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CHOOSING A COLOUR SCHEME



pot, paint a 2-x-2 metre square of paper to see how the colour looks in a particular room. This way, you can move the painted paper around the room to see how the colour looks at different times of the day and against your furnishings. Then live with it for a couple of days! Colours are much stronger when you brush them out, so you need to observe the shade in the correct light. Remember to look at it both during the day and with the lights switched on at night.

PERFECT BALANCE

To get the right scheme, many professionals follow a popular trick of the trade the 60-30-10 rule. You should use 60% of the dominant colour in a room (mainly the walls), 30% of a secondary colour (such as a feature wall, cabinetry, carpet or upholstery), and 10% of an accent colour (such as a vibrant rug, cushions or a window trim).

EXTRA TIPS

A feature wall in a bold hue can provide an interesting element to a room. Pure orange gives a dominant look and is a hard colour to tone down; however it's a great as an accent colour. When mixing colours, a simple rule to remember is dark below, light above. Use darker colours at your feet, lighter colours above eye level and mid-tones around eye level. In small spaces, use predominantly lighter colours to make the room seem bigger.

LIGHTING TIPS

You can easily bring a beautiful ambience to a room by effective use of lighting, which still provides enough light to see what you are doing.



"Consider scale when selecting lights. A small chandelier in a large living room, for example, looks rather inadequate. A chandelier always works as a focal point, so go larger rather than smaller."

When choosing a pendant light above a dining table, it's important to hang the light so it shines on the table, not in the eyes of your guests. Positioning the light just above eye level when seated allows guests to look at each other without the light being in their eyes. A dramatic pendant light can really pack a punch but if it appears in a large room, such as a living area, it may require extra illumination. After all, you don't want to be in a dark when studying the TV guide or having a late-night snack. A mix of floor lights and table lamps is an easy solution in providing effective additional light as well as providing contrast. Light shades in stunning fabrics can create a focal point in a room. But before purchasing, think about the room's colour palette. Make sure the tones and style of the shade complement other elements, such as upholstery, flooring and even artwork.

"Diffusing light through translucent material, such as a fabric shade can emit a gentle glow all around the room."

Indirect lighting, such as a floor lamp that directs light towards the ceiling, provides atmosphere to a room. It illuminates without focusing on one specific object, and makes a small room appear larger. Before you buy that stunning floor light or table lamp, don't forget about the powerpoints. They need to be close to the light and hidden away so children - and adults - don't trip. Wall lights above a bed are attractive and functional, but for real visual impact, hang a pair of pendant lights close to the back wall. For extra illumination throughout the room, well-positioned wall lights complete the look. Metal industrial lights - particularly desk lights and pendants - evoke a hip warehouse-inspired look but vintage versions can cost a bomb when re-wiring is required. Fortunately, lighting companies have recognised this trend, and are now releasing industrial-style lights with quality cords and modern wiring.

"When renovating, consider positioning a two-way switch in the bedroom. It means you won't have to get up to turn off the light after finishing your book."

Consider playing with different light bulbs to create a variety of effects. For mood lighting, most globes at a reduced output will be far more striking and effective. Dimmers are a perfect option to set the mood. If you have a pendant light over a dining area, you can use a softer light for an evening dinner and a brighter light when working or reading. When installing lights, think about where you want the switches to be positioned. A bit of forethought will save oodles of frustration later. Outdoor lighting encourages friends and family to socialise outside after dark. That's why solar lights offer real bang for your buck - these inexpensive options are ideal for lighting pathways and highlighting trees and features. In a busy room with striking upholstery, a classic large drum shade in a single colour never goes out of fashion. Remember, you don't need a light show in your own home. To save electricity and reduce global warming, always turn off light when you leave a room. Please always remember when installing or replacing lights, it's essential to hire a licensed electrician.

CHOOSING FLOORING

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to choosing flooring for specific rooms. It's simply a matter of choosing the flooring that suits your particular lifestyle

TIMBER FLOORING

Timber is a great choice for bedrooms, living rooms, hallways and kitchens. It has insulating properties that help keep a room cool in summer and warm in winter. With a range of tones from blonde to red-brown, timber adds character and warmth to any room. Timber should be cleaned with just a damp mop as too much moisture can make the flooring swell and split. However, if you installing timber in a bathroom, specially treated timber painted with a couple of coats of polyurethane can now be used. For a more rustic look, recycled timber adds a touch of old-fashioned charm. Whether you want the light and breezy feel of a beachside shack or the quiet authority of a darkened library, timber can be used to great effect.

FLOOR TILES

Once used exclusively in the bathroom and laundry, tiles can now be found in almost every room of the house. For flooring, larger sizes are definitely the latest trend which gives a more seamless, easy-to-clean finish. Most tiles now come in non-slip varieties so there is more choice than ever in design and style. If using tiles in the living room or bedroom, a few well-placed rugs can add a touch of softness. Likewise, underfloor heating can do away with the chill and make the room cosy. Bathrooms and laundries have been the traditional home of the tiled flooring and, of course, they work brilliantly in these rooms. The latest porcelain and ceramic tiles, particularly the European ranges available at Masters Home Improvement, make for durable flooring of great beauty. Even grout has moved into the 21st century with a vast range of stain-resistant colours to match your tiles.

CARPET

Whether you want plush and luxurious in the living room or tough and hard-wearing in the playground, carpet can be a great choice for any lifestyle. The colour should complement your furnishings but remember, dark tones tend to close in a smaller room. Woolen carpets are soft and have great environmental credentials. They are also anti-allergenic and stain resistant.

LAMINATE FLOORING

These flooring surfaces are good looking, hard wearing, easy to clean and easy to install. Laminate offers a wide range of designs including timber, stone, colours and metallic. They work well in kitchens, laundries and bathrooms. For people with allergy problems, laminate is a popular solution as they don't harbour any dust mites. They are also very scratch resistant, so they work extremely well in high-traffic areas.



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