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TOP KITCHEN TIPS

DESIGN DETAILS

To set the right tone, you need to decide the ambience of the room, bright and light or sultry and moody. All-white, chalk or pale grey never go out of fashion, and can make a small room seem super-spacious. Dark tones, meanwhile, make a strong impact, and have become a popular option for inner-city living.

Colour and texture need to harmonise in the kitchen, so it's worth putting together your own mood board before the renovation begins. On white cardboard, stick on all the colour and surface swatches, including paint, tiles, veneer and flooring.

A burst of colour is a feast for the eyes in a kitchen. A splashback in coloured glass makes a style statement, while mosaic or ceramic tiles also add brilliance to the room.

It can be hard finding where to start when planning the design of your new kitchen. Start the process by writing a list of features you like and dislike about your existing kitchen. This will quickly help your new design take shape.

When putting together a kitchen layout, the classic 'triangle' is the core of the design. The main working areas, cooktop/oven, fridge and sink, have to be positioned at three sides of a triangle. This simple rule will make cooking and cleaning a breeze.

BUILDING BASICS

A kitchen renovation can range from a one-day job to a two-week build, depending on the amount of work involved. Dirt, dust and noise are impossible to avoid, so consider moving in with family or friends during the messiest stages.

If you're on a tight budget, a flat-pack kitchen is hard to beat. The latest ranges provide amazing flexibility, even the most awkwardly shaped kitchen can have every centimetre utilised. Easy instructions mean you can put together a brand new kitchen in one or two days.

For busy homeowners, a kitchen company can make your life so much easier. They can guide you on the layout, the design, materials, appliances, as well as doing the demolition and installation.

CABINETRY

For a quick, cost-saving fix-me-up, replacing doors and/or bench tops can transform your kitchen from clunky to couture.

If your cupboards and drawers are looking a little scruffy, an easy spruce-up is replacing old handles and knobs with the latest ranges.

For an up-to-the-minute look, consider integrating the fridge and dishwasher within the new cabinetry. By enclosing the front of appliances to match the texture and colour scheme of the cabinets, a kitchen looks stream-lined and minimalistic.



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BATHROOM TRENDS

COLOUR

Drawing inspiration from nature, neutral tones continue to be in the 'must-have' list. From tiles to towels, soft tones of camel, olive and oatmeal add warmth and serenity to the bathroom. Pure white is an all-time favourite, not only does it evoke freshness, it also gives the illusion of more space.

For a more daring approach, dark, shimmering tones bring pure glamour to the bathroom, picture glossy charcoal or onyx tiles, gleaming chrome fittings and, for a theatrical look, a stunning black chandelier. A little bit of luxury never goes astray in the bathroom!

VANITY & STORAGE

Flexibility is key in the cabinet world, with storage units that can be mixed and matched. Open shelves are handy to store towels, deep drawers can store larger appliances such as hairdryers, and narrow drawers keep cosmetics and other essentials in perfect order. Wall-mounted shelving and freestanding cupboards also minimise clutter. With various cabinetry on offer, it means that similar surfaces and shapes bring continuity to the bathroom. Wall mounted vanities expose more floor area to the eye creating the illusion of a bigger space and make cleaning a breeze.

A mirror-fronted cabinet positioned above the basin, which can be recessed or semi-recessed for a streamlined look, helps keep clutter at bay. Mirrors are also available with electrical demisters so they can be used even when your partner is having the steamiest of showers. A recessed shower niche has also become a must-have in new bathrooms, offering easy access to essential shampoos and body gels.

BATH

Once an old-fashioned item, the freestanding bath has come into its own with sensual shapes and modern materials that make it the star of the show. It evokes pure romance and relaxation; all you need are a few candles, soothing music and a great book on hand!

Built-in baths, meanwhile, have never disappeared; latest ranges boast modern contours and durable materials. Various sizes and shapes mean that even the most modest zone can be transformed into a personal sanctuary.

SHOWERS

As a morning pick-me-up, the shower now offers massaging sprays to get the day started on the right track. Once a star performer in boutique hotels, the wet room, with no shower screen, has now become a popular option at home. With clever tiling and stainless steel floor grates, it creates an open feel with minimal splash.

Rain showerheads are also making their way into more bathrooms. Oversized versions are on offer for a descent drenching, while the most high-tech ranges are built into the ceiling for a seamless approach. Combining an overhead shower rose dropped down from the ceiling and a sliding shower on a wall bracket brings the best of both worlds together. Use a shower mixer with a diverter to toggle between the two.

Overhead showers are great for taller users whilst the wall bar can be lowered for small children and the hand piece is useful for rinsing the shower area during bathroom cleaning.

BASINS

Placed on top of the vanity, the solid above-counter basin makes a strong statement - a popular choice in many designer bathrooms. Setting an above counter basin to one side of the benchtop can free up convenient bench space. For a space-saving solution, a semi-recessed basin overhangs the vanity utilising a shallower cabinet provides more floor space.

For a sleek look, an under-counter basin - also known as an undermount basin that sits seamlessly under the vanity top - has a contemporary feel. It's a perfect option for those who adore the sleek, minimalist look. When choosing a compact ensuite or powder room, a wall basin is irresistible - various shapes can range from strong square angles to more feminine curves.

TOILETS

These days, most new toilets are water efficient, so the only real choice to make is the style. Wall facing toilet suites butt up against tiles from the top of the cistern to the foot of the pan creating a flush line, no dust traps, easy to clean and aesthetically pleasing to the eye.

In-wall cisterns are making their way from the commercial world into bathrooms. Sleek flush mount button systems combined with a wall face pan or a wall hung pan save space and are ideal for powder rooms and smaller ensuites. In-wall cisterns can also be incorporated in the vanity unit if the wall cavity doesn't allow.

TAPWARE

Design is key when selecting tapware but water efficiency is equally important. The latest ranges ensure you don't suffer from poor flows or low-water pressure. When deciding, look at taps that have high Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) rating - a 6-star rating is the most water efficient available.

On the design front, the current geometric shapes on offer boast straight lines, smooth edges and defined curves. But the organic look is also on the trend radar, drawing inspiration from nature. The easier-to-use mixers are still prominent, while wall-mounted tapware above the basin saves space and evokes a boutique-hotel style.

SPLURGES

A shapely soap dish, decorative small objects, or a selection of body lotions or perfumes - beautifully grouped beside the basin, can personalise the room. Heated towel rails have a sense of indulgence and the good news is that they are now affordable, with various designs and configurations on offer.



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