

Recipe for great design starts with right ingredients



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INSPIRED
LIVING

It's easy to spot good design. It's harder to nail down why. With a little know-how you can easily create a stunning and comfortable room.

The key elements for a great room design are a focal point, balance, form, texture, colour and harmony. Use these tools to craft a room's personality and tell its story.

The focal point will help dictate the mood and style of your room. It could be a large window or a fireplace, perhaps. You may not have a natural focal point, but that's ok; create your own with a unique art piece or furniture. Try putting something you really like, or something you've invested in, as your focal point.

Next, think about balance. Design your room so that everything is spread out evenly. You don't have to be completely symmetrical. A single large picture can be balanced by several smaller ones. A

bright splash of colour in a piece of art can be balanced out similar colour in a cushion, vase or lamp elsewhere in the room.

The shape and size of furniture, their form, affects how you use and experience the space. If a piece is too large or cumbersome, it may be better suited in another room.

Move things around to see how they best suit the physical space of the room, and make sure things are placed so they are still practical.

Texture creates depth and makes everything more interesting. Fabrics, art, furniture and accent pieces can all have different textures.

Mix them up to create contrast between smooth and rough, glossy and matte, and intricate patterns alongside simple surfaces. A mixture of textures invites curiosity and inspection.

Pull everything together with colour. The elements you have in your room should share a similar pallet. Draw attention to a particular area or object in the room, or create accents, with a second, different colour.

Used sparingly, this brings

character and life to the environment. Don't be afraid of colours. Bold art or dramatic fabrics can make a dramatic and positive impact on a room.

Finally, think about harmony. You want to move from room to room in your home without feeling a dras-

tic change between spaces. Each room, while unique, should flow and compliment the previous one.

Try to use similar elements like art, colour, and textures in adjacent rooms to help create an easy, comfortable flow.

A really simple way to create harmony is by paint-

ing all your adjoining rooms the same colour. Pick a colour that work for all your rooms and work it into your design palate.

These elements of design are tools that will help you design a great space. Just remember to use your own personal style to make your

space comfortable and functional.

— *Kate Davidson is principal of Kate & Co. Designs Inc., which provides complete design, renovation and decorating services for clients in the GTA. Visit www.kateandcocodeign.com.*



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Kids will be kids so choose built-to-last over disposable



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With a sports-team size family of little ones running around wreaking havoc on whatever they find in their path, I often find myself standing in the midst of this beautiful chaos thinking "this is why we can't have nice things."

From the shot glasses pulled out of the heirloom curio cabinet and hidden throughout the house to my parents' pristine solid wood living room tables now littered in water marks, scratches and show more wear in two years than the past 20, it leaves me wondering, do we just not care about our stuff anymore?

Growing up, my parents' nicer furniture lived in its own roped off room and we weren't allowed to enter under any circumstances.

A room in our house that remained off limits save for special occasions was never something I wanted, but our mother's methods did keep those gorgeous pieces in tip top shape!

Nowadays though, we all want to use all of our spaces in our homes. We have free-range children who leave traces of their daily journeys behind as evidence of new discovery and growth.

Big box stores like IKEA have built their entire marketing scheme on the notion that we want to love our home, all of it.

If we buy their build-it yourself coffee table for under \$100 we don't feel so bad when our kids ultimately destroy it because it didn't cost that much to begin with.

However, as a designer and mom who spends her life sourcing and purchasing beautiful things day in and out for everyone else, this is not a concept I'm entirely comfortable with anymore.

We have a stigma in our heads that we need to wait for our children to grow up before we can buy what we want for our homes but I don't believe that to be entirely true.

Take upholstery for example, there are so many technological advances in fabric that you don't have to buy everything in vinyl or bonded leather just because it's easy to wipe clean.

You can now get that beautiful patterned fabric that you've

wanted on your accent chair because it's treated with an inherent stain and water repellent (like crypton or alta for example) that make it as durable as it is beautiful — so go ahead and let the kids eat their ice cream on it without worry.

In the bathroom, companies like Victoria + Albert are now providing inspirational designs made from ENGLISHCAST®, a unique blend of Volcanic Limestone and high performance resins. For their tubs and sinks making them easily wipeable and scratches can be easily polished out, lasting a lifetime.

Quartz counters and the popularity of handscraped or wire brushed, oiled hardwood floor finishes hide dirt and wear better than the natural stone counters and polished floors that used to be the norm.

All of these may cost a little more upfront than some other options but there is something to be said for investing in quality — when you buy the best, you'll only cry once!

— *Cynthia Soda is principal of Soda Pop Designs Inc., providing custom renovation and design services throughout the GTA. Visit www.sodapopdesigns.ca.*



New designs for tubs and sinks make them easily wipeable and scratches can be polished out, lasting a lifetime. Image courtesy of Victoria + Albert.