

DECORATING FOR SMALL SPACES

Follow these tips to help a small space feel larger than it really is.

- **Storage:** Think outside the box when considering storage. Most small spaces are challenged in this area. There never seems to be enough room to put things. When any space is filled with clutter it feels smaller. A small space will make you feel claustrophobic, so good storage is key.
- **Kitchen:** Make sure you use all the space you can in the Kitchen. Upper cabinets can have a smaller cabinet added on top for extra storage if you have the ceiling height, or just go with a taller upper cabinet. Think about how you use your Kitchen. The biggest problem I see for the DIY is the customer is sold cabinets and not a functional Kitchen; this is often money wasted. The toe kick is another place to hide additional items that are seldom used or for extra trays and baking sheets. Invest the money in a good corner cabinet mechanism that uses all of the corner cabinet space. These are usually made of stainless steel. If you must go with a lazy-susan corner mechanism because of cost, get the strongest you can. The cheaper models tend to jam and there is still additional wasted space in the corners. Think about where you are going to put various food items and dry goods, plates, glasses, books and don't forget that junk drawer. Instead of wasting a drawer for junk, why not have shallow end cabinets with a few shelves to put keys, mail, note paper. You can even have a plug inserted so that you can store and charge your phone at the same time. You might also have room for an end cabinet bookshelf for those cookbooks. Don't have a breakfast bar? You might consider having a flip up mode added to the portable center island, side of an end cabinet or attached to a wall. Add additional lighting under the cabinets or above the cabinets for task or mood lighting. Make sure all of your appliances are easy to get to. Smaller appliances are available for smaller spaces. Hide a coffee maker or mixer behind a cabinet door that sits at counter level.
- **Dining Room:** Measure your space and be realistic about how much space you really have. Too often people jam too large a table in a space to accommodate entertaining, but forget that they rarely use the space for this and the room becomes difficult to maneuver in. A round or trestle table always is best to accommodate the most people when necessary. If you have the space to spill out into another room, you might want to consider a table with the versatility of

a leaf or two. If you can't find one, you can always have one custom made. It's worth the money in the end to have a table that fits your space well. Another tip is to use glass or acrylic when you can. A glass table will make the room feel lighter. A beautiful wooden table with acrylic chairs will have the same light effect.

- **Living Area:** If you don't like sectionals, get over it. This might be the best solution for your small space. There are many styles to choose from, some even with rounded ends and corners. A small sectional with a chaise might be the perfect solution. If a sofa is what you want, many come in shorter lengths these days or you can use a larger loveseat. Swivel chairs are also a great addition. A swivel chair allows a person to enter into a conversation in another area of the space and thus allowing your living area to "expand." These chairs are also great if you have several focal points of interest, such as a fireplace, view or TV. Any of the upholstery items can be ordered armless, which will allow the upholstery to accommodate more people. Most people do like arms for comfort, especially if your personal style tends to lean more towards the traditional concept. Keep the fabrics neutral with bright punches of color in the pillows. Add a great texture or pattern to a fabric or wallpaper. An accent wall with fantastic wallpaper can do miracles for a small space. Consider texture or pattern on the floor; an interesting area rug or an old refinished wood floor can bring interest and depth. Add extra storage in a storage ottoman, cubed wooden or woven boxes for cocktail tables or end tables. Nesting tables might sound out of date, but many fun choices are still available. These tables give you the flexibility to have additional table space when needed for projects, entertaining or even extra seating if constructed to double as a small stool. If you can afford built in bookshelves, it is money well spent. Floor to ceiling bookshelves can be the miracle cure for the no storage apartment. Use textured baskets for the unsightly items you do not want anyone else to see like toilet paper, office items, even cleaning supplies and shoes. A bookshelf is not just for books, display a collection and hide the rest in perfect sized boxes or behind fabric if baskets aren't your thing. Get organized. If you need a separation of space, use lighting or a mirrored screen to give a visual line between spaces without closing off a room. A very inexpensive solution is to use a great fabric and drape the separation with an indoor "window treatment" using a wire or an interesting pole. Anything goes here, a neutral mesh to filter light, heavy bright velvet or brilliant textured pattern with a pop of color will all have a different effect; it depends on the look you are trying to achieve. Don't forget the power of great art and mirrors. Mirrors will reflect light and help direct your eye to the place you want it to go.

If a mirror is placed behind a light source it will reflect the light back into the space and give the room depth at the same time. Remember; do not clutter your space with too much furniture. Less is more and size *does* matter.

- **Bedroom:** You will want to ask yourself how you use your bedroom. Is the bedroom used just for sleeping, or do you need to make sure you accommodate a space for something else? Here again, storage is key. Additional storage under the bed is a no-brainer. This doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. Simple plastic tubs that slide under the bed work best for extra books, belts, shoes, scarves or changing a wardrobe over from Summer to Winter. Here again, floor to ceiling storage can be very helpful. Add an outlet at eye level for a reading light, radio, phone or computer. If you have the width, one of these shelves can double up as an open or pull-down desk. Insert an automatic light for the pull-down model and you have an instant private mini desk area. Add additional outlets inside and plug in your computer, don't forget to hide the printer and wireless gadgets in one of the bookshelves. Hide the electronics with an overlay cabinet door or fun fabric. Make sure you are able to get a bed that fits the room. You might wish for a king sized bed, but if you have to take a running leap to get to the other side of the room and bounce off the bed to get there, this is probably not the size you need. The gymnastics will lose its thrill after about the first month. Make sure you are able to walk around the bed. Think of an accent wall in a great texture of interesting color. Incorporate this color into your sheets or pillows with a blend of additional colors in the same color family or contrasting colors for punch. Lighting is everything; a lonely light bulb in the ceiling is depressing. Get rid of it. If budget is a problem and you are crafty, make your own drum shade with ribbon, paper or left over fabric from the pillows.
- **Workspace:** The workspace idea can be implemented even in a hallway or entrance area if planned correctly. We all need a place to work once in a while, make sure you think about what might make the most sense for your work style. Do you like to leave papers out or are you a type A person that has everything neatly organized to the eye. Even if you are a slob you can organize your work space to look neat and tidy if you can hide the mess in containers, boxes, behind doors, fabric or in a cabinet.
- **Lighting:** Don't forget lamps. A harsh ceiling light with no additional lighting is very limiting and creates shadows; not the good kind. Dimmers added to a light switch will give you the flexibility to add mood lighting through your entire space. This is a simple addition that will make a big difference in how and when you use your space.