge.

Maybe you want to look through a magazine and find a style that appeals to you. That's fine if you want to copy that style, just be sure that it will work in your house.

There are some elements of design that should be taken into consideration.

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

There are 6 basic elements used in all aspects of interior design and decorating. If you correctly incorporate all or most of these elements you will have created a beautiful and functional room.

Balance

There are two types of balance – symmetrical and asymmetrical. Perfect symmetry is like the human body – two eyes, two arms etc. Symmetrical balance is typically very formal. Asymmetry, on the other hand, refers to an imbalance, perhaps two candlesticks of slightly different sizes placed next to each other. Asymmetry is used to add visual motion and excitement to a space, and therefore it is considered a more informal way of decorating.

Balance also refers to the weight of different objects in a room. This can be the actual weight and size of furniture – such as a large entertainment centre; or it can be visual weight – a patterned or very bold color upholstered piece appears to take up more space than a solid or neutral colored one. If there is too much weight on one side of a room, the arrangement will feel awkward and uninviting.

Color

The human eye can see more than 16 million colors. To simplify your paint choices look at your favorite piece of art, a rug or the upholstery fabric. Choose your colors based on that item using the “60-30-10 rule”.

For example – your favorite painting contains blue, yellow and cream. You might then choose yellow walls (60%), a blue sofa (30%) and a cream accent cushion (10%).

Focal Point

A focal point is the centre of interest – usually the part of the room that our eye is naturally drawn to when we first enter. If you don't have an existing architectural detail – such as a fireplace or large bay window – you can create a focal point by strategically hanging your art or by creatively displaying some accessories on a bookshelf. Once you have determined or created a focal point in your room, simply arrange your conversation area around it.

Harmony

This does NOT mean that everything should match. It simply means that the furniture, art and accessories compliment each other in some way.

Scale and Proportion

The size of pieces relative to one another and the size of the space is their SCALE. Large, ornate pieces will not look right in a very small room, just as small contemporary pieces will be lost in an oversized space with vaulted ceilings. And more importantly, the size

variance of different pieces within a room should be somewhat related.

Texture

Texture is the one element that can instantly add interest to a monochromatic color scheme. Should you choose to decorate an entire room in one color – mocha perhaps – it will be easy to add some visually interesting texture. Linen window shades and leather pillows can be found in the same color range but each has a very different look and feel.

You may have never put a lot of thought into these elements, but when they are put together in a room, they will enhance the room and make it beautiful!

Taking on an interior design project can be a huge undertaking. Don't let your vision become compromised. Start by getting organized.

ORGANIZE YOUR IDEAS

When you're getting ready to begin a decorating or remodeling project it's a great idea to get everything together. And keep it together! Any building, remodeling, or decorating project will be easier if you get organized before you start with a decorating file.

Your decorating file will hold everything you'll need to coordinate the project. Include carpet samples, fabric cuttings, paint samples, floor plans, wallpaper cuttings, photos, and pictures of inspiration rooms. Having everything in one place will help the job go more smoothly from conception to completion.

You can choose any style of file you want. The choice is yours. A small canvas tote bag, briefcase, notebook with file pockets, expanding envelope, or file box works well. Be sure you select a container that will be easy to carry from store to home and large enough for all your items.

Probably the most convenient way to keep everything together, and your hands free, is in a tote bag with shoulder handles. Interior pockets are helpful, too. Be sure to have a container for pens, your cell phone, tape measure, scissors, and tape.

Place an expanding folder with pockets and divider tabs into the tote. These pockets will keep projects and items separated and organized. You can keep several projects separate by labeling the folders for each.

You'll save time by having everything together wherever you go. Instead of wondering whether a paint chip coordinates with a fabric swatch, you'll know right away. If you're shopping for a lamp, you'll know if the lamp shade is the right color. If you happen on a wonderful flea market, you won't have to pass up a great bargain on an antique bureau because you don't know if it will fit in your space. With everything together: colors, fabrics, measurements, and ideas,-- you'll always be ready!

As you work on a project, you'll think of things that would be helpful to have in your own decorating file. The things on the following list are just a start. The most important thing to remember about a decorating file is that you should have it with you at all times.

- **Pens and Paper**

There's nothing more frustrating than finding a perfect paint or carpet and not being able to write down the particulars for ordering them. Have several pens and pencils tucked in your file and a pad of paper or spiral notebook for taking notes. You may want to make notes of a furniture arrangement, trim detail, or window treatment that you see.

- **Tape Measure**

Try to find a lightweight measuring tape if you can, as a builder's tape measure can get heavy if you're carrying it around all day. A 10-foot tape is usually fine for shopping trips, but you'll want a 25-foot measuring tape to measure rooms, windows, and ceiling heights.

- **Floor Plan**

If you're doing a room decorating project or a whole-house

remodel, you'll need a drawing of the rooms with measurements. A scaled drawing on graph paper is most useful, but you can have a simple sketch for a smaller project.

Be sure that you take accurate measurements of walls, window dimensions, and distances between doors and windows. You'll find that the more information you put down on this floor plan, the more helpful it will be as you're working.

A drawing of each wall will come in handy as you select fabrics for windows and wallpaper. This sketch should show the placement of windows, doors, and architectural details with accurate measurements. To get the proper drawing, look at the wall from across the room and draw in the details.

If you're not up to drawing your floor plan by hand, you might want to check out some online help from Smart Draw or Arrange-A-Room from Better Homes and Gardens.

Once you get a decorating file organized, you'll wonder how you ever got along without it. This file will hold all the information you collect to get a decorating project put together.

- **Photos of Your Room**

Even if you can't stand how your room looks now, take some "before" pictures. Get all the angles and details. These will be helpful when you're working on your plan or when you need to talk to a salesperson about your project. They'll help remind you of details as you're working.

- **Calendar**

As you proceed with your project, you'll undoubtedly have schedules to keep. Note when the floors will be measured for carpet, when the plumber is coming, or when you have a date with the painter. You can use your personal daily planner if you have one or keep one separate just for your decorating projects.

Just be sure to have it with you!

- **Magazine Photos**

Magazines are a great source of decorating inspiration. If you

see a color you like, a fabric print that is just what you love, or an arrangement of accessories that would work in your space, tear the page out and keep it in your decorating file.

Find pictures with ideas you can incorporate into your own decorating project. You can also get great ideas from decorating books, but don't tear the pages out!

- **Samples of Fabrics, Colors, and Flooring**

As you shop; you'll want to collect samples of carpet, tiles, flooring, fabrics, and paint chips. The more you have in your Decorating File, the easier it will be to put your project together when you get home. Add more samples with every shopping trip.

You may not be replacing everything in the room you're decorating. Be sure to take a sample of anything that is staying in your room, including carpeting, upholstery fabric, paint samples, tile, or wood.

For an upholstered piece, it's ideal if you have a piece of the fabric. If not, take an arm cover or cover of a pillow. If you just don't have a suitable piece of fabric to include in your Decorating File, try to get a good color picture of the pieces you'll be saving.

An 8" square of carpet will fit in your tote. If there's just no extra carpet, trim off some tufts of carpet fiber from an inconspicuous place and tape it to a piece of cardboard for your decorating file.

As you decide on your decorating scheme, you'll put together all the elements, first in your mind, then in your Decorating File. Coordinate fabrics with paint and paint with flooring by testing combinations of samples you've collected. Or use the resources of professionals who have put together collections of fabrics, colors, and wall coverings for companies such as Waverly.

Whether your "decorating file" is a notebook, a canvas tote, briefcase, or large purse, be sure it is comfortable enough to carry with you. Here are several additional items that are useful to include in your decorating file.

Add these final items to your decorating file and you'll be ready to go at a moment's notice.

- **Phone List**

Have a handy list of phone numbers for your carpet man, plumber, painter, upholsterer, or contractor. Keep the list in your Decorating File for easy reference.

- **Scissors and Tape**

When you find the perfect paint chips, you might want to tape them together with fabrics you've chosen. Also put together fabric samples and carpet tufts.

- **Envelopes or Zip-Lock Bags**

You never know when you might find some small piece of information, color, or pattern that could get lost if put in the bottom of a tote.

Have a few plain #10 envelopes or zip-lock plastic bags in your Decorating File.

- **Post-It Notes**

Simple post-it notes are great for marking pages that you don't want to lose in a book or magazine. Or use them to mark possible choices in a wallpaper book. If you're looking at paint chips, block off shades that you don't want, using a post-it note.

- **Color Board**

Once you've made all your choices, put together a color board. Use a piece of mat board, foam core, or cardboard, cut to fit into your decorating file. Paint the board in the color of your chosen wall paint or just leave it white.

Attach all fabrics, trims, inspiration photos, and drawings to the board. You can have the mat board cut to fit into a standard or legal size file folder. When you've completed your project, put the color board away in a filing cabinet for reference.

You'll find that it's fun to put together a Decorating File for your decorating projects. It's a useful tool to keep you organized.

Now that you at least have some idea of where you want to be with your new decorating project, you may be worried about how you will afford what you need. Don't worry! You can still have a celebrity room with an everyday budget.

DECORATING ON A BUDGET

Just because you don't have a celebrity checkbook doesn't mean that you can't have celebrity style! Anyone can re-decorate their home or apartment – even with limited funds! Consider the following:

1. Decide ahead of time on a budget or payment plan, pace your decorating. Include money for accessories.
2. Decide on one room at a time and designate a priority within your room. That's where you should begin.
3. Have a plan, color scheme, style, & atmosphere. Have a target date for completion.
4. Your confidence level in tackling your decorating project makes a big difference. If you are the least bit unsure, contact a professional designer. He or she will save you time, energy, money, and frustration. Select a designer that you are comfortable with and trust. He/she should know your likes and dislikes. Whatever is done needs to suit you and your family.
5. Measure your room to scale. Show windows and doors. Decide on a focal point. Measure furniture, rugs, etc. before purchase. Draw your furniture to scale and cut out the drawings. Place these on your floor plan, moving them around until you get an arrangement that you like. This is very easy on your back. This procedure will also help you decide if the items are proportionately correct for your room. Think too about ceiling height and traffic flow.
6. Repeat each color in your scheme at eye level, mid level, and floor level to achieve good visual balance. Repeat any pattern and/or textures at least twice in the room.

7. Paint and wallpaper/borders go a long way in updating and freshening a room and usually cost very little.
8. View colors and patterns in your home during daylight hours before making a purchase.
9. If you do not plan to be in your home for a long time, invest in accessories (artwork, area rugs, decorator pillows) that could easily be used in another home.

What about furniture when you're on a budget? No problem!

Furniture

Most of us have lived in a time when we needed to decorate an apartment or home on a budget. We probably "borrowed" items from our parents, inherited castoffs from friends, and purchased cheap furnishings that we eventually threw away.

Sooner or later, however, our taste began to mature and the eclectic uncoordinated furniture we once thought was "cool" might now look like just a mish-mash of old stuff.

Let's face it, we'd probably be happy to get rid of all of it and start over.

Unfortunately, few of us have the budget or the opportunity to begin furnishing a home from scratch whenever we want.

Nevertheless, there are ways to stretch your decorating budget and find bargains on quality furnishings that will bring years of beauty and style to your home.

Where are these great deals on furniture?

Try some of these resources the next time you need furniture but want to save money too.

- **Consignment Stores**

These are popping up everywhere and are a great place to sell your old things and find new ones. Items are one-of-a-kind so shop often and be ready to buy when you see just the right

piece. Get to know the owner or manager and explain what you need and they might just call when an appropriate piece comes in.

- **Model Home Sales**

Builder model homes are another source of beautiful furnishings. Keep an eye out by visiting models in your area. If you see something you like, ask the sales office how and when the furniture might be available for sale. This is a terrific way to get coordinated and custom items at a fraction of the cost of new. Beware that some pieces may have fading, spots, or dents due to the heavy traffic and cleaning schedules at the models.

- **Clearance Outlets and Sales**

Many major department and furniture stores have outlet center with ongoing or periodic furniture sales. Often the tags are marked with dates and prices are reduced every 30 or 60 days. Furniture in these outlets may be either scratched, a second, and overrun, repossessed, or otherwise imperfect. However, prices will generally reflect any imperfections and may also be negotiable.

- **Trades**

You might have a sofa that's just too big for your new living room. Your best friend might have a loveseat that's too small for her family room. Why not negotiate a trade? It can be on a permanent or a temporary basis, as you choose.

- **Scratch and Dent Rooms**

Furniture stores may have a corner or back room where they keep scratched and dented items available for sale at big discounts. Inquire at your favorite stores and visit often to watch for furnishing that might fit into your home.

Here are more bargain shopping resources.

- **Showroom Samples**

Design Centers (in most large cities) often have periodic "sample

sales" for discontinued furnishings that have been used as showroom samples.

Call a design center near you, or watch your local newspaper for ads.

- **Trash to Treasure**

Some people call it "dumpster diving" and others call it "found items" but this can become almost a hobby with some people. Discarded furnishings found in trash bins, on the street, or marked "free" at a garage sale, can be rehabbed into something beautiful if you have the time and creativity.

- **Junk and Thrift Stores**

Yes, you probably do have to visit 15 junk and thrift stores to find even one great item. But if you have the time and the patience, this can be an inexpensive source of some wonderful one-of-a-kind pieces. And if you have a friend who frequents these kinds of stores, let her know what you're looking for so she can call you with possibilities.

- **Garage Sales and Flea Markets**

This is an obviously cheap source for lots of furniture and accessories. Items will generally be inexpensive and may exhibit a great deal of wear. Negotiation is practically expected, so bring cash and bargain away for the best prices.

- **Auctions**

Auction houses are another source of quality one-of-a-kind furnishings. Read up on auctions before you go and be sure to take advantage of the preview days to examine any pieces you might bid on. Better to find out about that wobbly leg or the cracked drawer before the auction begins. Many pieces that are not classified as "antiques" are extremely reasonable at auction.

- **Buy with an Eye to Refinish**

Sometimes you won't be able to find just what you want and you'll need to get creative. Begin to look at furniture with an eye for its line, scale, and details. Perhaps a dark wood desk can be

repainted and updated with new hardware. Maybe a beat up coffee table can be sanded and stained, or an old chair seat recovered with pretty fabric. The only caution -- be realistic as to what you can actually accomplish. A chest with a missing drawer and a cracked top may be too much to fix if you don't have the time, tools, or space to repair it.

For those of us with more taste than money, attempts to decorate our homes on a budget can often be a frustrating exercise in making-do and doing without. We flip through the glossy pages of home decorating magazines and despair of ever living in anything with more charm than a shoe box.

But the truth is, the principles of home decorating have always had more to do with expressing your personality through your own sense of style than with spending large amounts of money to make your home look like a picture in a magazine.

Yet paradoxically, these very same magazines, featuring "little" 3000 square foot homes and "mere" \$20,000 renovation budgets are the ideal place to start. As you study the photographs look, not at the big picture, but at the details.

First, study how the owners have used color. Whether strong or muted, a well thought-out color scheme lends a touch of sophistication to the plainest walls, carpet and furniture. Not to mention saving you a bundle on trial and error paint! Note that a color scheme does not mean using only one or two colors that "match". It means using often up to five different colours in various intensities and proportions from room to room. Paint experts can usually tell you how to use a color wheel to determine which colors work successfully together.

Look next for decorating themes. A theme will again unify the look of your home and prevent you making expensive mistakes. An item will either fit or it won't and you'll know which before you bring it home.

Popular themes include the South Western look; the spare, clean, Ultra Modern look; or even the tried and true Eclectic look, which basically means a little bit of everything, on purpose! You could even use color itself as your theme.

Continue browsing through your magazine and you'll soon see that the best looking homes are those that are filled, not with expensive art and antiques, (though if you've got 'em, by all means flaunt 'em!) but with frequent touches of the owners' personalities.

You can also frame postcards, greeting cards and calendar pictures. Look in museum and gallery gift shops for the more "arty" ones. Look also in craft-supply stores. These can be a treasure trove of inexpensive, fashionable accessories. Birdhouses and miniature chairs are currently very popular and can be bought for only a few dollars each.

Never be afraid to express your personality and don't be shy about looking in unusual places for decorating ideas. One of my favorite items is a repainted wooden sleigh, bought at a garage sale and now a container, in my den, for many of my paperbacks: less predictable than a bookcase but just as efficient.

And why spend a small fortune on a silk plant for your coffee table when a bowl of bright green apples can be just as decorative? Edible and replaceable too!

One final, but important guideline for the frugal decorator: unless you have the money to follow along as they change, avoid expensive trends. Purchasing a few four dollar birdhouses is one thing. Painting your entire house in various shades of purple because the magazines are filled with pictures of purple houses is quite another. What happens next year when everyone moves to yellow? Or lime-green?

Instead, try and identify your personal style. What colors soothe you? What colors invigorate you? In general, would you rather be soothed or invigorated? Do you prefer formal, informal or positively laid-back? What type of furnishings invites you to sit on them? Is your eye drawn to wood, vibrant color, or chrome? Once you've made these decisions you can decorate with the sense of security that comes from knowing your choices will be comfortable, stylish and long-lasting!

Genuine satisfaction in decorating comes not from writing checks but from devising affordable solutions to vexing problems. Resolve from the outset to be resourceful and you can achieve high style on a shoestring budget.

Let's face it; few of us have the luxury of a sky's-the-limit budget for home decorating. As appealing as it sounds, "money is no object" is just a phrase we fantasize about using right after the lottery pays off or the Prize Patrol comes calling.

Even for top interior designers, an unlimited budget is a rarity. Many confess they actually do their best work when they have to rely on creativity instead of cash. So whether you're frugal by nature or necessity, consider these four guiding principles for getting the most out of your decorating dollars

- **Use inexpensive materials lavishly and expensive materials judiciously.** Rely on cotton sailcloth for slipcovers, table skirts, and draperies, and save the pricey textiles for throw pillows and trims.
- **If you have to decide between costly materials and costly labor, choose the labor.** An artisan can make your dollar-a-yard fabric look like a million bucks. Elegance is found in details, whether it's sewing trims, borders, and appliqués or painting color washes and stripes (thin lines or bands) -- touches of finery many of us can't craft for ourselves.
- **Remember that the objective is not just to see how inexpensively you can get by but to make every money-saving method count.** If you do your own painting and paperhanging, you'll have more funds left for furnishings, frills, and labor.

Make the most of what you have, and then fill in the blanks. Some of the best design ideas are free. Simply rearranging the furniture -- floating it away from the walls, or turning it on the diagonal -- can transform a tired room. Moving a piece of furniture from one room to another can improve the look of both. Experiment with what's on hand before you go shopping for replacements.

In a featureless room, architectural details can make a big difference for a little price. Wood moldings from the lumberyard or home center are the equivalents of architectural appliqué. They come in a wide range of sizes and styles, and they can be painted or stained. Use them to frame windows, doors, or panels of wallpaper, or to create a chair or plate rail.

Similarly, a wallpaper border is architecture by the roll. It can add ornamental detail to plain rooms and alter the perceived shape and dimension of spaces.

- Even if you can't afford a masterpiece, you don't have to settle for bare walls. Cut out, mat, and frame 20 pages of a book featuring botanical illustrations or architectural sketches. Mount them on a single wall to achieve the collective impact of one large work of art.
- Turn an ordinary print or poster into an extraordinary piece of art by splurging on professional matting and framing. Elaborate mats and frames can make an inexpensive print look far more sophisticated.

With just a hammer and nail, you're on your way to turning framed treasures into dramatic groupings. But before getting too hammer-happy, make templates of your artwork by tracing the perimeters on Kraft paper. Cut out the shapes and tape them to your wall, rearranging until you're happy with the look. Nail through the paper, adjusting nail position according to the frame hangers. Remove paper and hang artwork.

Because they come in coordinated solids and patterns, sheets take the guesswork out of mixing and matching. Plus, they tend to be less expensive than the same yardage of fabric. Use them to make curtains, craft table skirts, or upholster a salvaged headboard. Turn sheets into a shower curtain or a skirt for a wall-mount sink. Or appliqué strips of sheet fabric to inexpensive towels for a high-end coordinated look.

Fabric, like paint, covers a multitude of sins and can make a dramatic difference in an entire room. It also allows you to change the character of your decor seasonally. Use a floral-chintz print for wicker-chair cushions in the summer, and switch to a red-and-black tartan plaid in the winter. Because cushions take so little fabric, you may find what you need on sale in remnant quantities. If you don't sew, have an upholsterer make the covers for you at a reasonable cost.

- **For old chairs, consider new slipcovers:** they can give a brand-new look at a fraction of the price.
- **You don't need expensive fabrics to create a luxe look.** The trick to using inexpensive fabric effectively is using lots of it.

Instead of just one skirt on a round table, use three: a maxi, a mid, and a mini. Layering conveys luxury.

- **For a monochromatic look, use a solid-color fabric that matches the walls** -- perhaps sea-foam green, dove gray, ivory, camel, or creamy yellow -- for slipcovers, table skirts, and window treatments. In lieu of pattern, choose fabrics with texture to increase visual appeal and tactile qualities.
- **Mixing fabric patterns and colors is trickier**, of course, but you can improve the odds of doing it successfully by starting with a paisley or floral, adding a stripe or plaid, then introducing a solid color.
- **Study rooms in decorating magazines and books, and you'll find most have three fabric colors in diminishing proportions** -- for example, lots of blue, a little less white, and just a smidgen of yellow as an accent. It's a reliable formula that works for any color scheme.
- **Repetition creates continuity.** Sew pillows from the curtain fabric; trim curtains and pillows with the same fringe.

Looking for abundance? You can stuff a room with furniture and accessories -- an expensive proposition -- or you can buy fewer but bigger items.

Splurge on one worthy focal-point element and you won't have to spend so much on the elements around it. Try an oversize mirror instead of several small ones, for instance. Consider a large armoire you can appreciate every day instead of four tiny tables that never get noticed. Six small throw pillows won't do as much for an ordinary sofa as two 24 x 24-inch ones, which can change the sofa's profile and personality dramatically.

Often, the smartest buy is knowledge. Buying a few hours of an interior designer's time could help you decide where best to spend your limited resources and might keep you from making costly mistakes you'll have to live with for a long time.

Look for ideas that are low-cost or even no-cost. Study furniture vignettes in furniture stores and design centers. Go on house tours, and visit model homes and designer show houses. Pay attention to the

colors and materials you encounter in restaurants, banks, and clothing stores.

In the end, it's not how much money you spend on decorating that matters but how wisely you spend it. Imagination is your most potent ally. To make the most of finite resources, be willing to take an unconventional -- even eccentric -- approach. Make the process of feathering your nest affordably an exercise in creativity, not an exercise in making do. Explore, experiment, and dare to be different, and your home will almost automatically reflect the good sense, good taste, good humor, and good will you put into it.

For as little as \$25, you can create a brand-new complexion with paint.

But don't automatically resort to play-it-safe white, even if you're hesitant about stronger hues. White walls produce a gallery effect that almost demands beautiful objects and furnishings. And white intensifies the perception that something is missing if a room is sparsely furnished. Pastels and darker hues have a way of filling up a room's blank spaces.

You don't have to stick with solid colors, either. Bookstores offer volumes on decorative-painting techniques: combing, glazing, ragging, and stenciling. With a little patience and practice, anyone who can hold a brush can turn an ordinary wall into a work of art for pennies a square foot.

Paint has just as much potential on floors and furnishings as it does on walls. Two coats of deck or latex paint topped with three coats of polyurethane will produce a beautiful finish on tile, linoleum, or even old wood floors that are beyond salvage.

There are many different "styles" that can be incorporated in different rooms of your house. We'll try to touch on the most popular ones and help you give your home a new look.

MINIMALIST STYLE

This style is best suited for small spaces because when you decorate with the minimalist look in mind, the focus is on less rather

than more. It is a very simplistic style that offers just a few pieces of accents and not a lot of color.

Minimalist decorating is often confused to be an approach adequately dealt with within the concepts of modern decorating and design. It is much more. Minimalism can be quite modern or it can be retro. What it is is one manifestation of a total way of thinking. It is a way of viewing our world in general and then, our inner space in particular.

If you are like most people, you probably find yourself puzzling for a way to understand the values of Minimalist decorating. To acquire an appreciation of it's point. Without living the lifestyle or possessing a pre-disposition for prescribing to the theories, it is a difficult thing to do. Where other decorating forms work to create a state of mind, Minimalism is a state of mind.

Born out of a post World War II Minimalist movement in other art forms where a distillation to the essentials resulted in a "works-that-were because they existed" philosophy. The new approach to Minimalism maintains order but, is more relaxed. This has resulted in a broadening of the appeal. This decorating form will always have a place among those who view their home as an oasis of order in a world of chaos and clutter.

Minimalist decorating doesn't necessarily mean everything is stripped down. It means everything serves a specific function. Aesthetically, you will notice emphasis placed on a building's envelope by reducing dividing walls to create open floor plans. Not always are structural changes your option or desire but, if you have a space whose openness lends itself to Minimalist decorating you have a head start. If not, you will want to work toward creating a Minimalist illusion and feel by applying the main elements to what you have – an open feel, clean lines, order and wasting not on needless adornments.

Minimalist detractors might like to say you are creating a decorating wasteland but your goal is to create a space appropriate to the way you want to live. The result can be very rewarding personally and widely appealing; even to those detractors. It is a long known fact simple living leads to a more relaxed and tranquil life. After all, isn't that a worthwhile accomplishment?

Get rid of some of the standard notions usually applied to the use of color in decorating. In Minimalist decorating, there isn't an

attempt to create drama through the power of color. Wall colors are white based cool teals, greens and coral for example and a predominance of use of the purist of white. This highly reflective, neutral palette allows light to do its work. There is a space making effect when light plays upon smooth white walls. Architectural features are more visible and center stage is given over to better emphasize objects you'll use in decoration.

Consider this. One survey of condo buyers shows that those persons who chose texture to be their favorite decorating element,

The absence of textured relief was their favorite aspect of Minimalist decorating.

Texture is something that can block the way of Minimalist sophistication. Most fabrics are sleek and smooth yet soft to the touch. Fabric window treatments are non-existent, neither are windows trimmed out; favored are 90 degree plastered corner beads. Wood flooring is butt joined plank, flawlessly smooth and shiny. Base moldings are linear, used for the function of covering the wall to floor gap, not for the purpose of being noticed for its profile design. Kitchen cabinetry is lacquered to a super high shine and topped with polished granite.

Where texture does appear it is because function requires. Rectangular patterned area rugs and grainy leather upholstery come to mind.

Let the flow of space and light create much of your decoration without the confusion of ornamentation.

Pure simplicity is your conscience keeping the focus on an absence of clutter. Collections of hung artwork are not needed where one or two impressively perfect pieces will help not detract from the architecture of a particular room. Look for strong geometric shapes and asymmetry. Chrome used in furniture construction can be enhanced by the addition of a single, heavy, chrome ball form. Electronic equipment components selected for their quality and leading edge design can be set up to be artistic accessory pieces which exemplify the dual use or functional criteria.

Be selective and show a respect of space. The lines of your favorite piece of furniture when given enough space in which to value

it, will multiply in decorating worth. Stay disciplined and those things you value won't be lost in an over crowded home.

You see! The space doesn't have to be architect designed to achieve the desirable minimalist look.

I'm a big fan of the casual look because the casual decorating style focuses on comfort and being an inviting environment.

CASUAL STYLE

Do you long for a casual style room that is homey, warm, comfortable, and inviting? Who doesn't want to be comfortable in their own home? If you want to put together a casual style room, learn the basic elements that combine to create a truly casual room.

For starters, casual rooms have simple details, textured elements in fabrics and accessories, restful horizontal lines, soft upholstery, low-luster surfaces, and arrangements that avoid perfect symmetry.

Details are simple, and elements are rectangular or softly curved.

A room decorated in a casual style is the perfect place to have a touch of whimsy. Use an old or reconstructed birdhouse or wooden candlestick for a lamp base. Stack pieces of old luggage for a side table, or use a low vintage ironing board for a coffee table.

Casual decorating is easily incorporated into rustic, French Country, cottage, Shabby Chic, or American Country decorating styles.

With people enjoying more relaxed lifestyles, many homes today are totally decorated using the elements of casual decorating. But any home can incorporate the elements into a guest room, country kitchen, guest room, or bath. The elements of a casual style of decorating can sneak into most any room and make it feel comfortable.

The elements of a casual style of decorating are discussed below. Use any or all of these tips to bring the casual decorating style to your rooms.

- Furniture in a casual interior is soft and comfortable. Upholstered pieces are usually oversized and slip covered.
- Many pieces of upholstered furniture are covered in neutral colors, such as tan, gray, beige, or off-white. But other colors are used, too. Soft pastels give a peaceful feeling. Or try darker tones such as navy, rust, olive or forest green, wine, and cranberry for punch.
- Fabrics on furniture and pillows are usually textured, rather than shiny. Interesting weaves of natural fibers like cotton, linen, and wool are typical. New synthetic weaves give a natural look and add durability.
- For special accents on upholstered pieces, add ruffles, pleats, buttons, ribbon, or cording. Contrasting colored details incorporate the full range of colors in the room.
- To achieve a casual look, pieces are often long, large, and horizontal, rather than vertical and tall and petite. Tables are chunky and of a large scale, which gives a comfortable feeling, while providing space for storage and spreading out. This helps to create a restful look.
- A room decorated in a casual style is the perfect place for found items of wicker, iron, and rattan, or flea market finds. Old antiques fit in well.
- A room decorated in a casual style often has furniture arranged on the diagonal, cutting off sharp corners. Matched pieces are not required, as the focus is on easy.
- An ottoman is essential for comfort. Add a large wooden or rattan tray to convert it to a coffee table.
- Light woods are often used for furniture pieces and wood flooring. Oak and pine are the most popular, either painted or finished with a flat, low luster varnish to protect the grain.
- Hammered iron, antiqued brass, wrought iron, porcelain, or carved wood are used for the hardware on doors and drawers.
- Collections of treasured or found items are often arranged to add the casual look. The shelf of a bookcase or corner tabletop is the

perfect place for an arrangement of treasures.

- Bedrooms in a casual home would not be without a mountain of pillows and a comfortable quilt.
- Window coverings in a casual room usually start with shutters, blinds or shades for privacy and light control.

Keep in mind that a room decorated in a casual style should be:

- Comfortable, homey, welcoming, and sturdy.
- Fabrics should be soft and textured.
- Furniture is long, overstuffed, and low.
- Surfaces worn and rugged.
- Accessories are old and rustic.
- A touch of whimsy is in order.

Use a casual style wherever you want to create a warm, inviting atmosphere.

Some people are just drawn towards the formal, elegant look when it comes to decorating. Yes, it's true that some rooms that are designed with elegant elements are striking to look at. Here's some good ways to achieve that formal look.

FORMAL STYLE

If you love the look of elegant Ritz-Carlton hotels or public buildings such as the White House, you're probably drawn to their formal style of decorating.

While homes today are not usually constructed with 18" deep baseboard moldings, hand-laid herringbone-patterned hardwood floors, or elaborate carved plaster ceiling and wall decorations, there are elements of the formal style of decorating that can be added to more modern homes.

One of the most distinguishing features of interior spaces and homes decorated in a formal style is the symmetry of windows, furniture, artwork, and flooring. These elements are most often arranged in exact pairs on a straight axis around the room.

In a formal style interior, a central focal point draws the eye.

It might be a beautiful picture window looking out to a perfectly manicured lawn. The focal point might be a fireplace in the center of the longest wall. Or the focal point might be an exquisite piece of furniture.

A formal style of decorating fits best in a home with high ceilings, large and tall windows, and architectural features such as a large fireplace mantle or beautifully paneled walls.

Since formal style interiors are decorated to attract the attention and possible envy of others, highly polished woods, glistening mirrors, luxurious and sensual fabrics, sparkling crystal chandeliers and wall sconces, highly polished brass window and door hardware, and unique and interesting pieces of furniture are important.

Furniture and accessories in formal interiors are often antique or fine reproductions. Woods used are generally dark and rich looking, but lighter woods are often used for decoration.

Imported Oriental rugs cover polished hardwood floors. The original artwork is often elaborately framed in hand-carved gilt frames. Crystal light fixtures sparkle on the walls and hang from the center of the ceiling.

The details of formal style decorating are:

- Pairs of furniture and accessories
- Shiny wood, fabric, and metals
- Tall windows with elaborate coverings
- Antique furniture and accessories
- Original oil paintings and lithographs
- Persian carpets and Oriental rugs
- Chandeliers and light fixtures of crystal or brass
- Decorative trims of tassels and fringe
- Carved details on wood furniture

Of course, just because you love the look of a formal interior doesn't mean that it will suit your home or lifestyle. But you can use some of the elements to create a formal home for today's living.

- Soften tightly upholstered furniture pieces with decorative, comfortable pillows.

- Choose lush-looking durable fabrics in place of silks and velvets.
- Feature one or two uncomfortable formal pieces, but place more practical pieces of furniture around the room for everyday use.
- Incorporate formal trim and fringe on sensible upholstered furniture, comfortable pillows, draperies, and valances.
- Add ruffles and tassels on accessories such as tablecloths and table runners, but make them out of easily-cleaned fabrics.
- Instead of searching for perfectly matched pieces to create a perfectly symmetrical room, find pieces that are similar in size, density, and style.
- Or arrange the furniture for a formal look by having pairs of chairs, pairs of tables, and pairs of lamps. Arrange them on either side of a sofa, picture window, armoire, or dominant work of art.
- Decorative painting techniques can imitate the look of upholstered silk walls and are much more practical.
- Wooden furniture (case goods) is usually of a dark tone. Mahogany, walnut, and oak, as well as exotic hardwoods are used for their fine grain and elegant look. Wooden furniture pieces are polished to a high shine. For an active home, use several layers of lacquer or polyurethane to create a durable finish.
- Wooden inlay and parquetry, gold-leafed ornamentation, and polished brass hardware are hallmarks of formal pieces. Achieve the look of hand-carving by applying die-cut decorative pieces on furniture. Period or reproduction pieces might have leather trim or a marble top.

When you're ready to add formal decorating to your home, don't forget the accessories and special touches.

- Many formal interiors have carved mirrors hanging in matched pairs. They help to define a space and enlarge the visual feeling of the space. Instead of gold-leafing, highlight details with shiny gold paint.

- Furniture and accessories should look as though they're adorned with hand-carved accents and gold- or silver-leafing.
- Soft goods such as upholstery, pillows, and window treatments made of sensible fabrics can be adorned with trims. Tassels accent pillow corners and drapery swags, fringe is often used on the bottoms of upholstered pieces, and many patterned fabrics of different textures and weaves are used together. By simply adding a row of 6" fringe to the bottom of a plain colored sofa, you'll have a more formal look. |
- In place of silk, velvet, or satin, choose synthetic, washable fabrics for window treatments.
- Formally dressed windows usually have draperies to the floor with contrasting trim topped by a valance or cornice box of perfect proportions.
- Lighting fixtures of crystal or brass with delicate silk shades create a formal look. An inexpensive chandelier can be spray-painted to get the metallic look that's desired. Chandeliers look elegant and formal in a large living room, formal dining room, bedroom, or small powder room.
- Decorative accessories are used to add a formal look to a room. Choose shiny metals, plates and vases of china or porcelain, or leather-bound books. Pairs of accessories carry through the symmetry of the decor.
- Real or artificial plants and flowers, placed in interesting and elegant containers, add texture and color to a formal interior.
- A dining room is the perfect place to introduce a formal look. Choose from a wide range of elegant and beautiful china, crystal, and silver. A simple gold-banded dinner plate set atop elegant linens with sparkling silver flatware and beautiful cut crystal stemware creates a perfect formal setting for dining.

If you like the precise, ordered formal style, find ways to incorporate some of it into your home. However, if you're less fond of the formal look, you may prefer a casual style.

Shabby Chic is another beautiful way to enhance your home décor. It brings in elements of old style antiques and design to make the environment both comfortable and familiar

SHABBY CHIC STYLE

Shabby Chic is a comfortable, casual look using vintage accessories, pastels, and comfortable furniture. While people have been living with old lace tablecloths, dreamy soft floral fabrics, light painted furniture, wrought iron curtain rods with filmy sheer curtains, and colorful fresh flowers for a long time, Shabby Chic decorating style was brought to popularity by Rachel Ashwell.

Think of visiting with your grandmother, snuggled in comfortable soft furniture. Fresh flowers look beautiful and the soft scent of candles fills the room. A home decorated in the Shabby Chic style can provide the same sensation for your own home.

Shabby Chic is no particular style, but rather balances elegant things with old and worn, shiny silver accessories with painted wooden tables, soft throw rugs with rough old lace.

Here are some of the ways you can use a Shabby Chic decorating style in your home:

- **Soft Delicate Colors**

If you love bold primary colors, Shabby Chic is not for you. Soft white, muted grey, pale pink, and faded green all have a place in a Shabby Chic interior.

- **Tea Stained Fabrics**

Collect fabrics from around the house or buy vintage-looking fabrics even if they're new. To give the illusion of age, fabric can be made to look old, worn, faded, and soft by staining them with a brew of tea. Be sure to test a piece of fabric first to get just the right shade. You can change something that's stark white to a soft creamy white-- just right for the look.

- **Combine Patterns and Colors**

Combine stripes, checks, and floral fabrics to achieve a warm and inviting look. Gather yardage or fabrics from yard sales and flea markets. You don't have to follow traditional rules of combining prints, but for easiest mixing keep the background color the same (white or ivory, etc.). Then choose one color to repeat in almost every fabric, such as a soft green or pale pink.

- **White painted furniture**

Almost any piece of wooden furniture will fit into a Shabby Chic interior if it's painted white. Collect pieces from flea markets, garage sales, and the attic. Spray with white paint, sand off the corners and rough it up a little, and voila - you have Shabby Chic furniture. You'd be surprised how a coat of paint transforms a dark dingy chair or table.

- **Think Outside the Box**

Not every chair has to be sat on. How about using a sturdy, painted straight chair as a table at the side of a bed or sofa or in a corner to hold a vase of flowers? An old picnic bench or trunk can serve as a coffee table. Stack wooden boxes at the side of a chair for books and flowers. Be creative and use what you have.

Here are some other ways to bring the wonderful, warm look of Shabby Chic into your home.

- **Slipcovers**

You can camouflage old, drab furniture and cover up mismatched pieces with soft slipcovers. Whether you have a slipcover custom made, make your own, or buy a throw at a store, you can get just the look you want without investing in a new piece of furniture. Most pieces are covered in white, but soft faded prints will work too. Since you'll probably want to wash the slipcovers occasionally, be sure the fabric is easy care! How about a cool white look for summer and a warm stripe or floral for cooler seasons?

- **Overstuffed Upholstery**

For a welcoming and inviting look, upholstered furniture in a Shabby Chic interior is comfortable, oversized, wrinkled, with a slipcover.

Sofas are long and chairs are almost big enough to seat two. Delicate prints cover soft throw pillows.

- **No Iron Needed**

A rumpled, wrinkled, but neat look is perfect for the Shabby Chic style. Upholstered or slip-covered furniture should look well-used and very loved!

- **Architectural Details**

Anything old and beautiful will have a place in this style of decorating. Glass door knobs, pillars, an old mantle, and rusted old iron shelf brackets or hooks can add texture to any room.

- **The More Rust, the Better**

Decorative accessories and wrought iron furniture are perfect compliments to a Shabby Chic interior. If the rust is peeling or flaking off, sand it lightly and seal with two coats of a flat, clear spray varnish.

- **Delight All the Senses With Flowers and Candles**

Add a wonderful glow and delicious fragrance with scented candles. Be sure to have bunches of fresh flowers scattered around, whether in a glass jar or beautiful painted vase. Include pretty books on flowers to add color. Floral prints look comfortable and add texture on soft throw pillows.

- **Everything Old is New Again**

Even the most broken-down or dingy of elegant formal furniture pieces can be adapted to a Shabby Chic decor. If it's broken, fix it, clean it up, and paint it white. If it's rusted, clean it up (but only a little) and find it a new home. If the paint is chipped, you're lucky. If it's broken, find a new use for it. If the mirror is scratched, scratch it some more.

Because Shabby Chic style is so adaptable, it's a perfect way to decorate a guest room or family room. With the focus on warmth and comfort, everyone will be comfortable. Have fun putting together your Shabby Chic room.

Paris is the epitome of fashion and design. It seems that the French have the most envied sense of style in the world. You can make your living space into a Parisian paradise too.

PARIS APARTMENT STYLE

The image of a Paris apartment brings the thought of intrigue, romance, and European beauty to mind. Rooms have high ceilings with grand architectural details. A small balcony with a wrought iron railing overlooks a quaint street or the River Seine. Windows are tall. Pedestrians bustle on the streets below.

Paris apartment decorating style ranges through many decorating periods, including baroque, rococo, and neoclassical. Contemporary Parisian apartments incorporate art deco, Mediterranean, old world, and cabaret influences.

Rich jewel colors like emerald green, crimson, and royal blues are accented with black, white, and gold. Burnished gilt touches accent architectural details and carving on furniture. Furniture and accessories have time-worn elegance and a vintage look.

Chairs, tables, and armoires painted in black or cream bear golden accents. They blend beautifully with dark, carved wood. Rich, shimmering silks and luxurious brocades and velvets enhance upscale interiors.

To finish out a Paris style interior, accessories and motifs include vintage posters of French nightspots, French signs, large train station clocks, black wrought iron tables and shelving, and any scenes of France, Paris, or the Eiffel Tower.

If you're trying to bring the Paris apartment decorating style to your home, try to incorporate some of these elements in your space:

- Black is the accent color and a unifying element in Paris rooms. Bring black into your home without making things look dark. Find painted wood furniture, picture frames, fabrics, lampshades and accessories in black or with black trim.
- To really bring Paris to your room, use large posters of French landmarks, nightspots, and Parisian buildings. If you can find

paintings, etchings, old black and white postcards, or sepia-toned photos of anything French, all the better.

- Large clocks are often a focal point in a Paris room. Find a reproduction clock with lettering in French or that shows a French scene. The older it looks the better! It doesn't have to work. It just has to look great!
- Toile, roosters, fleur de lis, chateaux, pastoral scenes, views of the Eiffel Tower, Monet impressionist paintings, and pictures of riverboats on the Seine are popular decorating motifs that are easy to find.
- Don't try to match the elements in your room. Furniture and accessories should look old and used, but not shabby.
- For light fixtures, select wall sconces with black silk shades, crystal chandeliers, and fringed lampshades on table lamps. A gold foil lining on a black lampshade will help to reflect a romantic glow. Add your own beads, fringe, and cording to simple lampshades if you can't find any already embellished.
- Round tables should have layers of skirts. Add a plush cushion to an intricately twisted iron bench. Nothing says Paris more than a little bistro table and chairs. Use a large ottoman covered in rich fabric in place of a coffee table.
- Velvet, damask, brocade, lustrous silks, and traditional toiles are found in Paris style rooms. Toile is often paired with coordinating color checked fabrics in both large and small scales. Add a luxurious old-world look with tassels, cording, fringes, and other details. Textured linen, weathered leather, paisley designs, and bold stripes can be used.
- Furniture should be upholstered with beautiful fabrics, dressmaker details, and have carved legs. Cushions of down provide the slightly rumpled look of comfort and elegance.
- Wood furniture pieces of carved, dark tones or stains are often tinged with touches of gilt. Black and ivory paint, distressed and crackled, give wood pieces an aged look. There's no such thing as matching furniture. Pieces should look as though they were found through a lifetime.

- Every Paris style bedroom has a decadent vanity table. Add a luxurious look to a simple table by dressing it with silk, mirrors, and voluminous ruffles. Dress it with vintage accessories, frames, and perfume bottles.
- Use large vintage mirrors, architectural elements (columns, corbels), garden statuary, black wire ware, clocks, hat boxes, luxurious silk pillows, soft throws, vintage candelabra, flowers, plants, china, and delicate porcelain figurines to accessorize a Paris style room. Find dramatic hats or vintage linens at swap meets and antique shops.
- Depending on the style of the room and its use, windows can have elaborate, flowing drapery panels topped with swagged valances, ruffles, tassels, silk cording, or bouillon fringes. A simpler room could use linen or toile panels over shutters or wooden blinds.
- Hardwood flooring is stained dark and covered with old Oriental carpets. They add a grounding pattern, color, and age.

Paris apartment interiors appeal to our sense of glamour and European style. By using some of the elements here, you can bring the look to your own home.

Let's move from the city of Paris to the countryside of France and see how you can decorate in French Country Style.

FRENCH COUNTRY STYLE

When you think of Provence and the French countryside, you're sure to see lavender fields and bright sunshine. While there are many elements that contribute to the French Country style of decorating, the resulting look is always rustic, old-world, and welcoming. The look fits well into both country houses and elegant, old chateaux. The French Country style of decorating, with its warm and casual feel will fit beautifully into your home as well.

Colors used to decorate in the French Country style come from the full spectrum of the color wheel. Sunny yellow and soft gold, fiery red and burnt rust, bright grass green and dark hunter green, cobalt

blue and soft ocean tones -- all these are found in this wonderful decorating style.

Bright black and dull grays punctuate the bright colors and define accessory pieces.

Rusted metal furniture, lighting fixtures, and furniture give warm color and wonderful lines.

An important element in pieces used in French Country style decorating is the use of natural materials. Rough stained or painted plaster walls, hefty beamed ceilings and walls, delicate carved wood details, and chair seats woven of rush give texture and simplicity to the look. Natural stone floors are covered with wool or cotton rugs.

No real French Country home is complete without a stone fireplace. A heavy beam at the top of the opening serves as a mantle. Tiles, either stone or ceramic, form the border. The hearth is clay or brick, and herbs, copper pots, and iron accessory pieces hang on the side walls.

Read on for more ideas on how to create the look of the French Country style of decorating in your home. Use some or all of the elements to feel comfortable with this style.

Architectural features like stone walls and floors, raw wood distressed ceiling beams and timbers and irregular plaster walls form the frame of a home decorated in the French Country style.

New or reproduction rustic furniture has the ambiance of curved panels, hand-carved decorations, and raw wood. No room decorated in the French Country style would be without an armoire to store pots and pans, clothing, bed or bath linens, or tableware.

A large dining table, rectangle or round, must have a dull waxed or low-sheen finish. Curved and carved details grace dining and occasional chairs. Chairs are either ladder-back style or have vertical slats, often with rush seating.

Rustic flooring is of stone, clay, or brick.

Old wooden boards work well, too. The focus here is on old and charming.

Typical of French Country interiors are pieces with contrasting texture and color. Pale plaster walls and ceilings are punctuated with dark rough wood beams. Colorful Provencal printed fabrics are set off against light-toned natural seating.

Deeply cut window sills hold tall, narrow windows. Shutters close to keep the hot sun out in the summer. Windows and doorways are encircled with wildly growing vines.

The beautiful colors of the French countryside decorate fabrics used in French Country decorating. The traditional fabrics combine well with basic plaids, checks, and stripes in modern homes. Provencal prints combine shades of primary colors with greens, lavenders, and bright orange.

Traditional French country products and motifs include roosters, olives, sunflowers, grapes, lavender, and beetles. The designs are often arranged in regular intervals, bordered by a wide panel of the motifs in different scale. This is typical for textile products such as tablecloths and curtain panels.

Toile is a traditional design for French Country fabrics. A white, cream, or yellow ground has large motifs in a single contrasting color, such as black, blue, red, or green. Toile themes include farm animals, monkeys and Chinese patterns, bucolic country scenes, or courting scenes of the 18th century. Most toile patterns are printed on linen or cotton.

Generous baskets woven or wire baskets, colorful ceramics and tiles, carved wood pieces, and Chinoiserie pottery, and natural grasses are used for accessories in a room decorated in the French Country style. Old, dark or colorful paintings adorn the walls.

Lush natural flowers are everywhere! Baskets, an old pitcher or copper pot, or clear glass vases hold flowers inside and out. The aim is to bring the wonderful colors and textures of nature into the home. Window boxes outside shout with the colors of whatever will grow. Geraniums and lavender are especially popular.

Both colorful and muted pottery adorns a French Country table. (No fine china here!) The same themes of roosters, olives, and vivid flowers are found on tableware. Don't forget iron candle holders, wire baskets, heavy pottery water pitchers, and colorful tablecloths.

By incorporating some or all of the elements mentioned here, you're bound to have a wonderful French Country interior in your home. C'est bon!

Just as Paris is an amazing city and France is beautiful country, the country of Italy brings to mind certain images when it comes to style and decorating.

TUSCAN STYLE

Homes decorated in the Tuscan style are inspired by the elements of nature. Crumbling stone walls, intricate wrought iron accessories, sun-washed hillsides, rustic stone farmhouses, marble flooring and sturdy hardwood furniture are just some of the wonderful elements of this decorating style.

Because almost anyone can visualize himself in such a peaceful setting, it's no wonder that Tuscan style decorating is so popular for today's homes.

The appeal lies in its simplicity. By combining comfortable, worn, loved pieces, a room becomes warm and inviting. There's no attempt at pretense here.

From ancient Roman times, people moved to the beautiful hills of central Italy to remove themselves from city life, escape the intrigue of politics, and embrace the idealized culture of the country.

They enjoyed the beauty of nature and incorporated the elements into their villas. These same elements are what make Tuscan style decorating so appealing for our homes today.

Using sturdy materials that stand the test of time, the look of Tuscan style decorating is rustic, warm, and inviting. Nothing should look shiny and new.

Using the natural materials found in this area of Italy, the Tuscan home is built of sandstone or limestone, available in a wide range of hues. Marble is found in abundance and is used for decorative details, flooring, arches, and pillars.

Homes have an enduring quality about them and look solid and substantial. Terracotta roof tiles can be seen everywhere in Tuscany,

and should be incorporated into any home being designed in the Tuscan style.

Deep-set windows framed by sandstone are often protected with rustic wooden shutters.

Outdoor spaces are critically important, and a home incorporating Tuscan style decorating must include a patio, loggia, or portico. Walls built of sandstone bricks frame today's home, where in ancient times they served as a defense.

Water is a critical element in Tuscan style decorating, and many homes have a water fountain in the central courtyard surrounded by beautiful, wildly growing greenery. Marble statues grace outdoor spaces. Tall, graceful cypress trees sway in the breeze.

Walkways, driveways, and garden paths are set with stone or brick. Nature takes its course and grass grows up between the stones. How charming!

The outdoors is brought into a home decorated in the Tuscan style. Woods, stone, and color are important elements.

Natural stone walls are left natural. Stuccoed walls are colored with Venetian plaster, color washing or faux painting techniques to give a worn, well-loved look.

True old Tuscan style rooms can have low ceilings and can be small and dark. But today's Tuscan rooms use wooden beams, plastered ceilings, and can have an open, airy feeling. Windows are left uncovered to take advantage of natural light.

Wooden surfaces such as cupboards, door and window frames, shutters or ceiling beams are often left with a natural patina.

Colors in Tuscan style decorating come from the earth. Terracotta, brick, ochre, greens, and golden yellow are seen everywhere. Blue and green are added to contribute a visual cooling effect in areas with hot weather.

Surfaces that have been painted add a dash of color even when the finish wears off.

Often walls are painted with a soft white or gray, while accent colors and natural woods and stone provide the interest. Ceilings have dark open timbers. Venetian plaster is a technique for adding texture and color to new walls.

Homes incorporating a Tuscan style decor often use flooring of wide wood planks, timber boards, rough stone, unevenly-colored terracotta bricks, or clay tiles. Antique rugs add warmth and color.

The furniture in a Tuscan style home is usually of straight, simple lines made from rough-sawn local woods. Accents of tile, wrought iron, and marble are common. To achieve the worn look, new pieces of dark woods or pine are often "distressed" at the factory.

Open cupboards and armoires are found in almost any room and are used for dishes, linens, and clothes. Door fronts are often left open with chicken wire.

No Tuscan style kitchen is complete without a long, family-style wooden table.

Open shelves and free-standing cupboards provide storage in a Tuscan style kitchen and a place to display ceramics and pottery. A kitchen sink is made of natural stone or porcelain. Cabinet and sink hardware are often of dark wrought iron. Install a copper range hood surrounded by tumbled marble tiles at the stove area.

Display copper pots from a wrought iron rack, use terracotta containers as accents and storage, and add color with majolica dinnerware.

Incorporate Tuscan themes in accent touches in your kitchen with displays of pasta in glass jars, a braid of onions or garlic, jars of olives, and flowers.

The natural elements of stone, wood, water and color are essential in any Tuscan style home. By using all of the elements, you're sure to achieve this look that feels warm and welcoming.

Think about the home you grew up in, or maybe the home of a friend or other family member. You're likely to have several different thoughts about how that home was decorated. That is the traditional style.

TRADITIONAL STYLE

Traditional style interiors are comforting and classic. You may have grown up in a home that was decorated with traditional style furnishings.

There is nothing wild or chaotic in a traditional room. It is calm, orderly, and can be somewhat predictable.

Furnishings might look a bit outdated to some, while others will enjoy an interior that embraces the benefits of classic styling.

Traditional and formal styles can be similar in some respects. In both, symmetry is extremely important. Furniture in both formal and traditional interiors is often arranged on a straight axis and centered within the room. In addition, furnishings and accessories are often seen in pairs and straight lines are contrasted with curved details.

The point where formal and traditional part ways is in the degree of interpretation. Formal can be somewhat rigid, symmetrical, and almost too shiny and perfect, often using expensive period furnishings and fine antiques. Traditional rooms are less grand and a bit more casual, often using less expensive reproductions and accessories and fewer fussy details.

This homey style is easy to spot in magazines and furniture stores. While often eclipsed by popular casual and flashier contemporary styles, it is still a well-loved and enduring look for a home.

Here are some of the elements of a traditional room:

- Upholstered furniture in a traditional room exhibits classic lines and understated details. It is functional, unfussy, and restful looking. Edges are soft, smooth, and blend into the whole.
- In general a traditional room will use a mix of vertical lines with more restful, horizontal lines. Gentle curves are seen in furniture, pillows, and accessories.
- Fabrics in a traditional room are generally neither too shiny nor too textured. Florals, plain colors, muted plaids, understated

stripes, geometrics, tone-on-tone and small all-over patterns are common.

- Color in a traditional room is often in a mid-range of tones, though very dark and very light colors can also be used. Pretty multi-color florals are often the basis of a traditional color scheme that uses the lightest color on the walls and deeper hues for upholstery and flooring. Avoid neon brights and jarring combinations.
- The overall ambience of traditional decor is homey, understated, and non-jarring.
- As in formal settings, furniture in a traditional room is often arranged on straight axis within the room. The sofa will directly face or sit perpendicular to the fireplace and a bed will back up to the center of the longest bedroom wall.
- Wood furniture will usually have a mix of straight and curved lines. There may be light carving details as well. While wood pieces will often be finished with darker stains, a traditional room might also use lighter woods as long as the lines of each piece are classic.
- Interiors in a traditional home will often feature trim and molding that is painted glossy white. Crown molding is common and adds to the formal look. Walls might have a chair rail and simple molding details, with wall surfaces done in a flat painted finish or wallpaper. Ceilings are often white and may have simple beams.
- The dining room in a traditional home is generally a separate room, often with some built-in corner cabinets for china storage. A large area rug sits on top of a hardwood floor. The table is rectangular with a set of matched chairs placed evenly around the perimeter. A matching sideboard, buffet, or china cabinet is centered on one wall.
- Dressmaker details are not particularly important in a traditional room. Trims, tassels, and fringes are used sparingly if at all, in favor of a simpler, calmer look.
- Window coverings in traditional rooms show traditional style. Look for narrow shutters, traverse draperies, and under treatments of pinch pleated sheers. Cornices and valances may

also be featured.

- Accessories include pairs of lamps, urns, plants, mirrors, framed prints, china, vases, and collections of books. Pairs of objects are usually arranged in balanced symmetry.
- Light fixtures exhibit classic styling. Lamps with silk shades, wall sconces, and floor lamps might all be used. Shades should be fairly plain and in ivory or white.
- Traditional dining rooms can show off a variety of china, glassware, and silver. Plates might be a classic gold-rimmed style or a simple floral design. Use either beautiful tablecloths or pretty fabric placemats and napkins.

Who doesn't love the tropics – the thought of laying on a sandy beach and then retiring into a cabana decorated with the sense of palm trees and warm sun? Try doing a tropical chic theme.

TROPICAL CHIC STYLE

Tropical chic is one of the most popular looks today. It includes comfort, warmth, and a touch of the exotic, using jungle themes, restful colors, and natural textural elements.

It's a style that has fresh appeal with touches of traditional.

This is not the multi-colored jungle look you might choose for a child's room. Instead, it might be defined as "lush minimalism" since it mixes lots of texture and intricate pattern with simple details and a few large accessories.

Common motifs include stylized palm trees, large leafed banana plants, monkeys, animal prints, rattan, leather, and grass cloth.

This look is most often used in living rooms and family rooms, but can be adapted for master suites and bathrooms as well. Here are some of the underlying elements and themes of a tropical look room.

- Comfortable upholstered furniture is a must in a tropical room.

- Long horizontal lines underscore a casual look and add to a restful mood, while taller elements such as plants, screens, or artwork add a grand scale.
- Neutral tones including ivory, beige, camel, tan, deep brown, soft gold and pale yellows are the foundation of a tropical themed room. Greens are also a major element in shades that range from light sage to avocado and from yellow-greens to a green that is nearly black. Accents might be in dark brown, black, or even muted reds.
- Furniture in a tropical room is often large in scale and selected for comfort and utility. Accent pieces in wicker, bamboo, iron, and rattan will also fit well with the look.
- Fabrics should be soft and lush. Neutral solid chenille is perfect for the major upholstered pieces. Pillows, ottomans, and chairs might be done in jungle prints and leaf designs.
- Wood furniture pieces and wood flooring fit well into this look. Light woods can be used but add more weight to the room by mixing in some dark tables, lamps, or furniture feet.
- The main motifs used would be the tropical jungle look and animal designs (monkeys, elephants, etc.) used in fabrics, accent items, and accessories.
- Animal designs figure prominently in a tropical room. Consider using both animal hide designs such as leopard spots and zebra stripes as well as animal images such as monkeys, lions, and elephants.
- Large plants, especially palm trees, are a perfect addition to a tropical themed room. Add them in corners and up light from underneath using inexpensive can lights.
- Because island prints, leaves, and animal prints are a feast for the eye, avoid overdoing the room's accessories.

A few large plants, lamps, books, and some carefully selected large-scale accessories will usually be enough. Avoid lots of tiny little things and keep it simple and spare.

- Window coverings should exhibit a natural quality. Bamboo or matchstick blinds, breezy linen panels, or plantation shutters are all choices that will fit into this look.
- Grass cloth, baskets, rattan, and wicker in natural tones add another layer of texture to the room. Consider these materials for wall coverings, cornice boards, folding screens, ottomans, and more.
- Flooring might be hardwood, though tile or stone is another possibility. Accent the hard floor with area rugs of natural sisal.
- Artwork will look best if it sticks to the color palette of the room -- pale gold, ivory, browns, and greens. Hang prints with stylized leaf designs, exotic looking palm trees, and jungle animals.
- Light fixtures can add some whimsy with decorations in monkey, leaf, or jungle accents. Dark lamp shades will add more weight to the room.
- Tableware looks might include natural colored stoneware, textured placemats, loosely woven fabric napkins, and sturdy glassware. Accessorize with wooden bowls, baskets, and bamboo.

Another great popular style of decorating is the "lodge" look. This style brings the outdoors in and evokes the thought of a country mountain lodge.

LODGE STYLE

There is a good deal of emphasis today on an outdoors, rustic approach to decorating, commonly referred to as "the lodge look" or "Adirondack style." The feel of these styles recalls summer camps spent by a lake or a winter mountain retreat; there are memories of waking to the songs of chirping birds and falling asleep with only the light of the campfire.

Few of us have the luxury of time or money to retreat to the piney mountain or lakeside lodges whenever the mood strikes. However the thoughts of furnishing a room in this style are intriguing.

Regardless of your decorating skills you can get a lodge home décor theme by adding the right accessories and wall art. Changing out your window treatments, flooring, wall coverings and furniture can transform your home into a rustic lodge no matter where you live.

Window treatments are important to your lodge home décor style. For a great look try using plain cotton or canvas with tabbed tops or a lodge print fabric curtain or just plain wood blinds. There are many treatments that go with this style, especially if you use coordinating fabrics, but you probably want to avoid frilly curtains or valances.

Decorative items are key to bringing your lodge home décor style all together. Concentrate on choosing wall art, pillows and knick knacks, in colors and patterns that match your lodge design. It's amazing the impact a few simple changes can make!

Be sure to include lots of wooden bowls and old baskets as well as antique snowshoes and other camp gear and you can even try a few vintage lodge style blankets in traditional black and red plaid or stripes to really add a warm campy feel. Incorporating additional touches such as taxidermy mounts can give your home a nice final touch.

A critical thing to consider when decorating your home with a lodge home décor look is what you put on the walls. For this look the colors can really enhance the feel - you should consider having earth tones either as wallpaper or paint. Try using a split logs and chinking for a real log cabin look on the walls, or go with paint.

It's not crucial that you match the furnishings and lighting but you should include a variety of campy and rustic furniture. Try using antler chandeliers or deer hoof table lamps. You have a wide choice in furniture - leather always goes well with this look and you can even accent it with twig or antler chairs. Be sure to include some campy Native American style rugs or perhaps a sheepskin or bearskin rug in front of the fireplace.

A critical aspect that we sometimes forget when decorating your house is the wall space. Even the ugliest walls can be made to look good with decorative wall art and accessories. Try adding hunting prints and old advertising signs to your walls to really show off the campy feeling of your lodge design.

Adding a fantastic lodge look to your home doesn't have to be difficult or take a huge amount of money. Shop for bargains at your local thrift store and attend antique auctions for those campy items that will make your home unique.

You can re-do a room and make it sensational without having to buy a thing. Just work with what you have!

USING WHAT YOU'VE GOT

Are you confused as to how to 'pull a room together'? Do you want your home to feel more spacious, warm and inviting? You might be tempted to add another chair, piece of artwork or accessory hoping it will magically transform the room---instead the space feels more disjointed and cluttered. The thought of buying all new furnishings is not only daunting from a time perspective, but a very costly endeavor.

The solution is literally surrounding you! By creatively using the possessions you've accumulated over the years, you can make your home more visually appealing and comfortable---a place where your family will want to spend more time.

By showcasing your home's best features and maximizing the furnishings, artwork and accessories you already own, your home will reflect who you are and provide an inviting and interesting environment for your guests.

First things first: Dealing with your 'stuff':

To give a room a fresh, new look and feel, clear all surfaces AND clear your mind as well...completely forgetting the way the space looked before. Use an adjacent room's floor or a large counter or table top to sort the items you remove from the room. Sort 'like' items according to function, theme, color, or substance. For example, put all candles together in one area, all greenery in another and follow the same guidelines for glassware, pottery, books, collections, lamps, etc.

Next, evaluate and remember... less is more! Use what you like and what you have, but take a hard look at what you've got. Be critical. Ask yourself which pieces you still really need and love---the

remainder can be donated, taken to a consignment store or sold at a yard sale.

- Group like items. Cluster like objects -- they'll stand out more and make a more dramatic impression. Group them according to color, finish, or theme, instead of having items spread throughout the room.
- "Tack" your lighting. Much like a sailboat needs its sails tacked in a triangle in order to achieve balance and flow, your rooms will benefit from a triangular placement of lamps in order to equally distribute light throughout the room.
- Free Zones. No matter how much stuff you have, you need to have some surfaces free of objects---especially windowsills. To fully appreciate your collections and treasures, there needs to be alternating, empty areas to balance the accessorized areas. Create important 'pauses' by utilizing negative space when hanging artwork and arranging accessories. Place artwork or photos on every other wall, and notice the increased focus on the objects.
- Cluster plants and pillows. Instead of spreading plants individually throughout the room, group them together for a more dramatic effect. Gathering pillows together on sofas, beds and chairs adds more color and interest to the room.
- Furniture finesse. To maximize flow, resist the urge to push all your furnishings against the wall. Pull the big pieces away from the walls, you'll be surprised how much more spacious it makes the room feel.

Cross-utilize and rotate items. Just because something has always been in a particular room, doesn't mean it can't be 'reinvented' and revitalized in a new setting. Think outside the decorating box! A bench found in the basement becomes a side table to accent the couch. Bookshelves, once cluttered haphazardly with an assortment of knickknacks, become a display area for a collection of teapots and jars.

Believe it or not, you can actually re-do a room in a day! Yep, it's true. Check out the next section.

DECORATING IN A DAY

Great decorating does not necessarily mean it has to cost a lot of money or take a great deal of time. The things that make a home fabulous are using elements in unexpected ways. Just because they call it a china closet...doesn't mean you have to store china in it.

Don't get hung up on what the original purpose of the room was - use it how it works best for your lifestyle. Just because they called it a dining room doesn't mean it can't be a sitting room. Think outside the box and have fun with your home!

Here are some inexpensive ideas to help you to give your home a decorator's flair, many of them in just one day!! Your goal is to have people walk into your room and say, "I never would have thought of that!"

Change your window treatments for the season by sewing two fabrics together and use a simple rod pocket. I just did this for a client and we used a soft yellow and blue floral for the summer months...flip the rod around and the back side is a rich colored fabric in greens and deep reds that will give the room visual warmth. .

Bring your china cabinet into the living room. Remove the doors and merchandise it with books, accessories, and family photos....mixed in with some of your china. This creates a great focal point in a room that is missing architectural focal points.

Hang a picture low between the bottom of the lampshade and the lamp table to create an element of surprise for the person seated in the chair.

Don't neglect the ceilings in your home. Paint it (any color but white) or wallpaper it. Add some interesting wood moldings to create a faux tray ceiling look.

Float your furniture in a V-shaped arrangement instead of the predictable L.

Add elements of comfort to your room. It is equally important that a room "feels" good as well as "looks" good. For example, add an ottoman for your feet instead of a conventional coffee table. Padma

Plantations make a great one with a reversible top that is ottoman and one side and a serving table with trays on the other side.

Here are some other great tips for redecorating in a day:

- Bring down the antique dresser or chest from your guest room. Give it a place of honor in the living room or foyer.
- Other interesting curtain rod ideas for your room can be using old golf clubs, tennis racquets, copper plumbing, or PVC pipe, painted with a faux finish.
- Use a horizontal plate rack to create an instant cornice at your window. Add a scarf to it and then change the plates with the season.
- Add a glass round to a bird bath to create an interesting side table.
- Stack old suitcases to create an instant lamp table.
- Hot glue or sew bullion fringe to the bottom of your ready made draperies to create an instant custom look.
- Frame the unusual, how about a collection of antique door knobs or old silverware.

Creating a space that is multi-functional as well as interesting can be easily achieved by dividing the space into several smaller vignettes. The living or family rooms are usually the rooms where maximum usage is most desirable.

With an abundance of larger homes on the market, creating a space that feels warm and inviting can pose a challenge. As in the case of many urban dwellers space can be a costly luxury. Both of these dilemmas can be easily resolved by utilizing the space to create smaller rooms within a room.

If you have more furniture than you know what to do with, the good news is that your furnishings become more purposeful when used in a specific location. This can also elevate visual clutter which is often the result when pieces are loosely placed in a room.

Create a place for conversation or entertaining. A place where you would entertain or family gatherings would take place. By arranging the seating in a way that induce conversation you are also eliminating the need to shout. When your guest are at the edge of their seat and it's not because someone's telling a great story, its time to tighten up the seating arrangement.

How do you do that? Here are a few examples:

1. A nice comfy chair next to an occasional table with a reading lamp makes a nice place to read a book or have a cup of tea.
2. A writing desk and chair for letter writing or paying bills.
3. An accent table flanked by two chairs for more intimate conversations.
4. Chaise lounges are ideal for an afternoon napping.
5. For entertainment game tables are always a great addition.

Another way to define specific areas of the room is to use the furnishings themselves: Such as the backs of sofas or sofa tables define spaces.

- Arrange groups of seating away from each other to create separate spaces.
- The use of rugs is one of the best ways to create a wall less room.
- Screens or draperies act as a more dramatic partition.
- Free standing open shelving can give the space a very contemporary stylized look.
- And of course space itself can help to define two separate areas.
- Creating a path or flow of traffic will create an invisible barrier.

Empty out a room and think of it as a blank canvas. See what interesting rooms within a room you can come up with. Just keep in mind it may take several tries before you achieve what you want. Have fun with it – it's only decorating!

Finally, you may want to use a few pieces of artwork to help enhance your new look!

CHOOSING ART

Selecting art for your home can be an exciting adventure and a source of enjoyment for years to come. Keys to success are figuring out what kind of art you like, how it will fit in with the rest of your interior design plans, and how to exhibit the art to the best effect in your home.

If you regularly visit galleries and museums, you probably already have a good sense of what kind of art appeals to you. If not, there are many opportunities to browse art within your community at local exhibitions and art fairs.

Even small towns usually have a non-profit gallery space, and your local café or restaurant may exhibit the works of local artists. In larger cities, galleries often get together for monthly or periodic “gallery nights” where all the galleries hold open house receptions on the same evening. It’s a great way to see a lot of art in a short time.

Today the internet provides the largest variety and depth of fine art available worldwide. You can visit museum websites and see master works from ages past, check out online galleries for group shows, and visit hundreds of individual artists’ websites.

One advantage of using the internet is that you can search for the specific kind of art you are interested in, whether it’s photography, impressionism, bronze sculpture, or abstract painting. And when you find one art site, you’ll usually find links to many, many more.

If you feel strongly about a particular work of art, you should buy what you like and then find a place to display it prominently. But you may find that when you get the art home and place it on a wall or pedestal, it doesn’t work with its surroundings. By not “working,” I mean the art looks out of place in the room. Placing art in the wrong surroundings takes away from its beauty and impact.

What should you do if you bring a painting home and it clashes with its environment?

First, hang the painting in various places in your home, trying it out on different walls. It may look great in a place you hadn't planned on hanging it. If you can't find a place where the art looks its best, you may need to make some changes in the room, such as moving furniture or taking down patterned wallpaper and repainting in a neutral color. The changes will be worth making in order to enjoy the art you love.

Sometimes the right lighting is the key to showing art at its best. You may find that placing a picture light above a painting or directing track lighting on it is all the art needs to exhibit its brilliance. If you place a work of art in direct sunlight, however, be sure it won't be affected by the ultraviolet light. Pigments such as watercolor, pencil and pastel may fade, whereas acrylics will not. (Be sure to frame delicate art in UV protected glass or acrylic.)

If you prefer to do the room first and then find the art, size and color are the two major criteria for selecting art to fit its surroundings. For any particular space, art that is too large will overwhelm and art that is too small will be lost and look out of proportion. The bolder the art, the more room it needs to breathe.

As a rule, paintings should be hung so that the center of the painting is at eye level. Sculpture may sit on the floor, a table, or pedestal, depending on the design. Rules should be considered guidelines only, however, so feel free to experiment. One collector, for example, hung an acrylic painting on their bedroom ceiling so they could better view it while lying down.

When selecting a painting to match color, select one or two of the boldest colors in your room and look for art that has those colors in it. You're not looking for an exact match here. Picking up one or two of the same colors will send a message that the painting belongs in this environment.

Another possibility for dealing with color is to choose art with muted colors, black-and-white art, or art that is framed in a way that mutes its color impact in the room. A wide light-colored mat and neutral frame create a protected environment for the art within.

Style is another consideration when selecting art to fit a room. If your house is filled with antiques, for example, you'll want to use antique-style frames on the paintings you hang there. If you have

contemporary furniture in large rooms with high ceilings, you'll want to hang large contemporary paintings.

Think about it. When you walk into a gallery or museum, what do they all have in common? That would be white walls and lots of light. If a wall is wall-papered or painted a color other than white, it limits the choices for hanging art that will look good on it. If a room is dark, the art will not show to its best advantage.

If you want to make art the center of attraction, play down the other elements of the room like window coverings, carpeting, wall coverings, and even furniture. A room crowded with other colors, textures and objects will take the spotlight away from the art.

You may want to select one room in your house to focus on art. Paint the walls white or off-white. Lay hardwood floors or a neutral carpet. Install window coverings with clean simple lines and neutral colors (or no window coverings at all).

Put up ceiling spot lights that can be adjusted to focus on the art, or use individual lighting for each piece. For the furniture, follow the principle that less is more. Keep it spare. This is not the room to display your collectibles. Let the art star. Then relax and enjoy it.

Selecting and displaying art is an art in itself. Experiment to learn what pleases you and what doesn't. You'll be well-rewarded for the time you invest by finding more satisfaction both in the art and in your home.

Here are some things to consider when grouping and hanging your art:

Contrary to popular belief, your sole task isn't to pound a nail in the wall and hang the picture level. Pleasing wall arrangements follow the same interior design rules used for placing furniture in a room.

Do you want a serene room or a stimulating one? Well, rhythm - the movement from one object to the next -- contributes to a room's tone. Creating a certain rhythm depends on the size, shape, and spacing of objects.

When all of the objects are the same size and equally spaced, the rhythm is more placid. If the larger objects were replaced by tall,

vertical rectangles, the rhythm would be staccato, setting an emphatic tone.

Balance refers to the even distribution of visual weight within a display. Maintaining balance is important because an unbalanced arrangement may look top-heavy, bottom-heavy, or as if a side is falling off.

A symmetrical arrangement (where each half of an arrangement is the mirror image of the other) is the most straightforward illustration of balance, but you can use the technique to create asymmetrical arrangements too.

Sometimes an object's visual weight demands that it be displayed alone. Anything that is large, dark, bright, boldly patterned, or oddly shaped will look heavier and bigger than an item that is small, pale, solid, and predictably shaped.

The sheer size of a huge rectangular wall hanging makes it best displayed alone, but a smaller, bright red item would have the same visual weight. When using this technique, it's best to display your weighty object near similarly weighty furniture or architecture, such as a sofa or fireplace.

Hierarchy, or the use of one dominant object mixed with subordinate objects, allows you to display a group of things while drawing attention to the focal point.

Sometimes the wall area between items, called negative space, is as interesting as the items themselves. Try placing a square and four identical rectangles so the negative space creates a pinwheel effect.

It's easiest to draw attention to the negative space when your objects are in a color that contrasts with your wall, such as white against red.

You can create a dramatic and dynamic pattern with repetition of a simple object.

Repetition is a favorite trick of interior designers because the objects used can be as humble and inexpensive as garden seed packets or the same photocopy of your dog just thumb tacked to the wall.

This technique is equally as effective for three-dimensional objects, such as wall vases or display boxes.

Proportion is the size relationship between items, and analyzing proportion helps us make visual sense of our environment. Take a grouping at the top and make it large. However, divide a rectangular piece and divide it into familiar proportions. That way the top is divided in half and the bottom uses thirds.

Dividing up a panoramic photograph in this way, for example, would make it more interesting and approachable. You could also use rectangles painted in three intensities of the same color.

CONCLUSION

There are millions and millions of ways that you can redecorate a space. On the same tack, there's no one wrong or right way. What you need to do is have a certain vision in your head and then act on that vision.

The beauty of decorating on your own is that you can always re-do it if you want to. When you do-it-yourself, you (hopefully) haven't spent a lot of money and can scrap anything that doesn't work and start over.

As we said in the beginning of the article, celebrities spend hundreds of dollars on interior decorating advice and handiwork. Still others prefer to do it themselves. Some of the most prevalent styles that celebrities prefer are the traditional, French country, and Shabby Chic look.

Now you know how to emulate them and make your home the home of your dreams!

Decorate like a celebrity? Yes you can! Now enjoy your new surroundings!