

InteriorDesign

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Home Life Interiors

INTERIOR DESIGN

Q: Will a dark color on the walls make my room too dark?

A. There is no hard rule about this - one person's cozy is another's claustrophobic! Yes, a dark color will advance toward you and make the room seem somewhat smaller as a light color will recede and make it seem bigger. But, is this the only criteria to use? Of course not. The drama and impact obtained from using strong color far out weighs the sense of closeness for most people. Balancing a darker color with a lighter carpet, painted woodwork and a light ceiling is usually enough. However, because color triggers such strong emotions in people, only you can decide what is appropriate for you. And as I've said many times, "It's only paint," and can be changed without the relatively greater expense of other materials such as flooring. The new sample sizes of paint that Benjamin Moore and Sherwin Williams are offering help you to "try out" a possible color and make your first choice the right one.

Q: What are current window treatment trends?

A. The last several years have seen a shift away from the blind with a "topper" look that we saw in the 90s. But the prior heaviness of sheers, draperies, and a swag and jabot valance is not what we are moving back to either (thank goodness!). Window blinds are here to stay. They offer the most flexibility and privacy options for basic coverage of the window. Wood and faux wood 2" blinds with or without tapes, cellular shades, as well as Silhouette fabric blinds are the most popular. But beyond the basic blind, drapery options are limitless. Straight side panels with iron rods and rings are fabulous. Silk fabrics as well as silk look-a-likes bring a shimmer and elegance to any room. The choice of rod finishes and finial styles gains breadth every season. Rod finishes are far from just black and brown. Metallic, antiqued, and blown glass finials are just a few of the options! Wrap around swags with iron or wood rodding are also a great look (this is not the casual throw swag popular a few years ago but is tai-

lored to fit the rod). Board mount valances with clever trims, contrast fabrics, and a bit of shape take the place of the simple topper and bring charm and style to your home. Overall, the trend is definitely a dressed-up window with beautiful fabrics, trims and style.

Q: I can't afford to do it all at once, what should be my first step?

A. The first step should be to come up with a master plan to allow you to purchase in stages but give you a finished project that looks put together and intentional. Measuring the room and drawing it to scale on 1/4" graph paper is the first step. If it's a new home and you have blueprints, that is helpful. Standard

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residential architectural scale is 1/4", so you can make a photocopy or draw right on the plan. Make a furniture plan using 1/4" scale templates. Allow for walk space, door swings, and access to windows. Laying out your room will tell you exactly what size furniture you need. Upholstery comes in a huge range of sizes. Unless you have done a floor plan, you don't know which size is appropriate for your room. Also, table size and shape becomes apparent from a floor plan. If you have your plan and come across a great bargain in an end table, for example, you know immediately if it will work. Other elements such as colors for upholstery, floors and walls, as well as accessories and window treatments flow from the basic floor plan. Having the end result established enables you to purchase a piece at a time. This process is where a professional interior designer is most helpful: to help you set the vision and work out these details.



Q: What are some dramatic accent pieces that can really make an impact in a room?

A. The main problem that I encounter with most accessories or accent pieces is that they are too small.

Fewer, bigger accessories are the way to go. One large picture for above the sofa or a set of multiples arranged symmetrically can have a huge impact. How can you decide if a picture is big enough for above the sofa? Usually, you want it 6-10 inches or so above the back. If this puts it too low to be at an average person's eye level, then it is too small. A good size silk tree with some up lighting can do a great job of filling in a stagnant corner. An area rug in front of the sofa can make a huge difference. Even well-chosen throw pillows can dramatically affect the room. A large mirror, well placed, can expand the space. A dramatic paint color on an accent wall can be an inexpensive alternative to an expensive accessory. When planning your decorating budget be sure to allow 1/3 of your total dollars for accessories. Accessories can be costly! Proper accessorizing is one of the most challenging aspects of a room's design and takes the most judgment without clear rules. Experience is invaluable in this area.

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Kathy is a free-lance interior designer with over 25 years of experience working in the West Michigan area. She is a member of the Home and Building Association of Greater Grand Rapids and recently completed the interiors for their new building on the East Beltline. Earlier this year, she completed her certification for the Certified-Aging-in-Place designation through the National Home Builders Assn. She can be contacted through her website at www.homelifeinteriors.com

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