How to Decorate a Living Room

Create a comfortable and inviting living space by following these simple steps.

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In many households, the living room is the heart of the home—a space where family gathers to spend time together and relax. While interior spaces like bedrooms, bathrooms, and kitchens have clear and defined purposes, the definition of a living room is a little more malleable. Some people use their living rooms to kick back and watch TV, while other homes feature formal living rooms that are reserved for entertaining. No matter what type of living space you're hoping to create, these nine steps will ensure the space is welcoming and well-appointed.

STEP 1: Take measurements and make a sketch of the room.

The first step in any decorating project is to assess the fixed elements of the space. Take measurements and create a sketch of the room, either by hand or digitally using home design software. The conventions for how to decorate a small living room differ from those for designing a larger space. Consider flooring, wall treatments, fireplaces, windows, and doorways to establish whether any renovations need to take place before the project begins.

This is also the time to evaluate furnishings you already own—like furniture, window treatments, and accessories—and decide whether they have a place in the updated design or whether they need to be replaced.

STEP 2: Determine your living room aesthetic.

Once you've got a better idea of the size and layout of the living room, it's time to decide on a design aesthetic. Modern living room decor is sleek and neutral while traditional living rooms are more plush and eclectic. Some home decorators may already have a vision for the final look

of the space, while others may need help finding inspiration. In both situations, it's best to compile a collection of images that feature colors, patterns, furniture styles, and general design aesthetics that you love. These images may simply serve to keep you on track when choosing the different elements of the space, but they can also potentially be shared with professionals to help them understand your vision.

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STEP 3: Paint, paper, or panel the walls.

One of the most significant elements in any home decorating project is wall treatments. Choosing the right [living room paint color](#) is essential in setting the mood of the space. The color you pick should fit with the aesthetic you've chosen. Colors evoke emotion and generally speaking, cool-toned hues—like blue, gray, and purple—tend to be more relaxing while warm-toned shades—like cream, yellow, and red—are more invigorating.

While paint is the most popular and perennial choice, other wall treatments—like wallpaper and paneling—are coming back into vogue. While these styles can make a major visual impact, it's important to remember that changing them will take much more than a can of paint, so choose a style that you know you'll love for years to come.

STEP 4: Start with the largest piece of furniture.

The largest—and most expensive—piece of furniture in a living room is typically the couch. Since couches tend to both dominate the space visually and get the most use, many designers recommend [choosing a couch](#) before committing to any other furniture pieces. A high-quality couch is a major investment, but it's worthwhile to purchase the [best couch you can afford](#) to ensure its comfort and longevity. If properly taken care of, a well-made couch will last for many years before needing to be replaced.

STEP 5: Add an area rug.

Rugs serve to provide comfort and add style to any living space. In a living room, [rugs](#) can add a pop of color or pattern to an otherwise neutral space. They can also set a visual boundary for the main seating area, acting as a grounding presence in the room.

Since area rugs come in so many sizes, it can be difficult to [choose the right one](#) for your space. As a general rule, it's best to ensure that either all four legs of your furniture rest on the rug or that none of them do. In small living rooms, a 5 by 8-foot rug should suffice, while an 8 by 10-foot rug is more appropriate in a larger space.

STEP 6: Select supporting furniture that provides storage.

Preventing clutter build-up is a key consideration in any room of the home. In the living room, it's important to have furniture that provides storage so that every item has a designated place. Exposed wires and electrical cords from televisions and sound systems can cause visual clutter in a living room, so opt for a TV stand that's built to accommodate and hide those unsightly cords. Look for a coffee table that contains drawers so remote controls and other practical accessories can be kept out of sight when they're not in use.

STEP 7: Light the living room.

One of the most undervalued elements in home decorating is light. Finding the right balance of natural and artificial light is a key component in creating a comfortable living space. Control the amount of natural light that enters the space with window treatments like curtains and blinds. Opaque window treatments provide more privacy, while sheer curtains allow natural light to stream in.

Create a warm and inviting atmosphere for the evening by mixing ambient lighting with task lighting in a living room. Consider upgrading to dimmer switches or investing in smart light bulbs in order to have more control over light levels to create a cozy environment.

STEP 8: Decorate the walls.

Once all of these key elements are in place, it's time to add visual interest with decorations. For the highest impact, cover blank spaces on the walls with art that you love. Purchasing art may be intimidating, but today there are plenty of online resources that help shoppers find affordable pieces that are beautiful and unique. Commit to one larger piece, or create a gallery wall for a more eclectic look. For larger empty walls, consider adding shelves or bookcases to display novels, small framed photos, and other decorative objects.

STEP 9: Display handpicked accessories and plants.

The final step in decorating any space is adding texture and complexity with accessories. Decorations for living rooms take a number of different forms, ranging from practical to purely aesthetic. In a living room, opt for throw pillows and blankets in soft, natural textures that are both comfortable and visually appealing. In a largely neutral space, add contrast with dark or bold, colored accessories. Accessories are a great way to try out color and pattern trends without making a major commitment when decorating a living room.

Plants bring life to any interior space, and since living rooms often receive plenty of natural light, they make the perfect place to display thriving houseplants. You don't have to be a green thumb to keep plants alive—there are plenty of options for low-maintenance houseplants that

barely need any attention at all.

Final Thoughts

After reviewing these living room decor ideas, hopefully you'll feel equipped to embark on your own living room decorating project. By following these steps, you'll ensure that your living room is comfortable, stylish, and inviting.