



An Insider's Guide to Interior Design for Small Spaces

HOW TO CREATE
A BEAUTIFUL
HOME QUICKLY,
EFFECTIVELY
AND ON A
BUDGET

GAIL GREEN



EXPERT
DESIGN &
DECORATING
TIPS



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An Insider's Guide to Interior Design for Small Spaces: How to Create a Beautiful Home Quickly, Effectively and on a Budget

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A Note From the Author

Interior design is about much more than merely having good taste. Designing elegant and chic interiors requires knowledge, resourcefulness and creativity, especially in small spaces.

As with most art forms, interior design is highly subjective; however, with the right focus and planning, it can be an exciting and cost-effective adventure with instant returns and extraordinary, long-lasting results — in other words, a profitable investment.

When it comes to small spaces, however, there is a common misconception that it is not worth the time or money that it takes to create a beautiful home. Conversely, many overspend and overdecorate their spaces because they do not have proper direction.

The intention of this guide is to not only present you with valuable options but also to describe those options to you to the extent that you can make an educated decision as to whether to pursue the changes — on your own or with the help of a professional. Specifically, you will learn professional tricks and techniques for transforming small spaces into beautiful, upscale dwellings while saving significant time, money and energy. The strategies that will be discussed have been successfully implemented for more than 30 years and reflect inventive problem solving.

After reading through this material, that knowledge will be yours to use as you wish!

Who Should Read This Guide

This book is for anyone interested in learning simple, effective and practical home-design solutions for any type of space; however, it is particularly valuable for small spaces — such as studio or one-bedroom apartments, or even small rooms — which are common in urban settings.

Although the ideas here do not pertain solely to any one type of living space, the term *apartment* has been used throughout for simplicity. The information presented can also benefit those looking to spruce up starter homes, guest homes, smaller second homes or investment homes.

What Information Is Covered

This guide is divided into distinct focus areas that have been carefully selected in response to a common question: *Where and how should I focus my interior design efforts to achieve the*

most noticeable results in the least amount of time? These key areas — if you're interested in a basic framework for a remarkable outcome within a reasonable time frame — are as follows: color and paint, furniture arrangement and selection, lighting and architectural changes. Architectural ideas and viewpoints communicated here are largely based on or supported by projects and philosophies of one of New York City's leading architectural firms, David Estreich Architects.

The sections have been further organized into the following three categories where applicable:

Do-It-Yourself (Without a Designer): A do-it-yourself (DIY) approach that does not involve construction or architectural changes. All enhancements are strictly decorative and can be performed without the expertise of a professional.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimal cost• Sense of control• Quick results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final outcome is uncertain• Higher probability of error• Potential for costing more (both in time and money)

With a Designer: When the desired changes are pursued with the expertise and experience of a professional. Here, the primary focus is on soft furnishings (furniture and accessories) without construction or the use of a contractor.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely to achieve or exceed expectations • Cost savings on better-quality materials • Longer-lasting and more impressive results • Unique and custom solutions • More efficient use of time • Transfer of knowledge and information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional time and effort to identify, select and work with a designer • Potential for differences in vision • Expectations may not be met • Possible cost overages

Small Renovations: Using a professional with specialized construction knowledge (meaning an architect or advanced designer) and a contractor to implement architectural changes or enhancements to a space.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can increase the value and purchase price of the home • Better functioning and more flexible space • Customized results • Permanent and longer-lasting results • More unique and makes a big impression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher initial costs • Takes longer • Inconvenience of renovating while living in the space • Coordinating and planning with multiple parties • May require pre-approval by the building • Fear of the unknown (e.g., where to start, total cost, timing, end results)



Key Concepts

Many of the reoccurring concepts cited throughout this guide relate to the following four interconnected design theories, which contribute significantly to the end result of the suggested tips. If applied properly, these strategies provide valuable benefits, such as enhanced space, comfort, harmony, interest, function and aesthetic appeal.

#1. CONSISTENCY

It is overwhelming and distracting when too much is going on in a studio or one-bedroom apartment. The effect is similar to that

of a pinball machine — how your eye bounces around from object to object without a stable resting place. That's why it is important to establish consistency in your space. This effect can be achieved throughout an apartment by decorating with the same (or similar) colors, fabrics, proportions, textures and furniture styles.

Simply put: Less is more. Less color variation used more effectively, for instance, creates a more powerful statement. This is especially true in a small space, as individual objects tend to stand out more than they would in a larger environment. When you have less to work with, how you use what you have becomes more significant. Creating relationships between the items in your apartment as well as with the architecture is an effective method for optimizing and personalizing your space.

Consistency is what will help communicate a strong message within your home. Building a consistently designed space with a sense of visual flow is an essential component for instilling your home with meaning.



*Deeper
Understanding*

Think about some of the best novels and films — they all find creative and ingenious ways of connecting the elements within a story to support an underlying theme deemed to be meaningful. Likewise, it is equally important (if not more so) to do the same with your home.

#2. DEFINITION OF SPACE

In simple terms, definition of space means allocating different interior areas for primary functions: eating, bathing, resting, entertaining. A few examples of common areas that people usually

define immediately are the dining room, living room, kitchen, sleeping area and bathroom. By defining your space, you create a personal map within your home.

As you will see throughout this guide, there are many ways that you can define your space, including maintaining a sense of consistency, relating furniture through alignment and accentuating particular elements through “framing.” Another way to define a space is to introduce particular elements that have a clear meaning or purpose, such as televisions (entertainment), place mats (eating) or desks (work).

Defining your space plays an important role in creating an ambience that will make you feel relaxed and comfortable.



*Deeper
Understanding*

Imagine you are strapped for time and under pressure to get something done. You need quick, specific and comprehensive answers immediately, so you call up a friend. Now, think about how annoying it would be if that friend were to explain things to you in a broad, general and undefined way. You’d be pretty frustrated because you wouldn’t be able to interpret what that person was saying. As a result, you wouldn’t get what you need, which would cause feelings of confusion and restlessness.

#3. PROPORTION AND BALANCE

You can attain a sense of solace every day by having a home that is proportional and balanced. A personal setting that fosters stability and security is an important outlet for counterbalancing the distractions or stress that may come from everyday life.

You have the ability to influence how you feel when you're at home. With this in mind, you should create a space that is a reflection of how you *want* to feel. From an interior design perspective, words such as *proportion*, *balance*, *scale*, *symmetry* and *harmony* are all essentially alluding to the same thing: a feeling of order and comfort within your space. There is an inherent value in proportion and how we relate to our spaces. Proportion not only provides comfort but also is linked with beauty (aesthetics); however, when it comes to designing your home to achieve all these valuable benefits, it may be difficult to figure out where to start.

You will see that many of the tips mentioned in this guide have an element specifically designed for achieving balance and proportion.



*Deeper
Understanding*

Without thinking twice, people easily spend thousands of dollars a year on yoga classes and related initiatives to balance the mind and the body. Why? Because it feels good. A healthy mind is a healthy spirit. The same concept applies to your home.

#4. FOCAL POINTS AND DESTINATION POINTS

Focal points are visual destinations that naturally capture a person's attention. From a design perspective, they are important because they offer the eye a comfortable resting place (and are usually located near eye level). For this reason, focal points can subconsciously provide more relaxing and peaceful atmospheres.

When interior space is limited, it is important to control where you want focal points to be. By keeping patterns and bold colors to a minimum, you are able to direct the eye to specific areas or

pieces. Intense patterns and eye-catching colors can produce a potentially unwanted focal point that may divert attention and cause disorientation.

By understanding how to create and manipulate focal points, you can control what parts of your space are accentuated and which parts are best subdued. When selecting a destination point, it is important to consider several things: that the element is relatively more aesthetically pleasing than the other surrounding pieces, that the element fits well with the rest of the room and its components, and that it is centrally located in the room at eye level (if possible) — and looks attractive at that height. It is helpful to think of this exercise as a composition, in which all of the pieces fit together in a complementary way.



*Deeper
Understanding*

If everything has the same level of importance in your space, nothing will feel special. It is quite rare for a person to be completely ambivalent toward all objects in his or her home. People instinctually place more emotion or value on things that they perceive as important. By selectively differentiating areas or items in your space, you'll evoke stronger emotions and interest. A natural tendency is to accentuate favorable focal points and de-emphasize less-appealing features or views.