



UNIT-5

Room by Room Designing

Learning Outcomes

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

- ✓ Understand how to design, furnish and demonstrate a living room in a variety of different ways in accordance with the requirement.
- ✓ Describe creative design solutions for children's rooms.

Unit 5

Room by Room Designing

The rooms in a house are very much like a member of a family, each varying in size, having different needs and possessing distinct talents and weaknesses, but sharing a common family likeness. In the same way, when decorating the whole house, it is necessary to look at the requirements of each space and pay special attention to individual rooms, while still maintaining a common theme so that each has a sense of belonging to the larger family grouping.

Living Rooms

The living room often has to be the most versatile room in the whole house, depending on its use. It can be designed, furnished and decorated in a variety of different ways, according to family requirements and life styles. It may be a formal room, for adult relaxation and entertaining only, or a busy centre of activity with television, piano, computer, children's toys and games. Some living rooms have to be dual or multi-purpose, combining study and home office facilities with family activities. A good living room is one that happily accommodates the various activities while at the same time is aesthetically pleasing in its role as a reception area. Before starting work on the project, you, as a designer, need to be clear on the following points.

Is it to be?

- A leisure room for quiet reading, listening to music, letter writing, watching television?
- A dining room for family meals, smart dinner parties, television supper?
- An entertainment room for family parties, video viewing, card games?
- A hobby room for dress making, arranging a sample collection and so on?
- A work room for study, word-processing, homework, research?
- A mix of all or any of the above?

These different activities all require specialised lighting, ample storage facilities and suitable furniture.

Practical Planning

Most living rooms, especially the multi-purpose ones, suffer from a lack of space, so before going any further list all the activities which are likely to take place in the room. Investigate if any changes are expected in the family situation, such as children or teenagers going away to school or college, the arrival of a new baby, an elderly relative coming to stay, a new job requiring an amount of business entertaining or working from home part time, creating the need for a study area.

Try to be objective: look at the whole area with fresh eyes, considering the size, shape orientation and architectural style of the room and the amount of natural light it receives. Assess the existing furniture and storage and decide how efficient they are. Work out what must be replaced or renewed. Establish a clear idea about the budget available. Decide where to put the television or music centre because, not only will this affect the placing of seating, but it will also affect the provision of power points and the cable or aerial connection.

Next you will measure accurately and prepare a plan, using templates to fit in the furniture on paper first. Allow for opening and closing of doors and drawers and avoid placing units and cupboards too close to other pieces of furniture which will make using them difficult. Once the 'master plan' is prepared you will know at once exactly what you can and what you cannot bring into the room.

Selecting a Scheme

You can start by creating an interesting framework for the room by choosing the walls, floors and window treatments carefully, to give a relaxing atmosphere, but without being bland or boring. While selecting upholstery and surfaces for a well-used room consider their durability and easy-care qualities. The furniture will have to be functional as well as comfortable, and a suitable scale for the room – large, tall items in spacious rooms and lower, neat pieces for smaller spaces.

The Floor

Since the floor is the dominant feature in the living room it should be considered first for treatment. It gets the most wear and tear in a family living room and is likely to have to last through several changes of decorating scheme; therefore it needs to be extremely hardwearing. Besides this, the floor relates to all the other surfaces. A bold pattern or a strong colour on the floor tends to be overpowering while a fragile texture can be impractical in a family living room, so a balance must be established. If it has to be carpeted, choose as good a quality as possible in accordance with the budget. A carpet with a mix of 80 per cent wool and 20 per cent synthetic material is generally considered ideal from a practical point of view. A mid-tone colour or a simple pattern will be easier to live with and more practical, unless you want to give the room a period look with a carpet in an authentic design. Apart from carpeting there are many other options from stripped, sanded and sealed or stained, stencilled or painted floor boards; special wood treatments like parquet, wood strip or wood board; sealed cork tiles; linoleum sea grass or rush matting. All these floorings can be softened with a rug in the main seating area in front of the sofas and chairs.

The Ceiling

The ceiling is often ignored as an element in the decorative scheme and is usually painted white, but it can equally well be treated as an important feature either by painting in an exciting colour along with any cornice, covings and ceiling roses or by giving it a beam treatment. Either of these ideas will depend on the height of the room.

The Walls

Walls are, in effect, a totally blank canvas on which the scheme will be built up. There are many possibilities; however keep in mind that too bold a treatment will not be very restful. Tall, wide areas of the wall can be reduced in apparent height by using a dividing dado rail, picture rail and a frieze to create horizontal lines; whereas lower and narrow walls can be visually expanded by vertical treatments, such as wide stripes or a panelled effect.

The Windows

The windows are an integral part of the architecture of the room. If the windows are pleasing you can draw attention to them by dressing them simply, so their basic shape and style can be appreciated, or you can give them an extravagant treatment to contrast with the surrounding wall area. If the windows are unattractive, especially if there are several differently shaped windows on one wall, you may prefer to unify them with a single treatment or blend them into the walls by using blinds in the same colour as the wall. Alternatively, if there is an ugly view beyond, you may prefer to choose an opulent window dressing to create a focal point in the room.

Focal Point

When it comes to planning a furniture arrangement, it is important to establish a focal point in the room – a point of interest that can be highlighted and around which all the furniture can be gathered. In a living room the most obvious focal point is a fireplace, but if there isn't one some other focal point can be selected – perhaps the room has a handsome window with an attractive view beyond, an important piece of furniture, a collection of paintings or even an antique rug. In a very large living room you may have several subsidiary focal points. These days the television set also has a vast impact on how a room is to be arranged. A window can also become a focal point. The usually generous windows found in the living room can offer a great opportunity for decorative treatments.

Choosing Furniture

When choosing furniture, decide which items are needed to suit the various activities in the room, for example a deep sofa for curling up in, a wing armchair for reading and an upright armchair and desk for writing. If space allows, try to include more than one seating area in the room as well as creating a focal point in the room where people can gather to talk, such as the space around a fire. Do not feel that the major items of the furniture must match. Use a mixture of old and new pieces, or fully upholstered items and occasional chairs, to create an interesting juxtaposition in a room. For example, an old worn leather armchair can bring character to the room and can make a pleasing contrast to a modern sofa. What is important is that the colour, shape and texture of the different pieces work well together.

When it comes to choosing upholstery fabrics, there are plenty of materials you can use that will emphasize comfort. Try a mixture of quilted fabrics and soft textiles such as brushed cottons, wool, felt and chenille.

Occasional tables and low coffee tables should be placed within easy reach of sofas and chairs for placing books or glasses. Footstools will encourage people to put their feet up and relax. Small tables are the ideal place to create a display of eye catching objects, and to introduce colour, texture, scale and scent. A lamp will add height to the arrangement and illuminate the other items on the table.

If the room is to be used for entertaining, one of the most important ingredients is sufficient seating. As well as providing enough seats for the number of guests, furniture should be arranged so that people can converse easily. Window seats, fender seats and decorative chairs can all provide extra seating.

Storage

Storage is an important consideration in a room which must meet the needs of a diverse range of activities, which might include reading, listening to music, watching television or playing board games. Either wall-mounted or free-standing shelves are essential for storing favourite books, magazines and CDs. Make shelves as attractive as possible by using wicker baskets or decorative boxes for storage arranged in a pleasing way.

The Best Lighting

Nowadays living rooms have to accommodate so many activities, and therefore require the availability of suitable lighting to perform various functions. Most seating areas need some general background lighting in the form of ceiling or wall lights, as well as special task lighting provided by table or standard lamps, and possibly some display and accent lighting to draw attention to a feature such as a picture or collection displayed on shelves. Dining areas in a dual-purpose living room should have light over the dining table in order to be able to see the food being served.

Once you have made your master plan, and know where the furniture is to be positioned, you can use it to work out the lighting, so that fittings and fixtures relate to the various parts of the room. Install several different circuits so that you can fade out one part of the room when not in use and try to connect at least one circuit to a dimmer switch so that you can adjust the light level.

Accessories

When choosing, accessories, remember that an elegant living room calls for a much more disciplined approach. There are many finishing touches that can be used to enhance the living room scheme and to give it character. The use of some sharp colour or textural contrast will help to brighten a bland or very neutral scheme; softer tones and textures can calm down a stimulating scheme or provide a necessary link between contrasting colours and patterns.

Cushions of different shapes, sizes, colours, patterns and textures can be piled onto sofas, chairs and window seats to add contrast or to link various items together in a room. You might repeat the curtain fabric on another surface. Other fabric accessories include covers for occasional tables or throws. Their colour, pattern and texture should relate to the overall mood and style of the room.

In many rooms dried and fresh flowers and the grouping of plants are all an integral part of the overall scheme. Whatever the form the room takes, do not forget the importance of freshly cut, deliciously scented flowers, which will enhance the feeling of welcome and comfort.

Kitchen

In modern times the kitchen is regarded as the social centre of the home. In line with its new function a typical modern kitchen is more likely to be decorated in an altogether warmer, homelier style. But the primary purpose of the kitchen is cooking which cannot be ignored. In any design decision made for this room, priority should therefore be given to this primary function of food preparation.

Planning the Space

When starting from scratch in designing a kitchen, choose the right sized room for the kitchen as it can be critical. If the room is too small, it will be difficult to accommodate all the activities. If the space is too big each meal preparation will involve lots of unnecessary movement. Sometimes the use of two inter-connecting rooms can provide the best answer; the main one being reserved for cooking, and the secondary one for food storage, laundry, dining or other activities.

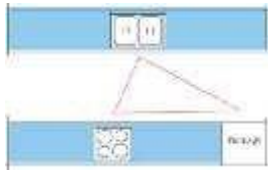
It is always a good idea to start by listing all the activities which will take place in the kitchen. Apart from obvious ones related to cooking, there could be various other activities like, ironing clothes, arranging flowers, serving informal meals, storing party equipment, accommodating the central heating boiler, providing space for children to play and so on. When you have completed the list of activities, it's time to draw up the details about equipment, and storage requirements necessitated by the various activities you have listed.

Once you know exactly what is required in terms of workspace, equipment, and storage, you can draw up a scaled plan of the room. Remember to mark the positions of windows, doors and service points as these will have a strong influence on the location of major items. Then mark the positions of the sink, cooker and refrigerator. Easily forgotten is the matter of waste disposal. A small skip might be appropriate in some kitchens, but a more practical solution may be the combination of a large swing bin and waste disposal unit attached to the sink. Ventilation is another important aspect to consider at this stage. Once all the important decisions have been made, it is time to decide upon the style the client wishes to adopt.

Kitchen Layouts

Galley

This type of kitchen is built between parallel walls. The sink and fridge sit on one wall and the range is centred between them on the opposite wall. There should be at least 48 inches between facing counters.



U-Shaped Kitchen

This is perhaps the most desirable kitchen design; it accommodates the work triangle and has endless design possibilities in a good size rectangular room. The U-shaped layout features a fridge, a sink and a range, each on its own wall. There should be between 5 to 10 feet between facing counters.



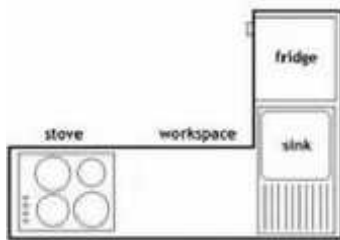
Island

This is the focal point for a large open kitchen. It also provides extra storage and added counter space. In a two-cook kitchen the island often has its own sink or cook top. Surrounding the island with stools creates a casual breakfast counter.



L- Shaped

This shape is ideal for long narrow spaces. It requires two adjacent walls and resembles the letter L. There is space for dining table or an island.



One Wall

This is suitable for urban studios and small homes; it makes good use of tight quarters by placing everything against a single wall.



Kitchen Schemes

Practical Considerations

The kitchen can have as many different moods and styles as any other room in the house. But whether the client prefers a traditional kitchen or modern, it must be organized carefully so that it is safe, hygienic and well lit, with all surfaces made from easy to clean and durable materials.

The basic plan and choice of cupboards, equipment and appliances, as well as the colours, patterns and textures used, will all depend on the way the family will use the kitchen and the type of cooking that will be done. The space available and the size of the budget all dictate what can, and what cannot, be done. At the first stage you need to look at the overall style of the existing kitchen and usefulness of any built in features before deciding whether to retain and enhance these, to reject and remove them, or simply to improve them. The amount of natural light the kitchen receives during the day and the question of ventilation and condensation are other important points to consider. Having insufficient daylight can be improved by installing a window. Ventilation and condensation problems can be dealt with by installing an efficient exhaust fan or air conditioning, by enlarging the heating system or by providing a moisture-proof layer in construction. Structural issues like these, as well as installing lights or the need for any re-plumbing, should be resolved at the outset. For these problems you may need to consult a specialist.

Selecting Surfaces

Once you have assessed the situation, listing faults and problems as well as the good features which you would like to retain, and have worked out the 'master plan', you can start to think about the style, colour schemes, and surface treatments for work tops, walls and floors. It is important to have practical surfaces in the kitchen. They need to be durable, easily washable but still have great style.

Cupboard Units and Work Surfaces

These are all a matter of personal taste, as well as cost, and depend on the overall style chosen for the kitchen. Whether you choose a warm wood or shiny laminate, check that the doors and drawers are easy to open, and that they are easy to clean from the inside as well as out.

Work Tops

Work tops should be appropriate for the type of units they link and the type of cooking that will be done. Choose hygienic work tops that are easy to clean. The most commonly used are post-formed laminate with rounded edges but you can also look at some of the more unusual options such as ceramic tiles, marble or granite. Some of these materials are heavy, so if you want to use them on the existing boards make sure that the frames are strong enough to hold the material.

Sinks

Sinks do not have to always be sited near the window, especially if there is dishwasher available and therefore less time is spent at the sink. You may have the food preparation area under the window instead. Nor do the sinks have to be made of stainless steel; enamelled bowls and drainers come in a wide range of styles, shapes and colours.

The Floor

A washable material is essential for a kitchen floor, as it has to stand food spills as well as the tramp of dirty feet; but it must also be non-slip. Quarry or ceramic tiles are hardwearing and easy to clean, but these materials are hard on the feet and anything dropped on them may shatter. They can be softened with mats in areas away from the sink and stove. If you prefer something bouncy underfoot, look at cushioned vinyl, vinyl tiles, cork tiles or linoleum. Rubber can be considered for kitchen flooring as it is quiet, but it is hard to clean this material. There are also especially bound kitchen carpets and carpet tiles available. The carpet tiles are more sensible as they can be taken up and washed if necessary.

Walls

Kitchen walls need to be splash proof and washable. They can be part tiled around the stove, sink and above the work surfaces, although an all-tiled kitchen can look rather institutional. Other wall treatments include washable wall coverings, wood cladding, and specially formulated kitchen and bathroom paint. Sometimes a combination of different wall treatments is the solution if they are selected from a co-ordinated range or chosen from a different colour palette for a harmonious effect. You can use ceramic tiles as well as vinyl wall coverings and paint in co-ordinated ranges.

Window Treatments

Window treatments should always be practical. Short, crisply gathered curtains in a washable fabric, or tailored Roman blinds all provide night time privacy without cutting out any daylight.

Colour Schemes

Colour schemes used should be relaxing or stimulating and should relate to the overall style. In general, very strong and clashing colours should be avoided. In a kitchen that gets warm, a cool scheme based on blues, greys or greens can be pleasant.

Furnishing

Furniture plays a vital role in determining the style and atmosphere of a kitchen. But furnishing should be kept to the minimum so as not to hinder movement around the kitchen. Free standing pieces, such as a larder cupboard or dresser, create a more casual, relaxed look than sleek fitted units. Plain or painted wooden units suit an informal look, whereas aluminium or black laminate finishes are appropriate for a more graphic style. A kitchen table should suit the style of the kitchen and the space available.

A kitchen that is used for entertaining needs comfortable upholstered chairs. However, if there are young children in the house, it is more sensible to use something that is washable.

Storage

Storage is an essential consideration not just in terms of the cooking area but for every part of the kitchen. List the items that need to be stored, such as ingredients, cooking utensils, crockery, cutlery and table linen. Next, consider how much storage should be opened or concealed, free-standing or fitted. Also consider the role of each piece within the overall design. A dresser or open shelving unit, for example, can be made into a focal point of the kitchen. Accessibility is of great importance so make sure that the cupboard doors can be opened as fully as possible. Storage containers are essential for holding ingredients and cooking utensils, and they can also add a decorative element to a room, such as glass jars filled with preserved fruit.

High and low levels are best left for rarely used items, while eye level spaces should be reserved for items that are used every day.

Lighting

Of all the rooms in the house, the kitchen demands the most care when deciding upon the lighting scheme. This is because areas used for preparing and cooking food should be well lit with spotlights or other types of task lighting. It is important that the light beams should be directed exactly where needed and should not be interrupted by shadows. Also ensure that the light source comes from exactly above the work surface rather than behind the person who is working. Use ceiling fixed down lighters over the work surfaces.

To create a social atmosphere in the dining and relaxing areas of the kitchen it is advisable to have at least one other circuit of lighting which can be switched on when food preparation is completed and the lighting used in the work area is extinguished. Additional soft lighting around the room could come from a combination of table lamps and wall lights.

Working Cook's Kitchen

The kitchen can take on so many roles these days. When planning a cook's kitchen also consider that it will need specialised equipment. As cooking is a physically tiring process, it must be remembered that everything possible should be done in order to minimise unnecessary work and movement around the kitchen. In the working cook's kitchen, the priority obviously is access, so some storage may be kept without doors. A heavy-duty ventilation system is essential. Stainless steel is a favourite work surface; as well as being tough it is also easy to clean and hygienic.

For walls and ceilings, a paint finish is good and works well in humid conditions.

Any type of flooring can be used as discussed in the kitchen section earlier. The island unit is used in the centre; it provides extra work surface as well as a place to serve informal meals. The scheme is usually very simple. It is more about the materials rather than colours, i.e. blonde wood, stainless steel, marble and bricks.



Country Kitchens

The essence of a country style kitchen is that everything in the kitchen should look as though it has its own past. While decorating this type of kitchen old items will have to be included. Surfaces in the country style kitchen are most likely to be natural-looking. Wood dominates and can be used for units, work tops, flooring and even walling. Flagstone floors are traditional and terracotta tiles can also be used in a country kitchen. This is one kitchen style where curtains are mostly the preferred choice for window treatment. Materials like gingham, ticking, and calico give a rural feel. The walls are painted in rich colours like leaf green, earthy terracotta, sunny buttercup yellow and gentian blue.



The most suitable lighting arrangement here will combine high technology with simple country style fittings. Traditional wall lights, table lamps and old fashioned overhead pendant fittings will all contribute to set the mood. For accessories old plates, vases and dried flowers can be used.

Dining Rooms

Eating is one of life's pleasures. How food is served and the surroundings in which it is eaten are a crucial part of that enjoyment. But a conventional dining room is almost a thing of the past, and nowadays a dining room is more likely to be part of the kitchen or the living room, or even situated in the hall.

Practical Planning

Begin by assessing how much space is required. Many people use the kitchen for every meal from breakfast to supper and use a dining room only on special occasions and for dinner parties. The important points to determine are how many people will be eating together on a day to day basis and how many extra people might join the family on special occasions.

If the kitchen is to be used for dining permanently, look for ways of separating the cooking area from the eating one. A simple solution is to use a portable screen made of fabric or painted wood. However, the division does not have to be a physical one.

Choosing a Theme

The style of a dining room, like that of the kitchen may also depend on the type of food that will be served and the type of entertaining that will be done. If it is an older property and formal entertaining is part of the lifestyle of its residents, you may wish to decorate the dining room with a special flavour such as Victorian or Edwardian. Other alternative styles include Sleek Scandinavian, French Empire, Colonial or Mediterranean. Whichever style you choose the dining area should be as inviting as possible. Colour, decorate and furnish it to create a feeling of warmth and intimacy, to encourage family and guests to linger over the enjoyment of a meal. When deciding upon the style of a dining room, think carefully about how it will marry up with the family's eating habits and their desires for entertaining. Ask your client the following questions:

- What household members need to be accommodated?
- When will the room mostly be used – day or night time, summer or winter time?
- How many people do you want to entertain at any one time?
- Do you prefer to entertain formally or informally?
- What mood do you wish to create?

Furnishing

Dining rooms have to serve a purpose, so there must be ample space to walk around the table, serve guests and open doors and drawers without knocking into the backs of the chairs. When you work out a room plan remember to allow for 'traffic flow'. Chairs must be comfortable and must fit well around the table, allowing plenty of space for diners' knees and elbows. A circular table is often a wise choice, especially if the room is small, as round tables need less space as compared to a square or rectangular one; they can often be fitted with an extra leaf or two which can expand the table to a larger oval shape. This means that there should be some extra chairs available when needed and there must be some space elsewhere in the house to store them when not grouped around the table.

In a larger dining room, several tables might provide a more flexible arrangement: these can be pushed up together when there is a party or buffet; separated into smaller individual ones on less formal occasions; or used to provide extra serving space.

A table with an attractive surface, such as smooth polished or textured wood, will be a feature of the room. If you want to give a period look to a dining room, antique chairs must always be used with an antique table.

Whatever style you choose, make sure that the chairs are comfortable; provide seat covers if chairs are not upholstered. Ensure that the chairs are the correct height for the table and position table and chairs to make the most of the light. Storage furniture includes dressers and cabinets, although any items in which plates, cutlery, glasses and table linen can be stored are suitable. A side table provides a useful surface for assembling the dishes. Having somewhere to put salads, fruits, cheeses and desserts means that there will be less running around between kitchen and dining table.



A Place for Everything

Storage is also essential for a dining room, where all the occasional items of china and linens can be stored, since it is also more practical to keep the best glass, silver diner service and table linens in the dining room where they will be needed for setting a stylish table.

Selecting Surfaces

A dining room floor is a place that can soon become scruffy, especially if there are young children in the house. A fitted carpet, especially in pale colours, should be avoided. More harder and easy to clean surfaces can be introduced in the dining room i.e. wood, cork, linoleum ceramic or quarry tiles, vinyl tiles or sheet vinyl. Hard surfaces can be softened with a carpet, rug or natural matting such as rush or sea grass, but make sure that these do not slip. Use a non-slip adhesive to keep them intact.

Upholstery needs to be hardwearing and easy to clean. Chairs with tie-on or slip on covers can easily be removed for laundering or dry cleaning. Decorate the walls so that they can be easily washed or wiped down, especially at the back of any serving area. Options include washable wall coverings, washable wall papers and paint in a variety of finishes. Very heavy curtains can pick up food smells: velvet, for example, would not be a wise choice.

Lighting

Good lighting is particularly important in a dining room. A lamp on a rise and fall chain which pulls down centrally over the table, or ceiling recessed down lighters focused on the table will create an intimate ambience and give good light. Chandeliers may give added sparkle. Display lighting in storage units, or as an integral part of a shelving system, can provide a warm background glow. Have different types of lighting on separate circuits, especially in a dual-purpose room, so that you can dim one area if necessary.

Connecting Spaces

Connecting spaces are the arteries of any home and should be given all the respect and attention that is normally given to any other room. In decorating, as in all things, first impressions are important, so the hall – the area of the home usually seen first – should be warm and welcoming. The hall, stairs, landing and corridors of a house have an important role to play and it is through the frame work they form that all the other rooms are viewed. These spaces are usually affected by poor light and irregular shapes, so in order to make them into convenient welcoming spaces, careful attention should be paid to them.

The designer's first consideration should be the actual structure enclosing the space. By highlighting the features which are well balanced you can organise the space. If the ceiling height is pleasing, an attractive border or cornice could be introduced to enhance the line where ceiling meets wall. A bold treatment at a good-looking window creates the same effect. Similarly, you can disguise features that are less attractive, by reducing their details or painting them out.

It is important to establish a focal point on each area – something pleasing for the eye to rest upon. It might be a handsomely surround fireplace, an impact making picture, a well-proportioned window or a stunning carpet. All these spaces impinge upon one another – the hall leading to the stairs, the stairs then leading on to the landing and so on – it is therefore important to establish a strong link between the schemes in each. By laying the same carpet throughout, a sense of unity can be created. Bear in mind that these are the heavy traffic areas, so the colours must be chosen accordingly. Door handles, panelling, cornices, light switches and socket plates: all these deserve special attention.

Surfaces

Flooring

The highways of a home cope with much wear and tear. These areas suffer from the daily tramp of feet, mud, dirt and snow. Therefore hard-wearing surfaces should be installed in these areas. If a carpet is chosen it should at least be of heavy domestic quality, in a wool and nylon mixture with a hard twist or looped pile. The flooring surface should be tough, easy to clean and should be further protected by installing a good quality doormat set just inside the front door.

It is not mandatory to carpet the hall or the stairs. You can lay ceramic tiles (the traditional flooring in Victorian and Edwardian houses), sealed cork tiles, studded rubber, vinyl in sheet or tile form or linoleum, which can be inlaid to create interesting patterns. Other possible floor treatments include sisal, coir, coconut and rush matting, or sea grass matting but these tend to be too slippery when used on the stairs. The stairs themselves can be left uncovered or simply sanded and sealed, but this can be noisy underfoot and is not practical in a house with elderly occupants or young children. Otherwise lay a hard-wearing carpet on the stairs up onto the landing. Stair carpets should be non-slip and must be firmly anchored to prevent accidents. One practical treatment is to use a stair runner up the centre of the stairway, fixed with special clips.

Walls

Walls can be tricky in connecting areas when it comes to deciding where one finish should end and a new one start, especially when stairways are involved, and you wish to link two different schemes harmoniously. In this case the priority should be given to the ground floor scheme. You can consider installing a dado rail and treat the area below with a more resilient paint finish.

Use warm inviting colours such as terracotta, or muted rose in larger halls and pale peach, dusky apricot or pastel pink in smaller spaces. Or suggest a sense of continual sunshine with yellows and burnished gold, contrasted with sparkling white. Plain white walls give a cold appearance to a hall.

Ceilings

If the hall is high and narrow, paint the ceiling in a rich tone and use the same colour or the tonal value on the floor. Pick out any cornice or coving as a contrast and paint the frieze (the area above the picture rail) the same colour as the ceiling. Give the walls a 'split' treatment, with panels or dado rail, decorating the area below differently from the wall above. You can play other eye-deceiving tricks with mirrors, light reflecting textures, and monochromatic colour schemes to help increase the apparent size.

Furnishing

The connecting areas generally offer few opportunities for the placement of furniture; each piece will stand out and therefore requires very careful selection. But remember that no item of furniture should be allowed to hinder the passage of human traffic. Many halls are scarcely larger than a corridor and few are big enough to hold furniture. Wherever possible, space should be made in the hall for at least a chair and a table or a desk to accommodate the clutter of daily life – keys, letters, packages, library books or message pads. Try to provide a place to hang visitor's coats and umbrellas, too. If the area is very narrow install a bench, a wall-mounted shelf, a drawer for small items, a mirror and an umbrella stand. It can either be painted to fade into the background or decorated so that it stands out.

Storage

Even in the very smallest of connecting spaces a storage space can be created. Book storage in a home is usually a problem but corridors offer an excellent site. Being narrow in depth and decorative in appearance, books can be happily accommodated in passage ways, lobbies and hallways, but do remember to light them properly so that books can be removed and examined in comfort.

Visual Links

Try to link the decorating scheme so that it flows up onto the landing and then into the rooms. Co-ordinate the colours and pick patterns that can be echoed in a different scale or used on alternative surfaces in another room. Look at companion group of fabrics, borders and wall coverings to help you mix and match schemes in an interesting way. A same coloured flooring throughout further gives a sense of unity and visual link.

Lighting

Halls and stairs often lack natural daylight. Choose window treatments like sheers, lace panels, slatted blinds or plantation shutters to diffuse the light, or hang curtains and blinds which do not obscure the windows during the day time.

Artificial light should light the treads of the stairs clearly for safety. Use accent or display lighting to highlight any special features, and to throw light up onto the ceiling if you want to make it look taller. Lights on the stair walls should not be positioned so they shine into the people's eyes as they ascend or descend the staircase. Organise the lighting circuit so it is a dual-switch from the hall and the landing, allowing the lights to be turned off at either level.

Finishing Touches

Halls and stairwells are often an ideal place to display a collection of prints, pictures or photographs and coloured mounts, chosen to echo a colour scheme used elsewhere, and can help with visual links. In some halls, landings or corridors there is ample space for book shelves or low-level book cases. Plants also play a vital role in decorating these areas. A deep window reveal can be turned into a miniature conservatory, and then you can light the plants well for maximum impact.

Entrance Halls

The entrance hall is the place where we welcome the guests. This is the place that creates a first impression on anybody coming in. Outside it may be dark, hostile and cold but inside we offer warmth, light and comfort; whether the hall be grand or humble, this is the message we would like to convey upon opening our front door. Many dark, small and badly designed halls are often considered wastage of time. But by introducing some interesting decorations and clever lighting, these unloved spaces can become attractive and charming.



Flooring

In the traditional home, hard floorings such as stone flags, marble, terracotta tiles or wood are all fitting choices. Carpeting is also acceptable, but in that case a door mat should be installed just inside the front door to prevent dirt being trampled all over the house.

Lighting

Lighting plays an important role in setting the mood in an entrance hall. An exterior light guides the visitor to the door. In the hall itself a good level of light is needed.

Furnishing

The furnishings you include in this room will very much depend upon the space available. Important items to include are somewhere to set down mail, newspaper, house keys and so on. A receptacle for umbrellas, a place to hang coats and, space permitting, at least one chair is also required. A wall mirror is very useful for last minute adjustments.

Space

If space is the problem, exchanging a solid door for a glazed one will much improve the availability of natural daylight. To maximise the feeling of spaciousness visually, go for plain reflective surfaces in cool colours and bring interest to your scheme by introducing contrasting textures. A combination of rough matting and gloss paint or polished blonde wood will look stunning.

Style

The style evidenced in the hall will set the tone for the whole house, so its selection is very important. Global and classic English country house are just two themes that adapt particularly well in a hall way.

Stairways

The staircase at the very least can offer space to create a picture gallery and can become a pleasurable transitional space between floors. It is impossible to think of a stairway without a room with which it connects to. The two areas will inevitably be viewed together, it is important that the colour schemes of both are linked.



Storage

The space beneath the stairs offers a wonderful opportunity for storage either closed-in and housing unsightly items or open and perhaps forming a mini library.

Surfaces

For practicality surfaces need to be tough. If carpet is your chosen floor covering, ensure that it is well attached to the stairs either by gripper rod beneath or stair rods above. Delicate wall surfaces can be protected by the introduction of a painted dado at the lower level.

Lighting

Lighting is an important element of stair design. Ceiling fixed down lighters provide ideal lighting. Alternatively, wall fixed lights can provide good illumination but make sure that the glare from bulbs is not viewed while either descending or ascending the stairs.

Stair Window

With the stair window, curtains do not look good if they stop half way down a wall or if they dangle aimlessly over a top step. If privacy is not a concern, an unadorned window can be framed with a painted stencil border on the surrounding wall. Another suggestion involves fixing glass shelves across the front of the window to display a collection of beautifully coloured glassware or healthy plants. The best way of dealing with an unattractive window is to minimize its importance by treating it in the simplest manner possible and by selecting a fabric to blend in with the surrounding wall.

Corridors and Landings

In a narrow corridor, furnishings may prove difficult to accommodate. As with all traffic areas it is important that the circulation is not hindered. You might consider incorporating some small upright chairs with elegant backs and pretty cushions, a shallow console table laden with decorative accessories, or a fitted bookcase.

One of the secrets of successful corridor decoration is; it should be done in a way that the whole place presents a very interesting picture.

There are several ways to achieve this:

- The creation of pools of light rather than all over lighting will create contrast and interest. Narrow- beamed down lighters directed at decorative floor treatments, are used to achieve this.
- A clever use of wall colours can change the proportion of the corridor.
- Mirrors fixed to side walls will magically open up the space and make it appear much wider and lighter.
- The placement of an item of interest at the end of the corridor will have the effect providing a focal point as well as arresting the eye.
- Interest can also be created on one side wall by hanging pictures.
- On the matter of safety, it is important that sufficient light is provided to reveal any changes in floor level.

Long Corridor

- Visually shorten the length with flooring in a horizontal pattern.
- Create pools of light at intervals along the length of the corridor to add interest.
- Install the focal point at the end of the corridor to arrest the eye.
- Select receding colours for the side walls to expand the width.
- Install plenty of mirrors to push out the walls and bring light to the area.
- Break up wall expanses with paintings, mirrors, chairs and console tables. But where there is insufficient space for furniture, consider installing a shelf with a mirror above.

Bedrooms

Bedrooms are the most individual and personal rooms in the home; whether they belong to children or adults, they should reflect the personality of their owners. A bedroom may have to be a shared space or a dual purpose one (study/office, dressing-room, bedroom, playroom/nursery/guest room) in any case they will require careful planning and scheming. As bedrooms usually receive less wear and tear than the more public areas of the home, the decorating material can be more delicate and more luxurious than family living rooms. As well as being a place to sleep and dress, a bedroom is frequently also somewhere to watch television, listen to the radio, eat breakfast, read a book or write letters. In households with children, the main bedroom is often an important centre for family life.

Choosing a Bed

Because a good night's sleep is so important to our mental and physical wellbeing, a bed is one of the most important pieces of furniture in a home. Comfort is key for the best mattress. The firmness of a mattress can be chosen to suit the sleeper, but in the case of children's beds, it should be firm enough to support young bones. Beds can be ordered with a different firmness of spring on each side, or it is possible to have a zip and link system, comprising two bases and mattresses which can be either divided and used as single beds or pushed and linked together to form a double bed.

Consider the style of the bed in relation to room's scheme. Also consider the head board both in relation to the bed and height of the room. An upholstered headboard is much more comfortable than a wooden or metal design. Always make comfort the priority when choosing styles.

Sizing Up

The size of the bed needs to relate to the shape of the room and space available, as well as to the style you want to achieve. A four-poster bed may well suit a room with country house styling but would be impractical in a cottage with low ceilings. The best way of planning the room, and working out which type of bed will best fit in, is to measure the dimensions and make a to-scale plan. While doing the calculations, remember that the bed may have to be pulled out for cleaning underneath, and enough room is required to move around when making it.

Bedroom Atmosphere

A bedroom is a place where we want to be happy both when waking up in the morning or and when relaxing at night. It is important to use colours, textures, materials and furnishings that will create the right atmosphere. Colour schemes in a main bedroom should be chosen to create a relaxing atmosphere, while in teenager's and children's rooms, they can be brighter and more stimulating. If the bedroom lacks light or tends to be cool, brighten it up with warm colours such as yellows, gold, pinks, peach or apricot. Use pale or middle tones for the main surfaces such as walls, and then add some definition or contrast in accents and accessories; sharp jade or turquoise with the above colours, for example. If you want to create an impression of space choose colours from the cool side of the spectrum – blues, lavenders and silver greens – and then warm up with splashes of terracotta or raspberry. Natural and neutral colours will help to achieve the relaxing atmosphere, though grey neutral can be somewhat cold, so you can add a few warm touches with it. Many of the cream and beige based neutrals give a feeling of warmth, while being quite relaxing at the same time. Busy designs and glossy textures can be distracting; try to balance the patterns with plain surfaces and offset a shiny surface with a matt one.

Furniture and Storage

The layout of a bedroom is extremely important so begin by drawing a floor plan. Allow as much space as possible for movement around the bed and make sure that the wardrobes, cupboards and chests can be accessed and opened easily. List the pieces of furniture that would be required in the room. Bedside tables, chest of drawers and wardrobes are the basic choices, but one need not always be restricted to these conventional pieces.

Good storage is essential. In a bedroom there is so much to accommodate and there is never enough space. Clothes are likely to be the most pressing problem, with the need to store items both horizontally on shelves and vertically on hangers. Hangers require a space approximately 60 cm/2 feet deep. Also consider the visual effect of storage furniture. A wardrobe or large cupboard can often have a very solid look. Glass panelled doors with fabric behind the panels or a specialist paint finish will have a softening effect.

Lighting

In many ways the rules applying to lighting the living room can be applied to the bedroom too, but perhaps in a subtler fashion. In a bedroom it is important to create a calm restful atmosphere and to avoid glare. As well as achieving a relaxing mood, it is also vital to ensure that the task lighting is doing its job. Of primary concern must be the bedside lighting. Position here is everything: the light source should be at least 60 cm/ 2 feet above the mattress. If a down lighter or pendant fitting is used to provide general lighting, ensure that this is not positioned too near the bed head or the glare will be visible by anyone in the resting position.

Strip lights fitted within wardrobes and with an automatic switch in the door jamb will make the selection of clothing much easier.

Main Bedroom

Quiet reading, television viewing, enjoying a peaceful light supper, letter writing: all these are activities that someone enjoys best in their own private space. This is the area where we are obliged to please no one else but ourselves. It therefore makes sense that the best bedroom space should be available in terms of area, shape, view, and orientation with access to dressing and bathroom facilities. Most people opt for soft colours and quiet patterns as these are considered less tiring on the eyes and more conducive to rest and relaxation. The problem arises when two people with different tastes share a room. This problem can usually be overcome by the skilful selection of colours and patterns mid-way between the two tastes. If you choose neutrals for their blandness, they will provide a wonderful backdrop for relaxation and can be sparked up by the introduction of pretty bed linen, stylish furniture and sharp accessories. For flooring, bear in mind that whatever covering is selected, it should be kind on the feet.



Always adjust the dressing table to a position where as much natural light as possible falls upon the face of the person sitting there – beneath the window is ideal. When it comes to the choice of bedside tables, people usually have their own personal preferences. There are, though, some common principles worth considering. First, for convenience, it is best if the unit is approximately the same height as the top of the bed mattress usually around 50 cm/20 inches. Ideally there should be enough space within the unit to store everything that someone may wish to store at their bedside.

Occasional Guest Bedrooms

Few households these days can afford to dedicate bedroom space for the exclusive use of an occasional guest. Usually this room has to serve some other function as well. A study or dressing room could more easily be converted to serve this additional purpose when required. Perhaps a rarely used dining room could also be considered. Whichever space is selected, take care that the room's main purpose isn't compromised. With clever planning the room can be prepared to take on both the roles without difficulty. Beds when not in use can be disguised in variety of ways:

- A convertible chair or sofa bed can be used. The fold away type which emerges ready made from a wall cupboard can be a clever choice.
- A fold-up camp bed is cheap and useful for visiting children but may not offer sufficient comfort to an adult.
- A day bed is the most satisfactory solution for many people. It can be handsomely draped for decorative purposes.



Lighting

Lighting in this dual-purpose room needs to be carefully planned. Incorporate free standing lights such as table lamps and standard lamps suitable to meet the needs of every new arrangement.

Storage

If the dual role of the room is to be disguised, good storage will be needed. A desk in a study room can be easily converted to a dressing table by placing mirror on the top.

Preparing the Room

- Guest towels sprayed with cologne and presented in a basket on the end of the bed.
- Fresh flowers on the dressing table.
- Recent magazines/children's story books left on a small table.
- Tea/coffee making facilities.
- A television or radio for entertainment and information and an alarm clock.
- A dryer in the dressing table drawer.
- A mirror, full length if possible, for grooming.
- A basket of bathroom goodies - perfumes, shampoo and so on.

Elderly Person's Bedsits

Having an elderly person in a house can often benefit the whole family. The room you choose for an elderly person should always be at ground level to make getting around easier. Allow space for more than just sleeping. The provision of areas for relaxing, bathing, cooking and dining will allow the senior citizen to remain active and somewhat independent from the rest of the house. Some of the most obvious provisions are:

- A comfortable easy to get out of chair.
- Bright lighting, walls and ceiling fixed lights plus table and floor standing lamps are suitable.
- Remember to highlight any changes in the floor level.
- Older people generally require a warmer temperature than the young.
- Storage at an easy access level and with openings that are not too difficult to operate.
- The elimination of all sharp corners for safety reasons. A smoke alarm is another wise precaution.
- In the bathroom, mixer taps, and a controlled temperature shower system will help avoid extremes of water temperature.
- Curtains on a corded track, operated from the side, to ease opening and closing.



The decoration of the room should most likely be traditional. Choose pretty patterns and cheerful colours to lift the mood and addition of plants or a pet will bring life into the room.

Children's Rooms

The most important thing to keep in mind for children's rooms is that children do not remain small for very long. This means any decorative scheme should be able to evolve with time. Before long a pretty nursery will need to develop into a room that is suitable for a toddler. Storage that was once an adult's height must give way to low, open shelves where books and toys can be kept. Just as toddlers have very different needs to babies, so do young children compared with toddlers and so on through the years.



Surfaces

When deciding on a decorative scheme, remember to take child's opinions and tastes into account and be prepared to compromise a little. Use paint on the walls or colourful textured wall paper, which could have a vinyl coating for practicality. Choose a cheerful colour that can be used as the backdrop for posters and photographs.

Flooring should be practical as well as comfortable. Wooden floors are tough and easy to clean. They can be painted with decorative patterns and chequerboard designs to add interest. Carpet is a more comfortable option, but make sure you choose one that is hard wearing – a mixture of 80 per cent wool and 20 per cent nylon for strength is a good combination. Select a shade that will not show marks too easily. Whatever type of flooring is selected, use a big washable rug over it to introduce colour, pattern, warmth and practicality.

Furnishings

Furnishing includes not just curtains and upholstery but bed linen, lamp shades and cushions. Dress the bed imaginatively, using coloured blankets and throws to enhance the effect. Child size furniture is useful for toddlers and younger children. But when children are tall enough to use them easily and safely, it is better to give them full size chairs, desks, chests and wardrobes. But this furniture can be customised using decorative paints and stencils. A good-sized bed with a comfortable mattress is just as essential for a child as for an adult. Bunk beds are useful if the space is limited. When choosing a bunk bed make sure that it is solidly built, with easy access in and out of both bunks, especially the top one. Another space saving option is a raised bed with a desk, drawers and cupboard underneath. These can however be difficult to move around when cleaning.

When choosing furniture for the child consider the activities which may include playing, socialising with friends, hobbies, homework and reading. Think about the furniture needed for these activities and whether space is needed for computers, televisions or other objects.

Storage

Storage is a key consideration here because so many different activities take place in the child's room. Depending on the age of a child space will be needed to store a wide range of items including toys, games, books, clothes, CDs and sports equipment. You will need to use probably every centimetre of space, as well as installing wardrobes, cupboards and toys chests, try attaching hooks to the walls and use plastic boxes that can either be stowed on shelves or under a bed. Books should be easily accessible: while older children can cope with books kept on a shelf, younger children will find it easier to take books from a basket on the floor. As with anything in a child's room storage should be made safe. Make sure that the shelves are fixed securely to the wall.

Lighting

Lighting in a child's room is extremely important. Make sure that you provide an overhead light for play, directional light such as a spotlight and an adjustable desk lamp for reading, writing or drawing and a soft night light beside the bed for reassurance.

Accessories

Choose decorative accessories, such as mobiles, pictures and a clock that match the style of the room and the personality of the child who lives in it.

Baby Nurseries

The needs of a small baby in room terms are quite simple: somewhere to sleep, to have a nappy changed and perhaps take a bath; somewhere for the mother or a carer to sit comfortably while nursing or feeding; and a place to store small garments, blankets, toys and toiletries.

Safety must always be the first consideration. Although few electrical sockets will be required in the baby nursery at this stage, they should be planned with an eye to the future and those not currently being used should be blocked off until needed.

Temperature is an important factor for a baby's comfort. Controllable central-heating radiators are probably the most successful way of safely heating a child's room, but these should be out of reach if possible, either hidden behind the furniture or protected by a safe guard. There should be adequate ventilation and the cot should be positioned away from the source of heat.

A wash basin with running water in a nursery is often considered a luxury.

Few items of furniture are needed in the nursery of a very young baby. A cot, chest of drawers, and an easy chair with low arms for nursing and feeding are all that is required. Shelves for displaying pictures, toys and books can help to decorate the room. A unit to hold nappies, cream, powder and a bin is useful too.

The decoration of a nursery need not be that expensive. Plain painted walls that allow for surface decorations to be added and changed as the child matures are a good idea. Colours should be bright and cheerful.

When it comes to floors, hygiene, ease of cleaning and the child's comfort and safety can all be served by laying such material as cushioned vinyl, cork or hard wood. The addition of easily washed play mats will soften the hard floor effect.



Pre-school Playrooms

A gate at the entrance is needed to ensure that the child is contained within the room and within earshot when the parent's back is turned. To lessen noise from the playroom install plenty of soft finishes within the room. The creation of different zones will help to punctuate the child's day. Plenty of storage facilities are also required to keep the room in good order. There should be fitted units in the room, as an idea a blackboard might be attached to the front of one, a pin board to the other and perhaps the third might carry a plastic mirror. Any free-standing units, as long as they are well weighted, could be used to divide areas within the room. For additional storage boxes and baskets can be used.

As children mature they need the company of others to develop skills fully, so it is important to have provision for visiting friends. Practical and washable surfaces should be used everywhere in the room. The best decorating scheme will be the use of bright primary colours. Temporary decorations can be attached to the walls by means of removable adhesive; mobiles can be hung from the ceiling and prints suspended from the picture rail.

Teenager's Den

The teenager's involvement in deciding upon the decoration of the room is very important if they are to have any respect for their surroundings and if they are encouraged to maintain them well. An interior designer specialising in young people's rooms has been quoted as saying 'ask them what they want and then bargain'. This seems a very sensible approach to adopt.

As in the young child's playroom it is good idea to create zones for different activities within the teenager's den.

Bunk beds or a day bed can also be used. Hammocks strung across the beam in a loft ceiling are a fun idea for a teenager that has frequent guests. An ideal study area should be located with a good source of natural light. There should be number of power sockets positioned nearby. Space for a work surface, a bookcase and for a computer should also be made available.

If possible, the provision of personal bathing facilities within the room itself will free more bathroom time for the rest of the family. For teenagers, dressing space will be an important area of the room. A walk-in closet is ideal; it provides lots of space and can be shut out of view at will. Alternatively, a large cupboard with lots of hanging space can be provided.

Plain walls of oil-based paint will provide a good background onto which posters can be attached. A carpet with thick underlay will help to prevent noise.

Bathroom

After the kitchen, the bathroom needs more careful planning than any other room in the house. The layout, the equipment, the materials and surfaces all need to be considered carefully, especially if the room is to be shared by several different generations, or if it is the only bathroom in the house. Bathrooms must work on two levels: as efficient spaces that people dash into each morning, and as relaxing rooms into which they retreat in the evening.

Assess the Needs

Start by assessing the daily routine of the household – for example, is there any time of the day when everybody wants to be in it at the same time? This could be solved by installing double basins if there is enough space. But this will not be practical if the only toilet in the house is in the bathroom and in that case, it would be more appropriate to have a separate W/C.

A shower is good for a quick freshen up, but do not be tempted to totally remove a bath in favour of a shower. If there is no space available for a separate bath, consider installing a shower-bath. When deciding on the model of bath tub, consider the practical aspects of bathing children, and possibly the ease of getting in and out of the bath tub – this should be a particular consideration for older clients. Decide what other facilities will be required in addition to the bathtub, shower and washbasin: a sauna or a whirlpool bath perhaps? When choosing the colour for the bathroom suite choose one that will go with several changes of decorating schemes, and is easy to clean. Usually black, dark blue or burgundy bathtubs and basins are hard to keep looking pristine; it is better to choose middle or pastel tones, or simply white, around which it is easy to make changes. Taps should be easy to manipulate, even with wet hands, and a mixer arrangement will aid temperature control.

Surfaces and Materials

The main surfaces should be as practical as possible – waterproof, easy to clean and as accident proof as possible.

The Floor

The floors should be splash-proof, so consider ceramics tiles, pre-sealed cork tiles, vinyl or linoleum, or you can show off the existing floor boards, provided they are properly water-proofed. Any of these can be softened by a non-slip cotton rug or carpet tiles.

The Walls

While choosing materials for walls bear in mind, that any wall coverings you choose should perform well in humid conditions. The walls can be tiled, part-tiled or painted with special bathroom paint and they may be covered with wood cladding or vinyl wall covering. Wall papers can be used but must be securely fixed and have a spongy surface if they are to survive. For the bathroom ceiling why not try an interesting style as it is what you look up at while soaking in the bath?

Bathroom Windows

Bathroom windows are usually small and have obscured glass panes but remember that these can be seen through at night when the lights are on. Keep the window dressing simple and relate the scale of any pattern or blinds or curtains to the size of the window.



Themes and Schemes

When choosing a colour scheme for a bathroom, consider the colour of porcelain fixtures first. You can then select the rest of the scheme to co-ordinate or contrast.

If you use contrast the bathroom will look smaller. If you go for the overall harmonious effect, using different values of the same colour it will look larger. Since bathrooms tend to be small, pale cool colours will help to enlarge it, but they do tend to look rather chilly. If you choose pale, or subtle colours from the warmer side of the spectrum like pinks, apricot, peach, cream, yellow, soft terracotta, gold and soft yellow the room will appear larger, without looking too cold.

Light reflecting colours, shiny paints, ceramic tiles and silky wall coverings; these will all create an impression of space, as will panels of mirror tiles or strategically placed mirrors. These can look rather busy and distracting, however, so some soft textural contrasts can be introduced such as long pile rugs, deep piled towels, cane screening, baskets filled with soaps, lace, muslin and sheer drapes. Plants will soften any hard edges; choose those that love a steamy atmosphere.

Heating Systems

The bathroom should be properly ventilated and warm to avoid condensation. Heat can be supplied by a radiator, or by one of the more modern ladder style radiators, which can also be used as a towel warmer.

Storage

Usually bathrooms suffer from lack of storage, so it is no wonder that they appear cluttered and disorganised. In general bathroom necessities are not attractive and the display surfaces should be left free for more decorative items, such as perfumes bottles and so on. Bathroom cleaners can be housed in the base of a vanity unit. Additional storage can be created by a free-standing chest. Hooks should be fixed to the walls or on a door to hang a dressing-gown or clothes.

Lighting

Lighting should be layered if possible so that you can have a bright light for activities such as shaving or applying make-up, and soft light for relaxing in the bath.

As well as providing good 'working' light conditions, consider introducing lighting as a hint of glamour: for example, this can be done, by introducing lighting around the mirror. Safety however should be the primary concern, whatever your choice of fittings, so ensure that it has been passed as safe for bathroom use. In the bathroom, ensure that the light is positioned between the person using the mirror and the mirror itself. The standard fitting for this situation is a strip light, but a ceiling fixed down lighter or wall lights fixed to either side of the mirror provide a more aesthetic solution.



En-suite Bathroom

Because the en-suite bathroom is likely to be for the sole use of the occupants of the adjacent bedroom, it should be tailored for their needs without considering others. Wallpaper might be considered, and the bedroom carpet continued into the bathroom with mats to protect potentially wet areas. Pictures can also be hung. Drapes around the bath might also be considered. Make sure that there is proper ventilation to avoid condensation.

If the bathroom and the bedroom are to work successfully together, their schemes need to relate to each other, while at the same time maintaining their own individual character. An effective way of achieving this is by revisiting the bedroom scheme in the bathroom – that is for example, by taking the bedroom accent colour and using it as the main colour in the bathroom.

Family Bathrooms

When planning a new bathroom or refurbishing an old one, the criteria that apply to bathrooms in general also apply to the family bathroom. In addition, there is a need for more strict safety precautions, keeping in view the range of ages of people likely to be using this bathroom. A lockable cupboard for the storage of medicines is useful and an out of the way space will be required for storing caustic cleaning products if the household contains children. Locks on the windows and the elimination of sharp corners in the bathroom will also help to maintain safety. Taps should be chosen carefully, and they should be easily manipulated even with wet hands. Non-slip surfaces will be required especially if there is an elderly person in the house.

Furnishings

The furnishing of the family bathroom will depend very much upon the size of the room. Twin wash basins housed in built-in units are ideal, as would be a separate shower if the space allows. A separate W/C would also be very useful.

Decorations

The best decorations for a family bathroom are simple, bright and cheerful. If the bathroom is going to be used by both adults and children, try to avoid deliberately childish themes, especially in any permanent features. Ceramic tiles or a paint finish are best for walls and sheet vinyl is probably the most practical covering for the floor. Useful extras for the bathroom would be plenty of mirrors and as large a heated towel rail as you can accommodate.

Workroom

In most homes a quiet corner is created where people study, read, deal with the household accounts, write letters, and pursue their hobbies. A room dedicated to work will allow for peace and privacy and will mean that work and equipment can be left out until next required. However, if it is not possible to dedicate a whole room to work, a room can be divided into separate play and work zones.

If you must plan a study room or workroom from scratch, first think about its main purpose and decide on priorities. Will there be a lot of noise (music, instruments, machinery, typewriters, hammering) which will disturb the rest of the household? If so, install some sound insulation and do not site the room over or next to a room where children sleep. If there are likely to be strong smells from paint, glue or varnish provide proper ventilation. Also provide plenty of electrical circuits, both for power and light. Plan task lighting to be as flexible as possible.

Surfaces

Surfaces should be as practical as possible, depending on the activities that will take place; a hard surface, that is impervious to spills and scrubbed, may be essential. The walls should also be washable, which means using paint or ceramic tiles. Colour schemes depend on the size of the room, its orientation and the atmosphere you want to create. Softer neutrals and warm mid tones work well for study and writing, while bright stimulating colour schemes will be more appropriate for design work or modern music, avoid colours which cause glare (bright yellow, orange, brilliant white), and shiny textures, especially with a computer screen in the room, but do not go to the other extreme and make it too dark and gloomy.

Style

The style of this room need not necessarily be too business-like but should reflect in some way the activities that will take place in it. When planning a workroom, it is tempting to come up with business-like colour schemes and so on, but there are many more fundamental things to consider first. Given below is the check list of questions to prompt your ideas:

- Is separate access required?
- What activities are going to take place within the space?
- What equipment will these activities require?
- What services (for example, telephone, internet, running water, heating and ventilation) are needed?
- How will you illuminate the various activities? (using both natural and artificial light)

- What are the storage requirements?

Other points to consider are:

- Sound-proofing (either to exclude or contain noise)
- Space and equipment for guest workers (for example a book keeper or temporary secretary)
- Security (locks, safes, alarms and so on)
- Safety (for instance, non-slip floors)
- Facilities for guests (seating, cloakroom, guests and so on)

Decorations

The style for the workroom may vary depending upon the dimensions of the space and the personal preferences of the people using the room. Whichever style is selected, there will be a need for a certain amount of equipment, hard wearing floor surfaces and lots of storage. If the room is to be used for professional purposes, try to avoid creating too domestic a style.

Storage

Try to plan storage right from the start. Existing furniture can be used for this purpose but where possible try to arrange for built-in storage for a more organised appearance.

Lighting

Concentrate on providing a good overall level of illumination and ensuring that specific tasks can take place in good glare-free light coming from the correct direction.

Home Office

Having a permanent work space at home is a fairly recent development. Traditionally most houses had a library that usually belonged to the male members of the family. However, current trends towards freelancing and working from home have made the home office a more common element in many households.

Basic items of equipment might include a desk, ergonomically designed chair, storage equipment, such as shelves or filing cabinets, telephone, fax machine, computer, reference material and desk lamps.

The home working area can adopt any style depending upon the type of work undertaken and space available. Distraction in the home office can come from many directions – interruptions from other family members, demands created by other activities happening in the same space, callers at the door and so on. Therefore, the home office should be built up in a separate building attaching locks to the door, installing separate telephone lines or even building in some form of soundproofing. The ideal home office has its own entrance and a cloakroom nearby.

For decoration use neutrals and deeps while distracting patterns should be used with caution. Cord carpets are considered suitable because they are hard wearing and will not be easily damaged by chair castors. Soft furnishings are kept simple.

Lighting needs to be well targeted and care should be taken that glare is not caused by the reflection of light fittings on the computer screen. Also remember to light the storage spaces and book shelves. To make the best use of the available daylight, site the desk near the windows (ensuring that the windows are screened in such a way that the view beyond may not distract). Purpose made office furniture is recommended because this will accommodate items like a computer, key board and printer at their correct height. The chair is equally important and should be well made, ergonomically designed and adjustable. Storage units can of course be in the form of free-standing cupboards and shelves but will look much more streamlined if built in.

Studio Workshop

A studio workshop is a dream place for creative people, where they can indulge in their creative work in peace. Whatever is the passion - designing or sewing, calligraphy or photography – a dedicated, well equipped studio provides the ideal environment for its expression.

Choosing the Right Location

Choosing the right location for the studio/work shop can be critical if home and work are to operate harmoniously side by side. A certain amount of separation from the rest of the home will be required. The work taking place in the studio/workshop may contain unsociable elements such as noise and mess that will require some form of isolation. To choose the best location in accordance with the nature of the work, list all the activities that the work involves. The availability of services may well determine where the studio or workshop is best located. Here are some of the facilities that you might require:

Power Points

Power points would be required for tools, audio equipment, heating, cooking, lighting, refrigeration and so on. It is wise to think ahead and build more sockets than you actually need.

Water

Water might be required for photographic work, pottery, painting, cooking, cleaning up and so on. Consider whether you need a hot water supply as well as cold water; mixer taps can be fixed.

Gas

Gas might be required for firing, heating, welding and so on. If a mains supply is not available, you can consider a tank supply.

Ventilation

To eliminate smells and to maintain a suitable temperature in the work place, proper ventilation will be required. This can be provided by an open window or fan system.

Lighting

Keeping in mind the overall tasks and the conditions of the place, carefully plan the lighting, which will best suit the purposes. It is also advisable to include some free-standing lighting that can be directed at will.

Security

Door locks to keep studio and work safe and to exclude children from the dangerous areas might be required

Storage

Clever planning will be needed for creating storage facilities. Apply the same principles as for planning kitchen storage. Plan for a chest, filing cupboards and similar units which can be best designed to suit the client's needs. A distinction should be made for those items which will be used on daily basis and those used less frequently. The tools can be stored on a wall mounted racking system, where they can be easily reached, while those that are rarely required can be placed within less accessible units.

Surfaces

Position, size and height of the work surfaces should also be carefully thought out. The availability of natural light will probably determine the best site for the main work zone. It is important that comfort, health and seating arrangements should be given their due respect. When it comes to finishes for the various surfaces in the studio, consider practicality first. A painted cemented floor is good for heavy duty wear and areas where high temperatures are involved. For dry activities cork or vinyl tiles may be most suitable. If working with textiles, a hard floor will be easier to keep clean than a soft one. Wooden flooring may seem more appropriate for a room used for physical activities but do take care and watch out for slipperiness and splinters. Walls with gloss paint finish are more practical, as they can be repainted when badly scarred. Your second consideration should be aesthetics. For most situations plain paint for walls surface provides the best answer: it will provide an ideal blank canvas against which the activities can take place.

Library

Although a library may be considered a work room where serious research, study and perhaps writing is carried out, a small library can also be a pleasant space: warm, welcoming and comfortable to while away the hours.

The selection of deep jewel colours - ruby, sapphire and emerald – or warm earth tones – terracotta, sand, clay and volcanic rock are all perfect for this room. By echoing the colours of the books, you can give the feeling that the books are the part of the room.

Lighting

Lighting can so easily enhance or spoil this wonderful place. A central pendant light is to be avoided; it will flatten all the textures. Instead, choose several individual lights positioned in the lower portion of the room; for example, table lamps, standard lamps, and desk lamps will all create a pool of light. Ceiling fixed recessed wall washers will provide enough light for the shelves. You can also consider library lights to fix to the shelving units themselves.

Furnishing

A comfortable chair is of paramount importance. This could be upholstered in either fabric or leather. A high back chair is wonderful for resting the head. Positioned near the window it will benefit from light for reading and a pleasant view for idle moments. A foot rest will ensure perfect relaxation. Other items which can be included: library steps to reach books on high shelves or a side table beside the chair to hold a drink.

Storage

There are numerous methods of storing books and much depends upon the size and layout of the room. When planning storage, remember that books come in all the shapes and sizes, so allow for extra deep and tall spaces.

Style

The most popular style for the library is the 'gentleman's club' look with lots of antiques and reproduction furniture, leather upholstery with brass nailing, heavy velvet curtains and rich dark colours. Victorian style includes most of these items and can be the most suitable theme, especially in a period house, but a more modern style can also be adopted for this room. Lighter colours, streamlined shelving and modern light fittings can give a library a very different but attractive appearance.



Adding an Extra Room

Improving a home by adding an extra room is an addition which can provide a pleasant dual-purpose room. An extension can be added at the back of the house to enlarge the kitchen and the living area, or to provide a new kitchen, a utility area, a separate dining room or a playroom. Another possibility can be to convert an integral garage into a habitable room, attics can also be altered, and roofs opened to provide extra living space; basements and cellars can be damp proofed and converted into workshops, playrooms, dens or utility rooms.

Practical Considerations

In some locations the addition of an extra room may require planning permission. Also consider the purpose for which it will be used. For example, in a conservatory, bear in mind its intended use. If it is to be planted with exotic flora and foliage, you will need to pay great attention to heating, ventilation, sun screening and water facilities.

Attics and Studios

A studio or attic is often required to be multi-functional, to provide space for sitting, sleeping, eating, relaxing and entertaining. You need to do some detailed calculations in order to work out a practical plan.

Space under the roof can become intolerably hot in summer, as well as chillingly cold in winter, so try to insulate the material immediately below the roof. Insulating material can be placed behind plaster boarding or wood panelling. Apart from adequate insulation, the area should be well heated and well ventilated. Noise can be a problem both from outside and from the occupants of the apartment. To insulate against this use insulating material around the floor joints, between attic floor and the ceiling of the room below. Select sound absorbing flooring like long pile carpet or carpet tiles with a good quality

underlay. Safety is an important consideration too. Install a fire alarm in the ceiling and have fire extinguishers readily accessible inside.

Scheme and Style

Flexible colour schemes should be chosen, so they appear neither too hot in summer nor too cold in winter. Use a natural, neutral or pale scheme for the main surfaces and add warm accent colours for accessories and window treatments for the winter. These can be changed for cooler colours in summer. Use continuous floor covering, with the separate areas defined by rugs or use different walls, ceiling and wood work treatments for different areas.

Conservatory

Adding an extra space in the house in the form of a conservatory is a relatively recent development, but it is a very exciting one. Creating a conservatory or sun room can give a sense of extending the house into the outdoor environment, for availing an area of sun and light that one can sit and enjoy or to grow plants. Before deciding on a style for a conservatory it is important to know about its intended purpose; whether it is to be used as a greenhouse, summer dining extension or even as a type of play or games room. Before you pin down your ideas about the style, be clear on the following points:

- How will the finished conservatory look from outside? Do you want its style to reflect the architecture of the house?
- Which direction do you want the conservatory to face? A south oriented conservatory will be full of sunshine, but unless a good ventilation system is installed and shade provided in the form of blinds, it is likely to overheat in summer. A north facing one will need an efficient heating system for cooler days.
- What is the intended purpose; is it to be a place for indoor gardening, relaxing, dining, cooking or playing?
- Is it to be an integral part of an interior living area or will it open up and become one with the garden or terrace? The larger the opening onto either, or both, these areas, the more linked they will appear.

Because the conservatory represents a link between the house and the exterior, the most appropriate furnishing will be the one which reflect this connection. Well-designed garden furniture softened with table clothes, cushions and upholstered seats will further enhance the link. Rattan, wicker or cane furniture can be used.

Remember, it can cut light from the room or the corridor from which it leads.

A conservatory should always be fitted with double glazing otherwise it will be too cold in winter and too hot in summer, however efficient the heating or cooling systems are. Some of the windows should be programmed to open and close in the conservatory to allow excess heat to escape. The glass will also need screening from the sun in summer and frost in winter, especially if there are to be lots of plants. There are many interior blinds designed especially for conservatories, from simple rattan screens to sleek slatted ones. Select a type to suit the design of your conservatory and the proposed decorating style.

Surfaces

The exterior walls of the conservatory are usually very small or non-existent, as they are mainly glass, but when a conservatory is built onto the exterior house structure, the original house wall will become the major feature. Brick and stones left unpainted can give an attractive look but if you want to paint it use masonry paint. Exterior views will become wall paper so use colours that blend well. Wood panelling is a pleasing alternative, either in natural form or painted. If you want to soften a harsh finish, mount a wooden garden trellis on the wall and train climbing plants to cover it.

Floors need to be both hard wearing and easy to clean, as feet will tramp in straight from outside. It should also be non-slip and impervious to damp, if there are plants to be watered. If you want to use ceramic tiles, make sure these are frost proof. Sealed cork tiles, good quality linoleum and strong rigid vinyl tiles are possible alternatives. These can be softened with non-slip rugs.

Safety

Safety has to be considered too; use double glazed panes, which have an insulated blind sandwiched between the layers, and a double layer of transparent roofing material.

Building a conservatory obviously changes the shape and dimensions of the home.

Lighting

Lighting in a conservatory is a relatively easy process so long as electrical points have been well positioned and there are sufficient sockets for free standing fittings. Use up lighters for good background lighting concealed behind or inside plant pots. Also provide adequate lighting for dining and seating areas. Spotlights can also be used to feature the plants. Low voltage lighting is particularly good because it does not become too hot.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Clean Room Design: Minimizing Contamination Through Proper Design, (1996), By Bengt Ljungqvist, Berit Reinmuller*
- ✓ *Handbook of Control Room Design and Ergonomics: A Perspective for the Future, (2009), edited by Toni Ivergard, Brian Hunt*