

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU DECORATE

Sometimes it doesn't matter whether you're a novice or an experienced designer. When it comes to starting a project the information you'll need to start decorating is the same. Here are some questions to consider before you begin a project. The answers and the issues they bring up can help you decide on what to include, and what to leave out, of your room.

### 1. What am I going to use this room for?

It may be basic, but figuring out how a room will be used can provide clues about the furniture to include. It is obvious, for instance, that in a bedroom a bed will be needed as well as tables or nightstands. You may also have room for a dresser, entertainment unit, armoire, or seating area. Yet adding activities -- perhaps you'd like a dressing area or exercise area -- will require both space and appropriate furnishings that you'll want to include in your plans.

### 2. How *often* do I plan to use this room?

The answer to this question may help you decide everything from budget to color. A space that you're not going to use very much should usually eat up less of your budget. It might also be a room where you can try bolder color or a furniture style that is different from the rest of your home.

### 3. How much light does this room get?

This answer may give you ideas for a color scheme and will definitely help you make decisions about window treatments. A hot corner room with full sunlight may be a candidate for a cooler color palette and light-controlling window shutters. If, on the other hand, your room is a dark space that never sees the sun, then you might choose warm color to brighten it up and airy window treatments to let in every bit of light possible.

### 4. What is my favorite color and how can I use some of it in this room?

Ok, so you adore pale green but your husband thinks it looks like a wet dishrag. In this case you may not be able to paint your living room pale green, but you can look for a fabric, area rug, or accessory that includes a variety of colors, including your favorite green. Use this item as a starting point. You may end up painting the room tan and getting the leather chair that your husband wants, but your carefully added touches of green will be there for you. Remember that background colors are often just that, and accent colors are the focal points in your room that will catch your eye.

### 5. What is my favorite outdoor location, vacation spot, or building?

Give this idea a few minutes of attention. Did you think of the beach, the mountains, or a cozy bed and breakfast? What is it about your favorite spot that you like so much -- is it the color, the mood, the style? How might you create this feeling in your room? If you choose the beach as your dream location then you might use a sandy colored sisal rug, sky blue walls, deep blue upholstery, and bowls of shells as accessories. Or you might want a nautical theme, a seaside cottage look, or a pale palette of shell pink.

## **6. How can I arrange the furniture so that it looks best?**

Although not every decorating technique applies to every project, the following tips can help get the ball rolling if you don't know where to start. Here's a mini-course on arranging your furniture:

- Find the room's focal point and use it to center your furniture.
- Don't block natural pathways into and through your room.
- Place the largest pieces of furniture first; midsize next and the smallest pieces last.
- Place your tables and lighting next to seating pieces.
- Try to balance large features (like a sofa or fireplace) with a similarly sized element in an opposite location.
- Keep your seating areas within a square that's between 8 and 14 feet across.
- Think of an area rug as an island within the room and use it as the foundation for a seating arrangement.