

Designer secrets in the bedroom



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Designers know all kinds of techniques and tricks when it comes to making rooms look bigger. The bedroom can really benefit from employing these simple ideas to make it feel more expansive, while maintaining a restful vibe.

Your master bedroom should feel like a cozy retreat, a place you want to go to at the end of the day. If it's too cluttered with several small pieces of furniture (besides your bed) it could be the reason your room feels small. If it doesn't belong in the bedroom, take it out. Now.

Keep furniture away from the corners. Corners are not there to be filled, don't stack books, plants or items up against the walls in the corners. Your bed is your focal point (it's a BED room), so keep all necessary items close to the bed.

It's hard to discern the size of a room when you can't see its corners. If you have room for a chair, don't line it up against a wall, bring it in, angle it to the bed, make it part of a grouping.



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Hardwood flooring is a great option for bedrooms. By installing hardwood floors on a diagonal, it fools the eye into thinking you're in a bigger space when the pattern is not squared off with the walls.

Add an oversized area rug. If you have hardwood or hard surface floors already, add an oversized area rug. This helps to make the room feel bigger.

Don't make the rug slightly

larger than the bed, rather make it at least 16" to 18" beyond the bed edge, all the way around. It's amazing how adding some cozy texture to the floor can make a room feel bigger.

If you are a person who must have a TV in the bedroom, instead of trying to make it the focal point — we've established that the bed is the centre of attention, right

— add some art. If you add framed art around the TV it blends in, rather than letting it dominate a wall.

Mirroring doubles the view. Not everyone is a fan of mirrored side tables, but reflective surfaces can expand the room and add some sparkle at the same time. In fact, side tables don't have to be big chunky boxes flanking the head of the bed. I've used pedestal tables

when closed storage isn't required. Custom-made and installed "floating" side tables make a room feel bigger simply by allowing the eye to see under the table.

The right lighting can make a room feel bigger. Consider hanging lamps over the bedside tables. This keeps the table surface free but still brings the light down to eye level.

Add dimmers so they can be adjustable according to the needs in the room. We're also seeing more modern, extendable wall lamps and sconces used by the bedside. They're great for task lighting and reading.

Nothing makes a bedroom look smaller than skimpy bedding and pillows on a bed. For king-sized beds, two superking Euro pillows will fit better than three regular euro pillows. Two super-kings will fit properly, will offer great support for reading or lounging and will stay in place.

Drapery can make or break the room. Drapery should be hung from the ceiling to the floor. Short curtains tend to disrupt the flow of a whole space when your eyes move around the room. To make drapery look fuller add heavy blackout lining rather than cotton. This makes drapes look more full and expensive looking. Even a small room can benefit from looking expensive, and expansive with these designer secrets.

— Jane Lockhart is a celebrity designer and considered to be one of the leading experts in the world of design. Visit www.janelockhart.com.

Reno budgets are seldom what they seem



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Forget everything you've learned from TV. Those budgets aren't always accurate. Often TV shows get products and materials for free making the costs of a big reno seem relatively affordable.

Don't base your reno plans on that! Here are my fail safe tips to help you budget your dream home reno.

1. Ball park the costs. Talk to your designer or friends who have renovated and start collecting data on what a renovation of your size will cost. For example a bathroom reno rarely comes in under \$20,000. Be prepared for sticker shock. It always costs more than you expect.

2. Determine what you are prepared to spend and see if it aligns with what you want to do. This is where having a good designer or contractor on board will help. They can help determine if you're budget is realistic. They have the experience to know what it's going to cost.

3. Create an itemized spreadsheet of all the elements that are involved in your reno, that is, construction costs, millwork (kitchen cabinets) Materials or items not included in construction, for example, design fees, lighting and any furnishings.

4. Get actual numbers and plug those in. When I was first starting out and didn't have much experience with budgets I would create a 'high/low' budget for my projects. This is a little more

work but will help you see the big picture and help you see the wide range that can occur. Now you actually have to do your homework though and look up what all those numbers would be.

5. Finally, set priorities and trim the project to fit your budget. There is always wiggle room as long as you have a healthy and realistic budget for what you want to achieve.

BONUS TIP: Don't always rely on a contractor's 'allowance.' This is an estimated cost that a contractor will put for items such as tile, plumbing etc.

Be sure to do your research and look into the price of these items to know if what he or she has "allowed" is enough for the end product that you are looking for.

If you're hoping for all mar-

ble tile, chances are that your contractor has not allowed for this and so it could be a surprise extra. Planning a reno is all about communication and the details. Make sure to go over any quotations line by line.

Of course, always consider 20% extra for contingency. You see this talked about all the time but honestly not enough people do it. If by some rare chance you don't spend it, it's bonus money to spend on the pretty accessories at the end of the project.

— Rebecca Hay is a Toronto-based designer who has worked on several HGTV programs and whose focus is on exceptional designs that infuse the old with the new. Visit www.rebeccahaydesigns.com.



When putting together a budget for a renovation, be prepared for sticker shock — it always costs more than you think.