

Back to School Heralds Fall Decorating

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The summer flew by and we are already into August and back to school. This is the perfect time to get those decorating projects you've been putting off, into the works. The first glimpses of holiday decorations are already showing up in the stores and catalogues, the season of visiting relatives, family gatherings, and house full of guests is fast upon us. Since decorating typically takes time and certainly furniture orders can stretch to 12+ weeks, the earlier you start, the better chance of having it all just in time! The guidelines here will get you started, remember this can be fun!

Whether you are a do-it-yourselfer or hire professionals, it is always a good idea to get some design expertise whatever the size of your project. Interior design is an investment in your comfort and lifestyle and when done right, will wear well and look inviting. Having a master plan in place will enable you to break the project up into manageable pieces, on your own timeline, and still get a great looking end result. Remember decorating is a domino effect, one change will cause many subsequent changes! Many designers and decorators will work with you on an hourly consulting basis to help you avoid costly mistakes and stay on track. Most will also take into account your family heirlooms and treasured collections and can make valuable suggestions on reworking and rearranging what you have. They can also provide retail resources for suggested purchases or work directly with you on custom pieces.

The best way to start a room is with either a rug, at the bottom, or with a cherished piece of artwork, at the top. This will give you necessary parameters for selecting colors in paint, fabric, and other finishes. When selecting paint, you'll want to invest in a couple of quarts of colors you like and try them out either on the wall directly or on a moveable piece of foam board (office supply or craft stores). In either case, it should be a section about two feet by three feet with a minimum of two coats (if a deep color, may require as many as 4+). Not even the experts select from thumbnail size chips; color changes in light dramatically, and intensifies in large expanses. Once you've settled on a color, and be sure to include trim (high gloss white is the best for a fresh look that maximizes even neutrals) and ceiling (no longer always white), then consider fabrics for upholstery.

The minimum number of fabrics any given room can take is five, a solid, a stripe, a plaid, a large print/floral, a mini print/floral. Many of us have seen rooms with less, and even far more. This is just a helpful guideline. It is important to balance your geometric straight-line prints with softer curved pieces. While floral patterns may not appeal to you, consider adding a paisley or acanthus leaf print. If you stick with more of a solid or tone on tone on the larger pieces, you are less likely to get tired of these and need to recover. Keep your busy patterns in the rug, artwork, and accent pillows. Throws are also a great way to build softness and interest. Balance your textured fabrics such as chenille, velvet, and boucle with slicker pieces, like leather, silk, or polished cotton.

Every room needs a combination of the five elements for optimal balance -- wood, metal, stone, glass, and ceramic. Often a room doesn't "feel right" because it is out of balance, missing elements or too much of one in particular. Consider using wood end tables, but a glass coffee table (yes, you can still put your feet up!) to show off the rug, then add some metal and ceramic with the lamps, stone could be at the fireplace or on a countertop. Be sure also to use a mix of

shapes, square, round, oval, rectangular, even triangular and octagonal for greater interest. Using a round or oval also eliminates sharp edges!

Once you've got the main pieces of a room determined, it is time to have fun with the accents and accessories, including the window treatments, and lamps. Stay tuned for the next issue with polishing your home just in time for the holidays.

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