



UNIT-4

Room Elements

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Discuss different aspects of lighting schemes
- ✓ Explore various treatments for walls and ceilings
- ✓ Describe the need for suitable flooring for the room.

Unit 4

Room Elements

Lighting

When planning a home, rooms should be allocated according to the amount of natural light they receive, as well as for other practical reasons. The traditional artists' studio for example had a large north facing window, so that the painter had as pure and cool light as possible to avoid distorting colours on the canvas. Morning light is brighter and clearer than afternoon or evening, which has mellow, yellowish cast. By contrast a warm evening light will be comfortable and relaxing for a night time sitting room. But as the day wears on, natural light fades and we need more artificial light to carry on the activities. There is an enormous range of artificial lighting available today and we need to plan lighting for a scheme just as carefully as other structure or service in a home, so that it becomes an integral part of the whole environment. You will have to plan the direction, strength and type of lighting that would be required in a room, where the cables would be sited, where the light fittings and sockets would be placed- all these things are as important as any other feature when planning a design scheme. Light like colour, can create both mood and atmosphere, in a room and therefore should be planned very carefully. It has the ability to dazzle, or enhance, dim or brighten any space. Light and colour are closely linked; the amount of light a colour receives can change its appearance subtly, so the two should always be considered very carefully.

Light has a major impact on our enjoyment of a room. Good lighting can alter the apparent size of a room, can enhance the good features and diminish the ugly ones. Natural light contributes greatly to a sense of well being but it is rarely enough on its own. Both natural and artificial lights affect colour, and must be taken into account when choosing the decoration for a room.

Natural Lights

Daylight alters in intensity from season to season and even from hour to hour. It changes in colour from the clear light of the early morning to the lavender glow of dusk; and from burnished golden light of high summer to the white dazzle of winter. With the change in the intensity of light the interior of the building also seems different; therefore it is useful to see a room in as many changing lights as possible before choosing a colour scheme and furnishings for it.

There are several factors to consider with natural light. First, decide if there is sufficient light in the room for its intended use. For example, if kitchen is to be the hub of the household at all hours of the day, then it should be a room with lots of natural light. Consider also how light changes during the day and how it fall in different areas of the room. Dark corners may need a subtle boost of artificial light.

If the amount of natural light is not enough for how you want to use the room, you have two options: to explore ways of bringing in more natural light, perhaps by adding another window or by changing the solid doors to glass ones; or to boost the existing day light with artificial light. In that case you will have to plan the lighting scheme.

Light Through Glass

Glass is another light producer. Glass topped tables on metal legs, seem floating and help to increase a feeling of spaciousness. Glass shelves, lit from above or below, and perhaps used to display a collection of coloured glass or plants will effectively increase light and reflect any sunlight that does not come in through the windows. Stained glass windows or doors also create interesting coloured shadows when light shines through them.

Adapting Windows

If structural planning have been planned for a home, special consideration should be given to increase the amount of light by replacing existing windows with the larger ones and by installing the energy saving sealed double or triple glazing at the same time. Picture windows and sliding patio doors are particularly effective ways of bringing daylight into the home but bear in mind the architectural features of the property.

The positioning of the home also affects the amount of natural light available, south facing rooms receive full light. East facing rooms will face light from the rising sun, west facing rooms light from the setting sun. North or north east facing rooms will not receive much direct light.

Light Enhancers

The use of beautiful colours, light reflecting textures and clear space-all encourage a sense of lightness. Light reflecting objects such as crystals or mirrors can be strategically placed to enhance light, boost energy levels and direct energy around the house. By day mirrors will reflect natural light and by night they will reflect light from the candles or lamps.

Planning a Lighting Scheme

A well-planned lighting scheme not only makes room more generally pleasing but it is very important whether you write down letters, cook or apply makeup- all these tasks will be helped if under taken in appropriate lighting conditions. Once the furniture is shown on the plan, we can see how exactly many light points, circuits and sockets will be needed and their best positions. There are many points to keep in mind when planning a lighting scheme for a room. Consider the following points:

Activities

What will be happening in the room and where? What type of lighting would be most appropriate?

Balance of Light throughout the Day

Have you ensured that there are no dark areas?

Highlighting of Features

What about the stunning pictures? About the magnificent marble fire place, beautifully beamed ceiling- are they all bathed in light and shown off to their best advantage?

Flexibility

What of room changes? Do you have enough free-standing light fittings that can be repositioned to provide new functions?

Decorative Style

Does the selection of fittings compliment the room or they clash the decorations?

Ambience

Decorative or reflective? The choice is yours.

Overall Light Level

How many fittings would be required to achieve a good overall level of light?

Variety

A scheme composed of all the same type of fitting can be boring and is unlikely to satisfy all the room's requirements. Be imaginative in your selection.

Types of Light

Well planned interior design lighting incorporates multiple layers of light. There are three main layers of lighting:

- Ambient
- Task
- Accent

Ambient Lighting

Ambient is the overall lighting of a room, from the sun's rays streaming through the window to an overhead fixture providing its primary glow. Examples of ambient light include lamps placed around the room; overhead lighting as well as ceiling mounted lighting fixtures. Other examples of ambient lighting include:

- Pendants lights

- Torchieres
- Suspended uprights

Task Lighting

Task lighting is used to illuminate a specific area for a more practical reason- reading, for example. A desk lamp to light a table and an under cabinet light used to illuminate a kitchen counter would be examples of this type of interior lighting. Other examples of task lighting include:

- Swing arm lamps
- Wall scones
- Adjustable floor lamps

Accent Lighting

Accent lighting provides a way to focus attention on architectural or decorative aspects of a room. An illuminated wall niche or spotlights focused on a painting draw your eyes to these features. Track lighting or recessed 'eyeball' style lighting can be used to illuminate interesting wall features or simply provide a wash of light across the painted surface. A wall wash can be very dramatic in itself.

Types of Bulbs

Halogen

This is the whitest of all lights, and has a cooling effect. It can be a great choice for utilitarian task lighting. It is good for kitchen and for home office.

Tungsten

The tungsten filament bulb is the most common domestic light source. Compared with day light, , tungsten has a warm ,yellowish tone and is good for interior use because it does not much alter colour relationships and also provides a good tonal contrast. Tungsten bulbs come in various wattages and designs and therefore suit different kinds of fixtures. Tungsten bulbs have a relatively short life and also they generate a lot of heat.

Fluorescent

Fluorescent light is long-lasting and efficient therefore it is less costly to run than tungsten, it is therefore rising in popularity.

Selecting the Right Fittings

Once you have established your lighting aims it is time to choose the fittings which will help you achieve your plan. The most important thing to remember when settling on a style of lighting is that the performance of a particular fitting should be considered first and foremost rather than the decorative

value of the lamp itself. Another problem to be faced is whether or not it is acceptable to mix lighting styles within the same room. Can modern fittings be introduced into a traditional interior? The answer depends very much on your own preference. Generally speaking, if the modern fittings are done in the ceiling, these will not conflict with older elements in the room.

A point frequently ignored while planning light levels is the effect of the chosen colour scheme. A predominantly pastel scheme (with white walls and ceilings) and one with shiny surfaces will need less light wattage, as light is reflected off the various surfaces than the darker scheme or which has matt surfaces where the light is absorbed. In the case of the darker scheme you may need to double the wattage or number of fittings.

Choice of light fittings depends upon room, personal taste, style and colour, how much light is required, and for which purpose it is required. In practice most rooms need a mixture of light fittings.

Pendants and Chandeliers

Pendant

Light suspended from the ceiling by pipe or chain.



Chandelier

A branched light fixture suspended from the ceiling that holds multiple bulbs.



Pendants and chandeliers both provide general or background lighting. Usually suspended centrally from the ceiling, they can generate a dull and unflattering light, leaving room corners in darkness. The Some pendants are designed to use over dining tables. Glass chandeliers are particularly elegant. Originally

they were candle powered, when converted to electricity, they can be harsh. Therefore low wattage bulbs should be used in them and these should be hung in the centre of the room.

Source

A light fixture attached to the wall.

Task Lamp

This is a lamp with moveable arm and head that can be adjusted to focus on a task.



Track

Individual fixture called heads can be positioned anywhere along a track.



Wall Lights

Wall lights take the form of: traditional bracket, up lighter, down lighter, picture light, strip light or angle-arm.

Modern or traditional, they can be chosen to throw light up, down or out. Now the question is what the best height for positioning wall fittings is? Actually around 1.5m or 5ft is a good starting point.

Floor/ Table lamps

The floor / table lamp category covers such fittings as standard lamp, uprighter, table lamp, desk lamp and angle poise. As these lights are not fixed to the floor, wall or ceiling they offer the greatest degree of flexibility.

Modern Fittings

Lighting has under gone a revolution in the past twenty years. The basic grouping is listed below:

Down Lighters

Down lighters direct the beam of light downwards. The width of the beam of light depends on the lamp and reflector installed.



Up lighters

Up lighters can come in the form of free- standing models for floor or table as well as pendant and wall fixed versions. They are especially effective when used to illuminate a beautiful beamed or decorative ceiling.



Wall Washers

A wall washer is the type of down lighter which, instead of directing light immediately below the fittings, cast a beam of light to the side.



Spotlights

The spotlights being highly directional allow you to change your lighting arrangement as the room use changes.

Some lights combine several functions. For example, table lamps are useful task lights and they lend atmosphere to a room; spotlights can be used for either task or display lighting as needed.



One of the most easily installed lighting features is a dimmer switch, which will give you option for instantly changing from bright illumination to subtle mood lighting as the occasion demands.

Most rooms need a mixture of task and ambient lighting, and of overhead and lower- level lights. Avoid too much bright overhead light as it will not create a relaxing environment. Essentially you should aim to create several layers of light in each room: the more layers, the more ways there are of lighting the space-and so of changing activity and mood.

When selecting the lights ensure that the lights themselves suit the style of the room.

Decide whether the room requires additional sockets for table lamps, or whether cabling needs to be installed for wall lights. Such tasks should be carried out by an electrician before you decorate.

Directing Light

Upright

It projects light up a wall or towards the ceiling. It gives the illusion of more space. Examples: a sconse pointed upwards, a pendant with an up turned bowl.

Down Light

The light is projected towards the lower part of the room. This can be direct or semi-direct. i.e. a pendant with down turned bulb.

Diffused Light

Light is dispersed throughout the room, making it work for ambient light. i.e. a paper lantern or a flush globe fixture.

Multidirectional Light

Light is directed in many directions for a combination of lighting. I.e. a multi head track light.

Creating a Lighting Scheme

Mix it up

A harmonious lighting scheme can be created by mixing variety of sources. Combining different fixtures offers much needed comfort and ambience, and the alternating levels of light allow the eye to adjust to the changing times of the day.

Take Control

It is best to keep artificial ambient light on dimmer control brightness as the sun rises and sets. Accent and task lighting can be combined for creating a dramatic effect.

Space it Out

Distribute the light. If a room can be lit with one hundred watt bulb. Consider spacing bulbs of lower wattage around the room.

Room By Room Lighting

Halls Stairs and Landings

These areas need to be brightly lit, both for safety and to create a welcoming atmosphere. Stairs should be well lit to make the treads clearly visible. A dual switch is advisable for linking the hall and landing. Light at the landing area can be on dimmer switch, which can be kept on for young children. Tables, desks or telephone areas should have separate task lighting. Wall washers can be used to highlight any

architectural features or wall hangings. If the hall is long and narrow use mirrors to reflect light; hang an eye catching item on a narrow wall and light it dramatically.

Living Areas

Living areas can be separate function areas; in that case, the individual areas will need appropriate light according to their different function. Provide soft general background lighting, possibly using a dimmer switch. Use task lighting for reading and play areas or for any desk area. Use accent light or display lighting to enhance any interesting architectural features.

Dining Room

Provide a soft background glow using integral lighting. Light the dining table clearly avoiding any glare. You may choose an overhead lighting, perhaps a pendant which can be raised or lowered according to what is required. Do not use very powerful light. Candle light on a dining table provides both light and gathering atmosphere. Food serving areas should be well lit, perhaps with wall lights or lamps which can be switched off, or dimmed once the meal is in progress. Use spotlights to highlight the special features like paintings and beautiful objects. If part of the room has to be used as study, also use task lighting.

Kitchens

Kitchen needs good lighting as it is the main 'workroom' of the house. Some soft background lighting should also be provided. It needs good task lighting also. Some accent and display lighting should focus on the dresser. Clear and direct lighting is extremely important in the kitchen. Work surfaces and cooker should be well lit from above. As sinks are often placed under the window, they receive good natural light during the day at night; they too will need an extra light source. Eating areas in the kitchen need to be well lit for this purpose integral light can be installed.

Bedrooms

The type of lighting will be influenced by the way the room is used. Use night lighting in children's bedrooms and task lighting in teenagers' rooms. Bedrooms also need soft, background lighting controlled from door and beds. Bedside lighting can be wall mounted or an integral part of bed head, so that can shine onto the pages of the book when sitting up in bed. Bedside lights should be used for reading rather than down lighters as they have disturbing effect, if they pour light on to readers head.

The dressing table area will need good task lighting. If television is watched in bed, or there is a computer in the room, avoid any light which will cause glare from the screen.

Bathrooms

Safety is of prime importance in the bathroom again. Do not mix water and electricity. Lights should be switched off by pull cord system, or switches sited outside the bathroom door. Fittings should be covered by glass or plastic so that metal parts are unaffected by steam. Spotlights, down lighters and up

lighters are suitable for using in the bathroom. Light a mirror or the dressing table area with a clear light which shines on the face not on the mirror. Light bath, basin or shower areas well but without dazzle. Shiny surfaces can give off glare and showers especially need sealed fittings.

Play and Game Rooms

These rooms need good background lighting plus some accent or display lighting. Task lighting is an important feature and depends entirely on how the room is used. Desk, play and games areas should be well lit. Billiard, table tennis and pool table need special table lighting.

Conservatories

Low voltage lighting is particularly good for conservatories because it does not become too hot.

Garden

Garden or outdoor lighting is also important to plan properly. It can be used to emphasize, plants, shrubs, trees and architectural features to create a close link between the home and the garden. Front door and entrance should be well lit and should spot any changes in floor level. To enhance the attractive outdoor features use spot lights, or down lighters. All artificial outdoor lighting should be controlled from inside the house or it can be dual switched.

Walls and Ceilings

Walls and ceilings are the large planes of a room. Because of their dominating proportions, they must be considered with care. Each must be thought about not individually but in relation to the whole room. Together these surfaces form the canvas on which to introduce other colours, patterns and textures.

The decision you take about these surfaces relates back to your initial decision about the room: how you want to use it, the quality and amount of space and light, the style and colours you choose. Another key factor is the budget: whereas painted walls and ceilings are relatively inexpensive to alter, a floor is costly item to change.

In simple terms the main decision to be made about surfaces is whether to draw attention to them or use them as backdrop. This in turn will show how decorative they should be. The amount of colour or pattern you introduce onto them will have a direct influence on the complexity of the decorative scheme. If in doubt, keep surfaces as neutral and plain as possible: then there will be plenty of scope for introducing layers of decoration later through the use of furniture, textiles, lighting and accessories.

Door, windows, skirting boards, cornices and fixtures such as radiators must be considered along with these large expanses. Although they are proportionally smaller, they play a vital role in defining the perimeters of the room.

Walls

When choosing wall covering, decide whether you want the walls to recede into the background or whether they should have more impact in the scheme. This will guide you towards neutral and plain colours on the one hand or patterns and stronger colours on the other hand. It is also important to consider what will go against the wall. If you have paintings, objects, and imposing pieces of furniture, they must sit comfortably with the wall colour. For example, rich wooden antiques, decorative collections and traditional oil and water colours paintings look effective against deep, strong colours. Think of forest green and vermilion red, these are found in some art galleries. You will also need to decide how to light such pieces and which type of lights to be installed before decorating.

Pieces with more textural beauty – such as shells or a collection of fossils- can be placed against a pale, slightly distressed surface to bring out their aesthetic qualities.

If what is going on or against the wall is not the issue, then the decorative treatment comes back to personal choice: paint or paper, colour or neutral, smooth or textured.



Finding Your Own Theme

A practice called “theme-ing” is another way of co-ordinating a room’s décor. In this case the style of a room is produced by using wall coverings with a dominant motif or a theme, enhanced with an accentuating border, and then choosing related accessories. Usually the theme reflects owner’s interest. Though the choice of styles or themes is endless, some popular styles include Asian or international, Victorian, country, eclectic.etc.

Architectural Features

Architectural features can either be prominent part of the decorative scheme or play a very little role. If you have chosen the second option, use white or off white to paint door frames and skirting boards. If

you do not want to hide these features they can be used to add colour and contrast to an interior. Painting door and window the same colour as the skirting board helps to unify a scheme. To define these features while ensuring they harmonize with the walls, paint them two shades darker than the wall colour. Give architectural features as much thought as the rest of the scheme.

Decorative Options

For decoration the first thing is to decide between paint, plain plaster, paper, fabric, mirrors or panelling for the walls and ceilings. The second thing is to know the extent of all these options.

Spatial Effects

Already mentioned in connection with colour, what you choose to decorate the walls and ceilings can make a significant difference not just to a room's character but also to its seeming proportions and style. Infected, the clever use of pattern, texture and architectural details, as well as colour, can make it look smaller or longer, wider or narrower, cooler or warmer, lighter or darker and also disguise the problem areas if any.

The actual space can also be altered, through structural changes such as adding walls or taking them away. In the same way ceilings can be lowered physically or can be raised without too much expense sometimes.

Decorative Ceilings

Decorative ceilings in old houses are still a great source of pleasure and wonder. Beams, mouldings, pictorial scenes, designs and paint finishes have been the different treatments for the ceilings for centuries. The eighteenth century architect and designer Robert Adam used designs on the ceilings that were taken from a room's woven carpets. Yet since the late 1920's ceilings have been more or less ignored. The ceiling is now a smooth surface usually painted in white. Rooms can be made altogether more interesting and more distinguished by giving the ceilings a special treatment. Possibilities include mouldings or cornices, giving them a special paint treatment, using fabric to create a tented effect or pasting up a skirting ceiling paper.

All the same there are so many new materials and methods, and updated revivals of old techniques- there are the range of possibilities to choose from like walls, ceilings also require attention, when decorating a room. Architectural features such as cornices or ceiling rose can be either emphasized or moderated. Similarly, a beamed ceiling can become a focal point for the room or its impact can be reduced by painting beams and plaster in matching white or cream.

Think too about the effect of light fittings. A chandelier will draw the eye upwards, while tiny spotlights set into the ceiling have less visual impact. Special features such as ceiling fans not only provide ventilation but also create interesting shadows, which in turn make the ceiling a focus of interest.

The ceiling's colour has marked effect on the proportion of the room. A ceiling that is darker than the walls will appear lower, while a paler ceiling will appear higher.

If there is no cornice, consider how to make a neat break between the walls and ceiling.

Ceilings in bedrooms tend to be noticed more than in other rooms, which provide an opportunity to make them more decorative. Children may also appreciate some of decoration on their bedroom ceilings.



Tips for Special Ceiling Treatments

If ceilings are a reasonable height

1. Paint the top stringing of the cornice (the part that edges out onto the ceilings) in a contrast colour, or cover it with gold or silver leaf.
2. Add mouldings such as a cornice or a ceiling rose, if do not exist already.

If Ceilings are too Low

1. Install curtain pelments just below the ceiling (rather than just above the tops of the windows) to make windows seem taller, and so in turn exaggerate the ceiling.
2. Make tall, narrow panels of walls using mouldings, paint or paper, again to draw the eye upwards.
3. Use shimmer paint on the ceiling.
4. Vertically striped paper or painted stripes lead the eye up to give the illusion of more height.
5. Plan lighting scheme for the room very carefully. Install cool florescent lights.
6. Choose fabric for curtains carefully i.e. stretch voile or double thickness cheesecloth which can reflect light to light up the ceiling.

If the Ceilings are too High

1. Paint the ceiling a darker shade than the walls.
2. Install some recessed lighting, which will draw attention towards the walls instead of the ceilings.
3. Divide walls into three portions to break up the height.

Paints

Paint Varieties

Paint basically consists of pigment dispersed in some sort of binder, along with a solvent which makes the paint more workable and which evaporates when the paint dries. Some paints also contain resins or silica to provide particular characteristics, such as quick drying or anti- mildew qualities.

Most paints are either water or oil based. The main advantages of water based paints over the oil based variety are that, water based paints dry more quickly, leaving no smell and can be washed off hands and out of clothes.

Non- Drip Paints

Both water and oil based paints come in non-drip versions which do not need thinning or stirring, and therefore can be applied straightaway from the tin to the wall or ceiling. These are especially very useful for ceilings.

Acrylic Paints

Cover well and dry quickly, with less smell than oil based paints.

Epoxy Enamels

These give a hard gloss finish which resists dirt and can be used on ceramic tiles, metal, fibre glass and porcelain. They are therefore ideal for painting over tiled walls in a kitchen or bathroom, where the look is in the need of change.

Textured Enamels

These are useful for painting wood panelling as well as wood furniture.

Distemper or White Wash

This consists of a chalk, known as whiting; it dissolves in water and animal glue and has added pigments. It has long been used inside old houses because it lets the wall 'breathe', allowing moisture from damp walls to pass through it.

Colourwashes

A colour wash is applied with a sponge or a decorator's brush over a base coat of matt emulsion or over existing paint or walls or woodwork to achieve an attractive finish.

Wallpapers

Wallpapers can very quickly set the mood in a room. They cheer up a dull room, change the feeling, style and apparent proportions, and give a unique unity. They are extremely useful on uneven surfaces.

Choosing Wallpapers

Lining Paper

If the ceilings and walls are really uneven, lining papers can help achieve a good finish. The heavier the lining the better it will hide defects. These should be hung horizontally and stuck precisely edge to edge so that a neat finish is achieved when the actual wallpaper is applied.

Textured Papers

These are heavy wall papers with their embossed patterns and are used particularly for covering irregular surfaces. These can be painted over and are usually used for dados in hallways because of their durability.

Choosing Wallpaper Patterns

1. Dark papers generally make the room look smaller.
2. Vertical stripes make a room taller.
3. Horizontal stripes make the room look wider.
4. In a living room, it is preferable to use a simple design or fairly plain paper. Strong or definite patterns can be distracting and do not make good background for paintings. A border frieze is a good way to finish the paper off here.
5. Mini- prints, small floral, linear prints, small geometrics, stripes, and modern abstract can be used successfully in a bedroom.
6. More open patterns look best in larger spaces.
7. Scenic and geometric designs, floral, large abstracts, papers with borders look best in corridors and on stair cases.

Wallpaper Borders

Borders come in various depth and designs from fanciful ribbons and swags, children's motifs to gardening and sporting themes. The main role of a border is either to define or break up a given space.

Using Borders

The most common way to use a border is to buy one that co-ordinates with or matches the chosen paper. These are used usually around the top of the wall, just below the ceiling or just below the cornice if there is one. Borders can also be used along the skirting boards, around windows or doors, or even vertically down the corners of rooms.

Alternative Wall Coverings

When deciding on wall coverings for the main rooms and bedrooms, usually paint or wallpaper treatments are considered, but there are various alternative wall coverings which can look splendid, which include fabric, mirror and tiles.

Fabric

Fabric has been used to cover walls for centuries, first in India, the Far East, and the Middle East and then Europe.

Walling

Today the upholstered walls are still common particularly in Europe. The process involves fixing a framework of thin batten to the wall, then lining the walls between with wads of polyester, and finally stretching the fabric over battens. The results are often original and usually luxurious, as well as provide excellent insulation against both cold and noise.

Hanging Fabrics from Rods

Another way of using fabric on walls is to treat it like curtains hanging from just below the ceiling.

Sticking Fabrics on Walls

Some fabrics like tweed, wool, or suede can be stuck to the walls like wallpaper.

Tenting

If ceiling is in bad state of repair, you can try tenting the ceiling, by covering it with fabric.

Mirroring

1. Floor to ceiling mirrors give a room added length, width and height, as well as extra light.
2. When mirror is fixed on wall at right angles to a window, it will seem to double the size of a room and also will reflect extra light by day time.
3. Fixing mirror literally from floor to ceiling double the apparent size of the room by creating the illusion of an opening to another room.
4. Fixing mirror in the space between two tall windows will make an enormous difference to light and brightness.
5. In a very dark room lining the recesses at either side of a chimney breast with mirror will make a huge difference. If you place a tall, bushy plant in front of each, with up lights behind, the effect will be very fresh and airy.

Tiling

Tiled walls look fabulous. In ancient buildings in the Far East, Iran, Turkey, Italy, Spain, tiles were used in splendid halls and rooms. Completely tiled rooms (floors, walls and ceilings) of the Alhambra in Granada and The Blue Mosque with its 20,000 blue glazed tiles covering the inside walls, are a source of great amusement.

Wood Panelling

There are many different ways to use wood panelling. It either is left plain or stained with a natural shade or a colour, painted or grained to make it look like more expensive wood.

Doors

When thinking about door treatments, first decide how decorative you want the door to be in the scheme. If the room has a beautiful old door, it can be made a special feature by adding antique furniture in the room.

The most obvious way of drawing attention to a door is to paint it in contrasting shades to the rest of the room. A most ordinary door, can be replaced, customized, or made to blend in with the rest of the room. To make the door blend in, paint it the same colour as the walls, or two shades lighter or darker than the walls. Consider how solid a door should be whether it should block out a view of an adjacent space or give a glimpse into it. Glass-panelled doors allow you to borrow light from outside or from the room next door. If you do not want a clear view through, choose plain frosted or etched glass, which has the same effect but is only translucent. Walls that have several solid wood doors like kitchen cupboards or fitted wardrobes, consider exchanging glass panels. Cut outs are a fun way of customizing doors, particularly for children's room. These can be simple shapes, such as heart or diamond, or can take on more complicated shapes such as favourite animals. Stencilling on doors can also give a decorative effect, whether it is a motif echoed from elsewhere in the scheme or calligraphic device such as a child's name. Give importance to the handles of the door also. These should be in keeping with the room's style, whether simple or decorative, period or modern.

Floor

A floor adds comfort, colour and texture to an interior. Being such a large surface, it has a major influence on the room's style and atmosphere. Floors are both expensive and inconvenient to replace, so the factor which should be considered is 'it should last long.' This applies not only to the material but the fittings also.

Suitable Flooring

Deciding on the right floor for a particular room is not about the taste alone. Consider the shape and size of the room, its architecture, furnishings, style, the amount and quality of natural light, and the room's purpose. Once all these elements have been carefully weighed, you can consider the different materials that might work in the room. The first step in flooring process is to plan and determine a room's overall use, appearance and personality.

Kitchen floors need to be durable, easy to clean, so choose surfaces like, tiles, stones, varnished wood, or good quality vinyl. In bathrooms the flooring must be able to withstand the effects of water and steam. Hard tile are practical for bathrooms, but if something warmer and softer is required, consider good quality vinyl or a natural floor bamboo or sea grass. For living room wall to wall carpet is luxurious, warm and quiet, but it may not be a most practical option. One solution is to introduce two levels of flooring: a foundation floor, such as wood, that is exceptionally durable; and a second layer, for example, a rug. This second layer will help to moderate the noise associated with the wooden floors. Another advantage of

using this combination of flooring is that, the room can be altered, season by season, simply by removing the top layer in summer, whereas in winters it can be replaced back.

Architecture and Flooring

Architecture provides the style definition. Look to the mouldings, window openings, baseboards, mantle pieces and other architectural elements and you can determine whether the space is formal, classical, modern or rustic. Often the short cut to determine a house style is to know the date of construction, and then to match it to interior and exterior design elements.

Right Floor for the Room

Think about the effects of reflected light. Very shiny floors look cold; matte flooring gives the appearance of softness. The way the light plays off the grain of wood or stone is part of their beauty; use materials to highlight these characteristics. Light coloured floors make room look larger; while dark colours promote an intimate atmosphere. Texture, too, contribute to the mood; a smooth unbroken surface seems streamlined. A mixture of materials gives the impression of depth and complexity. Natural materials bring the outdoors in. For a modern look, use pale neutral floor colours to give the room a clean uncluttered appearance.

Colour and Pattern

The size of a pattern is important, but scale is even more important. Generally small patterns work best in small rooms and large patterns work best in large rooms. Make sure that the scale of the pattern is consistent with the overall design statement.

Modern Looks

Materials appropriate to sleek, luxurious modernism are polished stone, rubber, neutral wall to wall carpeting, or a sophisticated vinyl. Cork flooring is also popular in modern times.

Classic Looks

Stone and wood flooring tiles are the modern shortcuts to classical interior.

Country Look

Mexican tile or honed stone are an important part of establishing a well loved rural design. A country farm house interior is best with wide pine boards. Another choice for this kind of décor is linoleum.

Existing Floors

Floors are both expensive and inconvenient to replace, do not make any radical decisions on floor coverings before studying existing floors carefully. They might not need to be covered again but can either be polished, varnished, painted or repaired.

Wood Floors

If parquet and timber floors are in reasonably good condition- without any gaps, splits, frayed, or splintered ends; these can just be polished and can then be covered with either rugs or left bare. If a floor is worn, the first task is sanding it. It can then be either stained a different colour – say, much darker, or maybe even a dark green or bronze- or bleached, or whitened. An alternative is to paint it with either floor paint or with acrylic, emulsion paint. Another option can be a plain floor with a stencilled border or design.

Whichever treatment is chosen – plain, stained, bleached or painted- the floor will need to be sealed with two or three coats of protective varnish afterwards.

Vinyl and Linoleum Floors

These floors can be disguised by using oil based paints rather than emulsions, because emulsion does not grip on their surfaces. Before applying any paint it is essential to wash the floor thoroughly using sugar soap solution, then rinse it and allow drying.



Concrete Floors

Paint is very effective on concrete flooring. Either special concrete floor paint can be used or alternatively oil paint can also be used. Whichever paint is used, it should be finished off with an acrylic floor varnish.

Tiled Floors

Existing tiled floor with cracked or unsightly grout can be cleaned and re-laid with new grout.

Juxtaposition

When planning flooring for a room do not think it in isolation but in connection with the whole house flooring. Doors which lead off corridors and hallways are often left open, and glimpses of upper storeys can be seen from stairways. The floor coverings should need to be coordinated, especially in a small

apartment, it looks better if one colour is used for flooring throughout. Where different texture and colours meet at the doorways. i.e. carpet with tiling, a threshold strip should be inserted between the two to achieve a neat affect.

Types of Floors

The way the floor looks is important but other factors, equally important are: how much it costs, whether it is easy to care for, and how long it can be expected to last. Most flooring options fall into three main categories:

- Hard Flooring
- Soft Flooring
- Flexible Flooring

Hard Flooring

The hard flooring usually covers materials that are extremely rigid with virtually no flexibility at all. Brick, tiles, stone and wood are the different types of hard floors. These are all hard wearing surfaces and they are generally best if used with area rugs.

Brick

Brick is unexpectedly a good floor treatment, especially in the country: as useful for halls, kitchens and cloakrooms. This type of floor should be laid on top of a solid, level base or concrete screed. Modern bricks used for floors are thinner and lighter than conventional building bricks. Once they have warmed up, brick maintain a comfortable temperature and these are cool in summer.



Floor Tiles

Tiles can be installed in different patterns for interest and a border can be created around the parameter of a room, using different shaped, co-ordinating tiles.

Ceramic Tiles

Non-slip floor weight ceramic tiles can look highly decorative in the right setting and climate also these are pleasantly smooth to walk on. Ceramic tiles come in variety of colours and styles.



Terracotta Tiles

Terracotta tiles come in various varieties. These are unglazed and like bricks they retain heat.



Quarry Tiles

Unglazed quarry tiles are tough and dense and non-slip. These are also absorbent to some extent. These are made from unrefined high-silica clay and look rustic.

Laying and Maintaining Tiles

All these types of tiles need a solid, level based and concrete screed. When tiles are laid a grout is used to fill the gaps. It is made from ground Portland cement and sand, mixed with water to form a quick drying paste. All unglazed tiles benefit from a liquid resin sealant which acts like a heavy duty polish.

Stone

Stone floors give an elegance look to a home. They last practically forever but are cold under foot and usually quite heavy.

Flagstones

The term 'flag' refers to slicing stone into thin slabs. They usually come in irregular slabs and also although some are cheaper than ceramic and terracotta tiles but are more expensive to install. These can be used in hallways or in some other room on the ground floor.



Slate

Slate is often used as an alternative to marble, as it is much stain resistant. These come in slabs and tiles and look best in squares or rectangles. The colours range from pale grey, green and blue grey to dark green bluish purple and black. The slabs are laid on concrete screed or slab floor. Slate can be left untreated but it looks effective if sealed and waxed.



Marble

Marble brings a level of glamour and shine but is quite expensive. The most fragile grades are usually more decorative, with the most interesting veining and colouration. The more solid grades are usually classified as A and B with the more delicate are C and D. The disadvantages of marble are; it scratches and stains easily. It is laid on concrete sub- floor.

Terrazzo

It consists of a marble chips set in a cement base and polished to high sheen. Terrazzo is non-slip and durable. It is also laid on concrete sub-floor.

Granite

Granite is cheaper than marble. It is less likely to stain and scratch and is also less slippery. Like marble it comes in slabs and very thin tiles, which means that it can be used in up stair rooms as well. It comes in variety of colours, in either matt or polished finish.



Concrete

It looks very attractive in tile form, if it is painted or stained and waxed. It is also extremely practical .It is both heat and cold resistant and also scratch proof.

Wood Flooring

Wood floor can be used anywhere in the house. Soft and hard woods both are used for flooring, with soft wood being cheaper. Softwoods include spruce, fir and pine; it should be finished with a polyurethane or oleo resinous sealer, and then polished if desired. For hard flooring maple, oak, cherry and walnut are often used.

Wood flooring comes in various forms: planks, parquet, and mosaic panels. Wood flooring is available in either solid or laminated wood. The laminated type consists of a thin layer of hardwood veneer. The solid wood floor can be nailed directly to a wood sub-floor. If wood is laid on the concrete a vapour resistant would have to be used on top of the concrete, in order to act as a barrier against the moisture. Laminated flooring however can be laid straight over the concrete.

Soft Flooring

The soft furnishing category largely consists of carpets and rugs.

Carpets

There are two main types of carpet- cut pile and loop pile.

Cut Pile Carpet

As the name suggest the fibres of the carpet are sheered off creating soft tufts above the carpet backing. This type of carpet is usually made of wool, nylon, polyester, acrylic or a combination of these materials. Wool is a resilient natural fibre that is moisture resistant, but it is relatively expensive compared to other carpet options. Nylon is strong and works well when mixed with other fibres. Polyester is less expensive and has a luxurious feel. Acrylic is lower priced option to wool. Though it looks similar to wool but it is not quite as stain resistant.

How a carpet will wear depends on the various factors not just the material it is made of. Twist and density of the fibre are very important. Higher numbers are better on these scales. Very closely tufted or woven carpet means that it will wear more. Carpet tufts that are not dense will have the tendency to mash down over time.



Loop Carpet

The other type of carpet is loop-pile carpet. The carpet fibres form loop above the carpet backing. Berber is a typical example of carpeting of the loop type.

Loop pile carpeting tends to be more resilient and hard wearing because of its construction. However it is not as soft to the touch as cut pile carpet therefore it is not as comfortable underfoot as cut pile carpet.

Looped carpeting is often made of olefin fibres which are naturally stain resistant. There is a degree of variation in style within the looped carpet category. The loops can either be uniform in length or sometimes varied to create interesting patterns.



Cut and Loop Carpet

This type of carpet combines both cut and loop varieties. Some of the fibres are left in looped condition and other are sheared off to create soft tufts. The combination at different heights above the carpet backing can create interesting patterns. One of the greater benefits of carpeting is its warmth in comparison to other types of flooring.



Alternative Floor Coverings

Natural matting such as sisal, coir, woven rush and sea grass- all provide an attractive alternative to carpeting. It is however tough on feet and slippery on the stairs. It provides an excellent background for rugs.

Rugs

Rugs not only provide a soft underfoot but they soften hard floors and add colour and texture to a scheme. They are particularly useful to make zones within a room and to draw disparate items of furniture together.

Another advantage that rugs have over fitted carpets is, they can easily be moved around or replaced. A considerable number of ethnic rugs are widely produced all over the world. Roughly they fall into three categories: ethnic cotton, dense woollen piles, thick woollen weaves.

Oriental Rugs

Oriental rug' is the umbrella term for rugs, carpets; prayer mats runners and kilims made by the nomadic tribesmen. The rugs made were hung on the walls and draped over seating as well as were laid on the floors. Oriental rugs are still produced in designs of the past and relate to the area to which they belong. Kilims are made using a technique of flat weaving, which is also known as tapestry weaving.

All designs in oriental rugs are based on traditional patterns and reflect the life, culture and customs of the Islamic and Far East worlds. The six traditional rugs producing regions are: Persia, Turkey, Turkestan, Caucasus, India and China.

Persian Rugs

- These are considered the finest of all oriental rugs.
- Persian rugs are generally woven in wool, using special senneh knot.
- Persian rugs are almost always rectangular or elongated rather than square.
- Their colouring is usually rich. Indigo or crimson is usually the main colour. Other colours usually include yellows, greens and brown.
- The Persians were the only Muslim people to represent the men and animals (in hunting carpets).
- The designs are usually based on floral motifs, showing flower beds, pools and streams.
- Vase rugs are more formal motifs i.e vases holding flowers.
- Persian rugs made before the eighteenth century can be classified according to their design: garden, vase, animal etc.

Turkish Rugs

These come from Anatolian region and are often called Anatolians by dealers. These differ from Persian rugs not only in design but also in colours.

- The pile used in Turkish carpet is usually longer than the one in Persian carpet, and very few colours are used.
- The most common background colours are red and blue, prayer mats are however usually woven in green as being the sacred colour.
- Patterns are bold and geometric.

Indian Rugs

- In Indian rugs mostly the designs feature animals, birds, trees and flowers.
- The colours are usually lighter than those of Persian Rugs.
- The pile is usually longer than the Persian rug.



Chinese Rugs

- Most common colours in Chinese rugs are blues, yellows, peaches and roses.
- The designs and motif based on the Chinese art. The designs include the animal specially dragons and flowers like the lotus, daffodils and pomegranate
- They usually have a longer pile.

Caucasian Rugs

- These come from Caucasus which is the mountainous area between Caspian Sea and the Black Sea.
- The distinguished colours are red, blue, green and beige.
- The design, though varied are always severely rectangular.
- Animals, birds, flowers and birds are common motifs.

Turkoman Rugs

- These come from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan.
- Red is the prominent colour. Although different tribes and areas can be identified by specific colours i.e Baluchis use a lot of dark blue with rust red and bluish mauves.
- Designs are usually geometric rose motif is also found in these rugs.



Flexible Flooring

These are hard wearing, easy to maintain, and relatively inexpensive. Flexible floorings are not only practical but are extremely decorative and are warmer underfoot than tile or stone. The flexible flooring is dominated by rubber and vinyl products.

Linoleum

This is made of linseed oil, pine resins, wood, ground cork and pigment pressed onto a jute backing. It comes in sheets and tiles. It is non-slip, reasonably priced and burn resistant. These come in a wide variety of colours, the material can be inlaid to make handsome designs. Linoleum is glued to a spotless, level surface preferably plywood. The floor is easy to clean.

Cork

Cork is an easier alternative to both vinyl and rubber. It is durable, economical, and soft and quiet underfoot. It is very resilient material and is made of compressed and baked pieces of the bark of the cork tree. It is efficient in bathrooms, kitchen and play areas. It comes in sheet and tile forms. The tiles are usually pre-sealed, if unsealed they will have to be varnished after laying. Cork is available in range of colours.



Vinyl

This is made from Polyvinyl chloride. Vinyl flooring is comfortable to walk unreasonably priced, easy to clean and available in huge choice of colours and designs. Like linoleum, plain colours can be combined to form good looking patterns. Vinyl is found in cushioned and flat varieties. The cushioned variety is slightly bouncy and makes a very soft tread; it also provides some sound insulation. Solid vinyl comes in plain colours but also in realistic copies of marble, terrazzo, lime stone, wood and terracotta tiles. Vinyl is available in both sheet and tile forms.

Rubber

Rubber flooring is more hard wearing than vinyl and supplies greater sound suppression as you walk on it. It is resistant to burn and dents. It is available in both sheet and tile forms and comes in range of colours, including, primaries, pastels and industrial black. The studded and ribbed versions are very non-slip, which makes them useful in bathrooms, but they are also difficult to clean and are not really suitable for kitchens.

Furniture

The choice of furniture plays vital role to the success of a room. No other element plays that important role in determining how well a scheme works, both practically and aesthetically.

The style, shape, and proportion of a major piece of furniture have a strong influence on the look of a room. Consider, for example, the effect of a four poster bed in a bedroom compared with that of two single beds. Style also relates to the materials and finish: a polished mahogany table will give much more formal appearance than a white painted one. Furniture also provides a marvellous opportunity to unite the old with the new; for example, a traditional arm chair might be combined with a modern coffee table. The layout of furniture in a room will determine whether it feels formal or relaxed, cosy or spacious. Sometimes a single item can be used as a focal point to draw the eye and to alter the perception of a space. For example, a tall narrow book case will draw attention upwards, creating an impression of height, while a low and wide book case will emphasize horizontal space. No matter what style is chosen, furniture must always satisfy the functional needs of a room and those who use it. There is a wide range of options for seating, surfaces and storage.

Furniture Needs

The best way is to make a list detailing the seating requirement, after a complete assessment of how many seats would be required. Assess the existing furniture in relation to the floor plan and the style and mood that is required. The floor plan will also give an opportunity to rethink the arrangement of furniture. For example, a sofa and two chairs with a table in the middle is a classic combination, but you may prefer to place two sofas opposite to each other or even to replace the sofa with arm chairs to give you space for a bookcase. It is important to buy mixture of furniture types, shapes and sizes to cater for different people who will use the space and also for the various activities that will take place there. With sofas and armchairs consider the amount of maintenance they require. Feather and down cushions on seating are soft and inviting, but they will need plumping up regularly. Quilted foam on the other hand, bounces back into shape. Similarly a sofa with tightly upholstered back needs much less maintenance than the one with loose cushions.

Everyone needs a place to put things down. Coffee table is essential to tie a seating arrangement together. Coffee table should be at proper distance from sofa, make sure that no one has to lean forward to reach drinks, and there should be a room of two to three feet between the table and sofa for feet and legs.

There is no ideal height for coffee table. It is personal preference, though one that's (about 21 inches) high is easier to dine on. Remember a coffee table which is too much higher than the seat of the couch will look out of place. Keep end tables around the same height (about 24 inches) and depth (usually 15 inches) as the arms of the sofa or chair next to it. A couple of inches above or below is fine but end tables that are say 5 inches higher or lower will be awkward for guests to use while seated.

Material is important to keep in mind. Transparent tables or those made of glass can make a tight space feel bigger. Heavy material can make a space look packed.

Furniture Arrangements

Apart from the style of the furniture, the way the furniture is arranged is of paramount importance. So your starting point should be to think about how the pieces will work together. If you have to redecorate a room, you should have a clear idea of what to include in your scheme, what to discard and what extra pieces if any you will have to acquire. If the room has to be redesigned you must have a clear idea of exactly what furniture you will need, how you want to use it, what sizes will work best and where you want to place it.

Establishing Priorities

However good a room is, if it does not function well, it is a failure. In order to function well a room has to be arranged properly. It is as simple as that.

- If the furnishings are not appropriate...
- If there is no real focal point in the room...

- If people do not feel comfortable in the room...
- If there is no place to read...

If there is no where near at hand to place a glass or coffee cup...

In all the cases mentioned above the room is definitely not functioning well, regardless of how brilliantly it has been decorated. The ideal arrangement for any room is for each piece to be placed where it works and looks best. But there is often a conflict between aesthetic and practical. An arm chair, for example, might look good in a corner to help balance the furnishings in the room- but it might never actually get used there. Therefore, when you have to choose between aesthetic and practical considerations, the practical must take priority. Arm chairs are meant to be sat on comfortably. Find something else of comparable visual bulk, with a large plant, or a side table to create balance. Although people's needs vary a good deal, there are some general criteria to follow with regard to furniture arrangement.

Seating Groups

Any piece of seating cannot be considered alone, unless it is an occasional chair or desk and chair. Seating should be considered as part of a group. A chair on which you can sit comfortably while reading, should be accompanied by a side table and a light source, preferably a lamp at the right level for reading. For more comfort you might include a foot stool. This arrangement, in turn should be considered as part of a larger seating group. Usually this larger group is a conversation group and includes sofa and at least one other arm chair and possibly a love seat, depending on the availability of space. This seating group should be provided with good lighting facility and with some sort of nearby table surface. You could, for example combine end table with a large upholstered stool or a good sized coffee in the centre of the grouping. In addition there should be some focal point around which the seating should be arranged.

Manipulating Space

Space is as important an element in a room as the objects in it. There has to be a balance among the solid objects present in the room and empty space. In general, rooms having lot of space around the furnishings look better than fully packed rooms because they seem lighter and airier. Along with improving the aesthetics of a room, the manipulation of space plays an important role in its traffic patterns. Traffic patterns should be established when planning the positions of furniture, so that there can be easy movement throughout the room. There are few guide lines to remember:

- The major passage way through a room should be at least 4ft wide, and preferably 5ft to allow enough room for two people to walk side by side.
- Allow about 18 in between dining chairs and at least 2ft to pull a dining chair back from the table. There should be at least 4ft between dining table and the wall, so that people can walk behind the diners when diner is in progress.
- There should be (12- 18 in) between a sofa and arm chair and a coffee table, so that people can get up gracefully from a sitting position. And at the same time the table should not be too far from the people to reach for putting a book or glass on the table.

- In front of the dresser or bureau, 3ft is necessary to allow the drawers to be pulled out.

A sense of Balance

Before selecting any furniture for a room, the first thing to consider is the scale and balance. This involves the ratio of vertical lines (tall pieces) to horizontal lines (low pieces) and the proportion of light items to the solid ones.

- If a room mostly consists of tall pieces i.e. a wall unit, large pictures, mirrors, tall plants, high backed chairs and sofas, it will look too stiff, formal and uncomfortable.
- If there are all low lines i.e. low backed seating, small plants, low storage, low hung mirror, and paintings hung low on the wall, the room overall will look incomplete, somehow disturbing and again uncomfortable.
- If most of the objects in the room are solid and heavy, the room will look fully stuffed and dark.
- If all the furnishings are very light say – several occasional chairs, a cane or wicker sofa, the room can look insubstantial.

There has to be a happy medium in a well arranged room. This however does not mean having half vertical and half horizontal lines or half solid and half light. Generally most rooms look best with a predominant number of low pieces, set off here and there by taller pieces of varying heights. They could progress, perhaps from a low, upholstered stool or sofa to a wing chair or then to a side table or lamp and finely to a really tall lines of an armoire, a bureau- bookcase, or a painting or mirror over a side table, a fire place, and tall plants.

Similarly sofa and arm chairs which are solid should be balanced by the openness of occasional chairs, the lightness perhaps of glass table, the height of a storage unit. A dresser or bookcase can be balanced by a tall leafy plant in the room. Planning a room will be much easier, if you start with larger and heavy pieces and balance them carefully with permanent features, such as fire places, doorways or windows and shelves. When all that is clear in your mind, decide where to fill in the smaller pieces.

Other features like floor, walls and window treatments- all contribute strongly towards the balance of the room. A patterned fitted carpet or Oriental rug will be visually heavier and will have more importance in the room than ordinary wooden or tiled floor. Dark coloured walls will look heavier than pale colours. All these factors have to be considered when working with the furniture arrangement.



Suitability of Position

How well the arrangement of the furniture has been done is affected by the environmental factors.

Environment

Extreme climatic conditions like hot and cold, dryness and humidity all need to be considered when positioning the furniture. Strong sunlight will make both wood and fabrics fade, so fabrics used for upholstered pieces placed near window should be as fade resistant as possible. If furniture is covered in a fabric likely to fade do not place it near the window. In areas with hot climate, consider the position of the ceiling fan before deciding on the seating arrangement. Pianos and other musical instruments, if possible be placed near and inside wall, rather than near window and radiators.

Listening and Viewing

Stereo equipment should be placed near or against, a hard wall, facing soft surfaces like curtains and upholstery. A television screen should be placed in a position so that it can at least be viewed by four people easily.

Creating a Focal Point

If there is no natural focal point in the living room like a fireplace or a window, you will need to create one – a central interest around which you can make various furniture groupings. It can be either a large painting or a group of small ones, a tapestry or a rug mounted on a wall. Other possibilities include an interesting book case or a media wall, even a low table holding some interesting items could be a focal point.

Creating Arrangements on Plan

The next is the stage to check whether your proposed arrangements will work, by drawing it to scale on the floor plan. Draw it on a graph paper. Most pieces of furniture have fairly standard measurements, so you can use the templates of the most common furniture pieces. Making a floor arrangement plan helps you to see if there is anything left out, what should be left in and what should be purchased new.

Furniture Arrangement Checklists

Use a check list to remind yourself of the factors you need to take into account for the furniture placement in the room.

- **Practicality**- will it work well?
- **Aesthetics**- will it look good?
- **Organization of space**- is there going to be enough space around the individual furniture items?
- **Traffic planning**- can people move around easily?
- **Scale and balance**- will the furniture look well balance, without any individual item dominating?
- **Environmental aspects**- will furniture get too much, sun, humidity, heat, cold, or dryness?
- **Ease of use**- will people be able to listen music and watch television easily and is there a good focal point?

Upholstered Furniture

The most important thing about the upholstered furniture is what you see is not necessarily what you get. An upholstered piece should feel as good as it seems, because the inner construction is what counts. Therefore always look at the label detailing the construction of an upholstered piece.

Construction methods

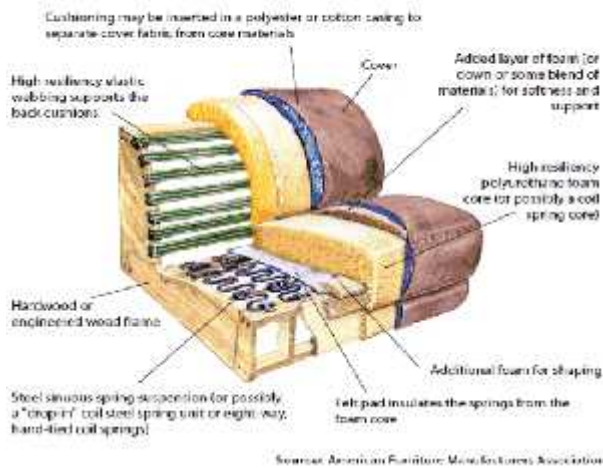
In order to know what to look for when buying upholstered furniture. It is very important to have some idea about the construction of the upholstered furniture.

There are two types of upholstery:

1. Fully upholstered pieces, such as sofas, love seats, arm chairs, slipper chairs and upholstered stools. These are completely covered with upholstery with no frame showing, except possibly the lower part of the legs.
2. Exposed frame pieces, like occasional chairs, chaises and stools that have parts of the frame showing.

THE INSIDE STORY: UPHOLSTERY

Construction features vary depending on furniture design and price



The frame is constructed first. Good quality furniture should be made from oak, walnut, tweak or pine. The joints should be glued, and double- or triple- dowelled, corner-blocked and screwed. Next comes the webbing, which is the bottom most material used on an upholstered piece, to hold the other layers. Good strong webbing should be made from the jute, flax or a synthetic material and woven into basket weave design, which is tracked to the bottom of the frame.

In top quality furniture, after webbing come the springs. Such furniture incorporates the coil springs which are set close enough together to provide good support without actually touching each other and these are hand tied in place. About eight springs are used for one chair. Cheaper furniture makes use of more rigid springs. On top of the springs, goes tough layer of canvas or hessian, which is sewn firmly to keep the padding intact. This padding consists of polyurethane foam, polyester, rubberized hair, foam rubber, feathers or according to the quality of the furniture. The best quality furniture has a final layer of fibre fill or cotton felt, which is eased just the upholstery fabric. Sometimes that layer has a protective covering of muslin to reduce the tension on the covering and thus maintain the shape. When upholstery fabric is stretched over the furniture it is often trimmed with self or contrast piping to give it more fit and definition.

Commonly used Fabrics

The upholstery fabric has to be durable because it has to withstand a great deal of wear and tear. The toughest wearing fabrics are densely woven cotton, denim, cotton rep, twill and brocade. These are all cotton based Linen mixed with cotton is often used for loose coverings, velvet which is either cotton based or linen based is also used for this purpose. Wool is soft but an excellent upholstery fabric. Loosely woven wool or loosely woven texture of any type is not suitable for upholstery. Leather and suede though expensive always look luxurious and are extremely long-lasting.

Checking For Quality

If the furniture is covered with patterned, striped or checked fabric, make sure that the designs are centred; lines and checks are straight. If there are any buttons make sure that they are sewn well through the filling, not just attached to the fabric. Run your hands through the piece to make sure that there are no lumps or bumps.

Non- Upholstered Furniture

Wood Furniture whether it is new or old, is made of either hard woods such as mahogany, rosewood, oak, maple, walnut, teak, yew or cherry or of soft wood like pine. All wood furniture whether antique or modern should be checked for stability and quality of construction and finish.



Chairs

It is very important to check the joints of the chairs, whether these are new or antique. The joints should be constructed with corner blocks, preferably with ribs, these are meant to strengthen the joints which come under considerable pressure. There should be no gaps between the joints and the joints should be smooth. Bear in mind that the straight legs have the greatest strength. In order to test the stability of a chair, lean on the piece to see if it tips easily. Then push it a little to see if it wobbles. Finally inspect it for the finish and make sure that there are no bubbles or streaks.

Tables

Make sure that the joints have been constructed with corner blocks for strength. If there are extending leaves make sure that these match the main part of the table. Also check that the extending leaves are easy to fit and remove.

Case Goods

These are storage pieces like wardrobes, dressers, desks, bureau- book cases, side boards and chest of drawers. When inspecting this sort of furniture make sure that the doors swing well and fit well. Drawers should slide easily and smoothly. The bottoms of the drawers should be strong. Inside should be smoothly finished. Fine quality furniture has thin layers of wood.

Hardware

Another important item to examine carefully is the hardware (the knobs, handles and hinges). These should be of appropriate shape, scale and material.

Glass, Plastic or Metal Furniture

Glass

Glass is mainly used for table tops and shelves. Make sure that the glass has a thickness of 5mm preferably 1.2 – 2cm for practical use. It should have smooth edges nice finishing.



Plastic

These include fibreglass, laminated plastic, polystyrene, polyvinyl and acrylic. Plastic collects scratches very easily. Check that the pieces are thick enough to stand up to heavy use. The joints should be strong and overall finish should be neat.



Metal

Angle iron, wrought iron brass, copper, stainless steel, chrome plated tubing- are all used for furniture. These should be checked to make sure that there are no bubbles; it is smooth and free of weak spots.



Cane, Wicker, Rattan and Bamboo

This type of furniture is usually used in conservatories, gardens and porches. Check that it is sturdily constructed and joints are bound well.



Wicker furniture



Bamboo



Cane



Rattan

Beds

Mattress Types

There are several different types of mattresses, all of which are quite different from each other.

Inner Spring Mattresses

These consist of about 800 or so coiled springs. This is about 7 in thick.

Foam Mattresses

This is a light weight mattress and is made of urethane or latex foam. It should be between 10-15 cm thick, and firm.

Stuffed Mattresses

These are not large enough to hold inner spring. They are much thin and consist of polyester or cotton topped by foam.

Water Beds

As the name suggests, these are filled with water. These are especially good for circulation, discourage bed sores and are good for restful sleep.

Guest Beds

There are few types of beds particularly useful for the occasional guests:

- A sofa bed can be used as sofa and when required it can be pulled out to become a spare bed.
- A daybed can be made into a full size bed by sliding out a frame from underneath.
- A rise and fall single bed contains a second bed underneath.

- A Murphy bed folds up against a wall behind a panel and so is excellent for use in studio or one roomed apartment.

Headboards

There is an enormous choice in headboards, including padded fabric, wood, brass, Perspex, chrome, cane and white or black painted iron. Almost all headboards are sold separately.

Arranging bed room Furniture

Bed should be placed by leaving a margin of about 2 to 3 feet on either side to safely move about. Modern low beds are great in spaces with lower ceilings. If you choose an extra- tall, bed frame then make sure that the ceiling height is at least 10 feet. Headboards should be tall enough to lean on comfortably while reading (about 2 feet tall). The style of the bed frame- whether sleek wooden platform, dark sleigh bed, or wrought iron canopy- will set the tone for the other furniture items in the room. The role of bedside table is to provide space to rest the essentials. It's nice to have two that match but it's by no means essential. The surface should be stable to hold something like a glass of water. When it comes to the size of the dressers, space will often dictate whether you go for a wide and long one (ideal for narrow room) or a square and medium height one (for a square room with little wall space). The top of the dresser is prime real estate and can quickly become cluttered with keys, sunglasses or lip-gloss. Use a combination of trays or even bowl and boxes to create space for everything.

If the space allows it, a comfortable seating area in the bedroom makes a large room feel more intimate. The options range from mod rocking chair to a lounge chair. Each sends a very different message the key is the style of the room.

Storage

To work out the storage requirements, think about the different activities for which the room is used. Built in storage, such as alcove cupboards, look elegant, but free standing storage furniture can be moved if necessary, so it offers greater flexibility. A mixture of the two can also be used. Furniture that combines storage with another function is extremely useful, especially in small space, for example coffee table with shelves or drawers for magazines or beds with drawers for storing bed linen. Remember that furniture for storage should not just be functional. Consider its visual impact too.

Furniture Style

When choosing any piece of furniture, be it a sofa, a bookcase, an armoire, a bureau or a chest of drawer, it must not always work well in terms of comfort or practicality, but should suit the style of the room and create a pleasing effect with other items in the scheme. Think about the key issues of shape, scale, colour and texture.

The larger and more permanent items of furniture, such as sofas, dressers and armchairs, naturally have a great impact on the style of an interior. Particularly large or decorative pieces often become the focal points. The key pieces should always be chosen to suit the style and proportions of the internal architecture. If the bedroom has a low ceiling, a boxy or too high bed should not be placed in the bedroom. Using furniture that is very solid looking, such as dark wooden pieces, can make a small room feel very crowded. Furniture made of glass, laminates, shiny metals, cane and light- coloured wood will lessen the effect of solidity and give an airier feel to a room. Seating need not always mean fully upholstered furniture. A rattan sofa with seat

cushions will appear much less dense.

Finally, remember that less is often more: few well- chosen and carefully placed items will maximize the light and space in a room, which is essential for the feelings of relaxation and comfort.

Smaller items of furniture offer great scope in terms of both style and practicality. They are also the most portable items of furniture and can be moved around a room or home to revitalize different areas. The list of smaller pieces is long one and includes occasional table, coffee table, sofa end tables and side tables that can be used for decorative displays or to extend surface areas when entertaining.

Decorative screens are useful for dividing space, concealing awkward areas, or creating a more intimate atmosphere in a large room. Whether painted, made of textured wood or fabric – covered, they also add interest to an interior. Large baskets are very versatile- these can be placed at the end of a bed to store seasonal bed linens and blankets, kept in the hall for gloves, hats and scarves or used in a family room for games and videos. They also bring pleasing natural colours to the room.

Tips on Arranging Furniture

1. If you choose furnishing with colours that closely match their intended background, the items will effectively disappear, leaving the room with much less cluttered appearance: for instance, a beige sofa against a beige carpet and beige walls. If you want furniture to stand out, this can be achieved by choosing furnishing in contrasting colours.
2. A three- seater sofa hardly accommodates three people happily. Use three seater sofa but with two cushions on it.
3. In a dining room don't forget to allow enough space around the table to move around, taking into account the need to pass behind a chair that is in use. A minimum space of approximately 90cm/ 3ft between a table and a wall will be required for comfort.
4. Stools and poufs are useful for occasional sitting in the living room. They take up little space and can sometimes incorporate storage space in their base.
5. When designing wardrobes, be careful to allow sufficient depth for coat hangers.
6. Try to arrange furnishings so that people entering the room are greeted by a pleasant view.
7. Kitchen units and vanity units should have recessed plinth to make it possible to stand close to the work surface / basin.
8. In a kitchen, wall units that extend all the way up to the ceiling will eliminate an obvious dust trap- an arrangement that will also provide extra long term storage.
9. When ordering furniture, consider access to the house.

The Finishing Touches

Once all the ground work has been done, it has to be finalized and enhanced further. The furnishings and finishes need to be completed and then maintained as well as possible. And finally, the art and objects, flowers and plants, and general accessorizing can be decided upon.

Perfect rooms are as irritating as perfect people. The ideal room is one that manages to look both interesting and relaxing; used but not abused. Upholstery should look neat and cushions should be plumped and well arranged. But at the same time the upholstery should look deeply comfortable and welcoming. If curtains are held back in tie-backs, these should be positioned at just the right height for the folds to look graceful. Blinds should be pulled up so that they are straight. Carpets, rugs, matting and hard flooring- all should look as clean as possible. Polished wood should be kept polished. Marble, glass and any metals should be free of spots.

Table tops, window sills, mantel pieces, display units and shelves should look best with some sense of arrangement. Plants, collections and art should be carefully chosen and should be arranged properly but should not look so well arranged in artificial way, that one is nervous about putting down a glass for fear of spoiling an artistic effect.

Accessories

The decorative objects or the accessories are the crucial elements that can finish a scheme off perfectly. From handcrafted items and antiques to flowers and found objects, these are the decorative details that are often small in size but big in impact. In design term, they play a vital role in creating accents of colours, form and texture in a room. Whether displayed singly or in groups, they provide a focus for the eye and greatly enrich the entire scheme.

If lighting, colour scheme, window and floor treatments and the choice of furniture and upholstery are what make a room comforting, then the paintings and objects, plants, flowers and other embellishments are the elements that give it a special charm and make it memorable. They layer an interior scheme, thereby accentuating the colours, patterns, shapes and textures within the room.

There are two schools of thought on the display of objects: the school for simplicity and the school for clutter. The problem with simple school is that the few objects used for display should be really beautiful or unusual, or at least made to appear so. The difficulty about 'cluttered' school is that the collections must be organized to display the possessions to their best advantage. This involves a careful assemblage of texture, shape and colour. Collections of small objects are far more effective when grouped together, rather than scattered thinly around the room. For example, very small objects like, pebbles, shells or polished fragments of stones from the beach can be put into a bowl or goblets and displayed on window sills or shelves. Slightly larger objects can be grouped in a way, so that they have something in common, like colour, texture, shape or origin. Alternatively they can be juxtaposed with larger or smaller objects to create more interest and balance. You can add a plant or some dried flowers in a jar for contrast. If arrangements are grouped on some small table which is also used for books, magazines, glasses and so

on, leave space so that the composition will not be ruined by putting down a tray, drink or book. If arrangements are placed on a glass table or shelf, you can light them from underneath with some up lighter to add charm, if they are not on transparent surface, try lighting them from above with down lighters from above to add extra brilliance.

Some accessories are purely decorative, but others such as candlesticks and vases, have a functional role too. It is important when completing a room to be aware of this difference. Function must determine where something is placed, in terms of both height and location. Decide which of the items you want to be prominent, place them at key focal point in the room. Use other objects in a supporting role.

Purely decorative accessories are only worth including if you display them well. Location is important, especially the colour against which they are set, how they are lit and whether it is a single object that becomes a focal point or a group that needs to be carefully arranged for the maximum effect.

Displaying Pictures

The way the objects and pictures are displayed, play a crucial part in the success of a room. Consider pictures first. Do not dot these around a room- one on each wall- as this will only emphasize the spaces between them. Instead group them together on one wall, even if it means leaving the other three bare. If these are the pictures of smaller subject matter, size and frame, accentuate this connection by making the arrangement symmetrical. For example six prints can be hung in two rows of three or in three rows of two. Such symmetrical arrangements are also possible with disparate images and sizes: a large picture could be placed centrally, with smaller size images flanking it on other side. Pictures that are double hung, one on top of the other, also look eye catching, particularly in rooms where they are often viewed from a sitting position such as dining or living rooms.

Images for the walls are not limited to drawings, prints and paintings. Also choose from posters, post cards, photographs, framed embroidery. A small piece of special fabric or hand printed wall paper also looks wonderful framed.

Large single pictures look best hung over a mantelpiece or over a significant piece of furniture such as sofa or side board, centred within its space. Make sure that the picture is no wider than the item it is being hung over, and be aware of hanging it too low over a sofa.

Displaying Other Works of Art

Wall hangings

Fabric wall hangings are the ideal solution for covering large areas decoratively- and they can hide a multitude of blemishes or eyesores on the wall too. Ethnic rugs make popular wall hangings. There is a vast range of materials to choose from, to suit every style of the room.

Mirrors

Mirrors are versatile. With an attractive wooden or gilded frame, they are most decorative; they reflect light and help to create the illusion of more space. A large mirror placed at the end of a dark and narrow passage way opens up the area dramatically. In a small room a mirror or mirrors placed opposite a window or windows create a feeling of greater space and airiness; with pairs of windows a smaller mirror placed between them provides added dimension. A large mirror over a mantel piece or bigger pieces of furniture such as sofa provides a focal point in the room.

Displaying Collections

Whatever you choose to display- whether it is a prized china ornament, a pottery vase or a lovingly accumulated specialized collection, it is important that they are



displayed to the greater advantage. To make most of a thematic collection- anything from china and glassware to collectibles such as perfume bottles- always try to group them together, whether on a glass fronted cabinet, on wall mounted shelves or on a low table. Any arrangement looks better if the grouped items have a common factor, be it shape, colour or texture; otherwise the display will risk looking like clutter.

Unusual Collections

The collection of ordinary but unexpected objects often makes more memorable rooms than much rare and more expensive items. Perhaps this is because one is less impressed by the effect of something one knows to be especially good than that of something one has no idea about.

Sculpture

Sculpture always adds distinction to a room. Almost all sculpture, looks better on some type of plinth, whether it is stone, wood, fibreglass, marble or plaster.

Screens

Screens are very adaptable, they may be used instead of drawn curtains at a window, can disguise an ugly or functional corner, and provide a decorative barrier behind which to store things or serve as a room divider.

Lighting

Although lighting has its role in terms of illumination, lights and lamps have a decorative role to play too. If you want a light for a room that is decorative as well apart from being functional, then decide how big it needs to be for its chosen location and purpose and how it might reflect the style of the room in terms of colour, shape and material. Generally, lamps and wall lights work well in pairs.

Table lamps come in different sizes and shapes. Think about the base first; should this be chosen to blend into the main colour scheme or should it be in accent colour? Should it be plain or patterned, high or low, slim or round? Lamp shades too come in a wide variety of colours, sizes, shapes and styles. It can also be decorated by stencilling motifs onto a card shade. Central ceiling pedant should never be the only source of lighting within a room. Remember, the more imposing the design will be the more it will pull the light upwards.

Arranging Art

Unifying a set

A set of prints can be given a unity- it can be framed in same material, whether, chrome, brass, gild, silver or natural wood. Again an odd assortment of different subjects will have a unity of their own if they share a colour: all sepia tints or all black and white, or all green, ivory or terracotta



Hanging Heights

When there are lots of different things to hang, try not to hang them too high or too far apart. Do not fix anything that low that people knock their heads on it. Try to hang as much as possible at eye level. If there is very large grouping, group at least the central pieces at eye level. If seating in the room consists

of low-level couches or chairs, some pictures, prints or posters can be hung somewhat lower than usual. There are certain guidelines to follow:

Most art work stands out on dark walls although some drawings and graphic art can look good even on grey and neutral colours.

If the walls are strongly patterned, it is best to give prints and drawings very deep mounts, so that the subject is not lost in the surrounding background design.

Before hanging different sizes of pictures or other wall mounted objects that vary in size, shape and style, lay them out on the floor first and move them around until you find a composition that works best with other arrangements in the room and the wall space available.

Decide on the overall shape of the arrangement and mark out the area on the wall in pencil before you attempt to hang several things together. This will save a lot of unwanted nail holes. Vertical arrangement of art makes room look taller.

Horizontal arrangements of art make room look longer.

A lot of small works of art can be hung as a block to balance a large painting.



Alternative Art

There are plenty of alternatives to conventional art. Framed bits of fabric such as antique lace, square pieces of fabric pinned together like a patch work; interesting bed spreads rug, pieces of jewellery, old advertisements, and collections of post cards.

Suspend heavy fabrics on a slim curtain rod hung on hooks. Unless the fabric is very rare, turn over the top to make the casing for the rod.

Frame lighter fabrics underneath Perspex or glass or stretch them like canvas over thin wood frames.

Hang smaller items on top of a square of velvet or canvas and then stretch on a frame.

Flowers and Plants

There is almost no gap in a room which a plant cannot fill and no piece of furniture that cannot be balanced and made to look better by spread of leaves, no corner that is not softened by foliage.

Light and Aspect

The choice of plant is governed by the amount of light a room receives and its aspect (the direction in which the windows face). If the aspect and light both are not right for the plant – the plant cannot survive.

Using Plants Creatively

Plants can be put in anything such as a basket, terracotta pot, or stainless steel planter; it all depends on what best suits mood of the room. Plants can be grouped with sculpture. Tall plants and indoor trees make subtle room dividers. A bushy indoor tree or a well plated hanging basket set in front of an uncertain window can make it look completely dressed.

Lighting Plants

Use up lights behind plants to throw dramatic shadows onto walls and ceilings, as well as illuminating the foliage on a dull day and at night or plants can be put under the down light.

Decorating With Fresh Flowers

Cut flowers and container plants offer the perfect way of introducing nature into a room. Their vivid colours, bold shapes, textural leaves and delicious scents will all lift a scheme. The colours of the plants should complement the colours of the room. Bold displays of flowers or plants suit the areas like living rooms or hall ways but for bedroom something less intrusive seems more suitable.



Decorating with Dried Flowers

Dried flowers, leaves and berries can be used to make flower arrangements large and small, as well as wreaths, garlands even dried trees. Dried florist's foam is used for holding flowers in place or crumpled chicken wire can be used to hold everything in place. Most plant materials can be dried by hanging it in small bunches in any dry and airy place.



Further Reading:

- ✓ *Residential Interior Design: A Guide to Planning Spaces, (2011), By Maureen Mitton, Courtney Nystuen (2011)*
- ✓ *Interior Design Reference Manual: Everything You Need to Know to Pass the.. (2013), By David Kent Ballast, FAIA, CSI, NCIDQ*