

Elements of Design (Space)

Unit 2

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Elements of Design Space

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this unit the candidate will be able to:

- ✓ Develop design programmes and concepts that solve spatial problems in an interior.

Introduction

The decoration of a room is a good point to pause and think about what a given space would be required to offer in the coming years. Think about its purpose and whether it is being utilized properly.

Function

Consider all the activities that take place in a room. A bedroom, for example, may be more than just a place to sleep. It may also be a place where someone can exercise, write letters or read. Similarly a kitchen may be much more than a place to cook. It is as likely to be a room where the family eats or they offer informal suppers to friends.

Changing the use of a room is often beneficial. When designers plan a project, they follow a specific sequence.

1. They examine and change the structure, if necessary.
2. They plan the arrangement of the furniture.
3. They plan the lighting.
4. They select the scheme.

The order of the stages is quite specific; each operation logically follows the completion of the previous one. For example it is not possible to plan the positioning of light fittings before you have planned where the furniture is going to be sited.

There are many reasons why people want a change in the structure of their house in some way:

New Room Use

They may wish to convert an existing guest room to a dressing room.

Change of Lifestyle

Maybe a change of job is allowing someone to spend more time at home and hence the need arises to join up a dining room to form a spacious sitting room.

Additions to the Household

On arrival of a new baby some extension is needed to be built.

Proportion needs Correction

Would the removal of a picture rail improve the division of space within the drawing room?

Natural Light is Insufficient

By enlarging a window you might make a darker corridor more inviting.

Floor Plans

When assessing space try to imagine the walls are invisible and that each room flows into the next. This can reveal new possibilities, and you may decide to dramatically reshape the space by removing or erecting partition walls. A floor plan is invaluable for working out the best use of space in a room. Draw the plan to scale on 1 centimetre square paper, with, for example, a 1 centimetre square representing 20 centimetres in reality (1:20). Measure the walls and draw the outline of the room, marking the position of doors, windows, and fixed features such as radiators and power sockets. Write measurements around the outside of the plan for easy reference. You can then draw in the new layout for the room, including furniture, television and any built in features like cupboards and shelves. These must be drawn to the same scale as the room. This will be an invaluable source of reference when choosing furniture, light fittings or new doors. It will also prove helpful for estimating quantities for paint or wall paper and curtains or blinds.

Dimensions

The floor plan will also help while deciding the furniture and decoration. Flexible furniture will increase the uses of a small space - for example, a sofa bed can transform the living room into a spare bedroom when needed. Again there can be many imaginative ways of making storage space; for instance, by using drawers or casters that slide under the bed.

Room too Small

Working with limited space can be a challenge. Taking advantage of some small space tips can make a big difference in how a room is perceived. It is possible to give style even to a very small space. With some thought and imagination you can do some exciting, functional

things with small spaces. While developing an interior design plan the following points must be considered to maximize the perception of a space.

Expand the View

Reduce unnecessary walls to create more open, flowing space. Consider creating partial walls or pass through areas as a way to create more openness in the floor plan. The space can be planned in a way so that on entering into a house, you can see through the immediate space and partially into the next one. The sense of intrigue draws your eye toward the far room and invites you to explore the larger, attached space.

Co-ordinate the Colour Scheme

Visually connected rooms feel larger. Paint the areas of the house in a common colour scheme, which will tie the rooms together, giving a perception of larger space.

Define individual spaces using area rugs, furniture, art work or perhaps an accent wall colour if the architecture provides a distinct wall space to accommodate it.

Unifying the Floor

Use one flooring style for all adjoining rooms on the same floor. It will create a sense of continuity and connectedness, especially, if the floor plan is small.

Install Recessed Lighting

Recessed lighting creates a greater sense of height in areas with a lower than usual ceiling. Though these fixtures don't intrude on the space physically, the pool of light created adds warmth and sophistication to the scheme.

Maximize Scale

When purchasing furniture for a small room consider two-seater sofas instead of three-seaters (three people hardly ever sit together on a three-seater sofa). Large overstuffed furniture can be overwhelming in a small space. Minimizing doesn't mean doll house furniture, though. It is important to get the scale right for the specific room you are working with.

Utilize Multifunctional Furniture

Versatile furniture pieces can be used as extra seating and much needed extra space at the same time. A storage ottoman is a great example of this particular small space tip. It can perform three different functions at the same time as a coffee table, storage, and extra seating. Also consider a small pull out sofa that can be converted to a guest bed when needed.

Get Creative

Look for unique or oddly shaped areas which can be good locations for built in cabinets and display areas. Recessed wall areas such as light niches, for example, provide decorative and storage space without intruding into the main living area.

Use Mirrors and Glass

Mirrors and transparent items help to create a sense of space. A mirror's reflection tricks the eye into believing that there is a window to additional, adjoining space. It is a very strong tool used for maximizing small spaces. Transparent items create a sense of openness. Consider glass topped tables and glass fronted cabinetry and minimize the use of heavy, dark wooden objects in small spaces.

Consider a Murphy Bed

This bed can be folded up against the wall, when not in use. This can be used in a bedroom which has to function as a home office as well.



Reconsider the Curtains

If windows have attractive mouldings show them off by avoiding curtains and opting for some natural bamboo blinds or use roman shades for privacy and texture instead. The absence of curtains will result in less intrusion into the space. Or an attractive window treatment that sits well within the window frame could be a perfect solution for a small space. The greater the difference between the colour of the wall and the curtains, the more the curtains will visually intrude upon the space.

Small space tips for Specific rooms:

Bathroom

- over the toilet cabinetry (storage)
- Shallow wall mounted cabinetry (storage)

Bedroom

- Murphy bed
- Trundle bed (Compact yet expandable)
- Desk/dresser combo(multipurpose furniture)
- Closet system.

Kitchen

- Combination range hood microwave (effectively combines the two spaces and saves counter space)
- Corner banquette (built in eating area)

Other

- Large checker board floor patterns can create an illusion of greater space in a room.
- Paint the ceiling lighter in colour than the walls to increase the sense of height.
- Install floor tile on a diagonal to increase the sense of floor expanse.
- Select furnishing that blends in with the background colours of the room.

Room Too Big

Working with a large space can seem almost as challenging as dealing with a small space sometimes. In a very large living room if the furniture is too far apart, it will not look very functional. Being able to communicate properly in a social setting requires proper placement of furniture and an environment which can enhance interaction.

Large rooms with unusual proportions, such as an L shaped room, also need special consideration. It is often easier to divide such spaces into two or more separate areas. For example you can either create areas for different activities or you can arrange two groups of seating. Alternatively, the areas can be defined by different decorative treatments, perhaps by painting walls in one area and using wall paper in the other.

Select Large Scale Furniture

Larger scale furniture and art work will carry more visual weight in a big room. It won't have as much tendency to disappear within the scene. But using items of larger scale should not be confused with over stuffing the room with furniture and accessories however; the right balance is important.

Create Social Islands

Multiple seating areas are a more practical choice for a very large room, than having to shout across. Create several conversation groupings within the space. Area rugs should be used to further anchor these social areas and enhance the perception of smaller, more intimate spaces within the larger design.



Warm the Walls

Hues on the warmer side of the colour wheel seem to move forward and visually envelope a space to create a greater sense of intimacy. Take advantage of this by painting the walls in warm colours.

Bring the Ceiling Down

A perception of a lower ceiling can be created by painting the ceiling in a darker tone than the walls.

Introduce Texture

A strategic mix of tactile qualities can create a visual interest, drawing you into space. Texture depth can be accomplished through a careful choice of flooring, upholstery, draperies, furniture and even accessories.

The careful use of groupings, scale, colour, and texture can turn a very large space into a welcoming, accommodating and fictional area, perfect for relaxation and entertainment.

Points to Remember

- Do not block light by putting tall items in front of the window.
- Work out the 'traffic flow' through the room to allow freedom of movement.
- Avoid placing square or rectangular pieces of furniture at an angle in a corner as it creates dead space.
- Place television and computer screens away from the window and direct sunlight to avoid poor visibility.
- Place furniture to make maximum use of natural light.
- Make sure that the door into the room and the doors of the cupboards can be opened easily.
- Place lamps and electrical equipment near the sockets.

- In a dining room don't forget to allow enough space around the table to move around.
- When designing wardrobes be careful to allow sufficient depth for coat hangers - 60cm/2ft should accommodate most.

Suggested Further Reading:

- ✓ *With an Integrated Approach to Built Environment, (2002), By M. G. Shah, C. M. Kale, S. Y. Patki*
- ✓ *The Office Interior Design Guide: An Introduction for Facility and Design, (1994), By Julie K. Rayfield*