

Homes



Designer Jessica Cinnamon says properly scaled furniture will make a small space feel larger. **SUPPLIED**

LIVING LARGE

Making the most of small spaces

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Even if yours is a small space, it's possible to feel like you're living large if you pay attention to design.

"With some careful thought, detailed curating and customized features, you can create big style within a smaller living environment," says Jessica Cinnamon, principal designer and founder of Toronto-based Jessica Cinnamon Design Inc.

Here's how:

FURNISHINGS. Choose sofas that are three feet or slightly shorter in depth and choose neutral, grounding furniture pieces in monochromatic tones and limited pattern. "Introduce different textures for more interest," she says. Placing furniture away from walls and allowing some breathing space around them will help make a small living room seem larger, she adds.

MULTI-PURPOSE FURNITURE. Invest in multi-purpose furniture pieces that can double as extra seating and/or surfaces. Murphy beds and expandable, multifunctional coffee tables are "perfect" for smaller rooms, Cinnamon notes.

FURNITURE SCALE. Furniture that's either too large or too small is one of the biggest faux pas when decorating a small space. Avoid sofas and chairs with fat, rolled arms, as they will take up limited space in pathways in and

around your room. Cinnamon also recommends avoiding multi-cushion back sofas and recommends instead streamlined tighter back and lower back sofas.

STORAGE. Failure to take advantage of vertical storage such as cabinetry, bookshelves, floating shelves and/or customized built-ins is another common mistake. Cinnamon also recommends creating additional, unexpected storage within kitchen islands and plain hallway walls. "Utilize interior wall space and introduce custom hidden storage," she says.

ACCESSORIES. "Minimal, thoughtful decorations are best with small rooms. Too many accessories will visually clutter the space," Cinnamon says. "Use reflective materials like mirrors and glass, being mindful of what a mirror is reflecting, as it can expand a space but can also make the room feel more cluttered."

She also recommends using round in lieu of square elements to help tuck into corners and be able to move throughout the space. "Even in a small space, we recommend getting a larger rug that will help ground your furniture placement. Your anchor items like a sofa, bed or large-scale artwork delineate space."

LIGHTING. Use lighting to create zones and don't overlook the impact of multi-level lighting. "Good lighting is a key element to consider for all interiors and especially small



Jessica Cinnamon of Jessica Cinnamon Design Inc. **SUPPLIED**

spaces, where it can define and ground spaces in open-concept smaller designs, and pull your eye around a room, giving dimension and, most importantly, draw your eye upwards, giving the illusion of taller ceilings," Cinnamon says.

COLOURS, FLOORING. Be consistent in colour hues and depth. Use lighter colour flooring underfoot throughout, she advises.

PAINT. "Painting is the easiest and most economical way to create the illusion of space," says Lydia Thammavong, head design, styles and trends at Rona. "Whether you're aiming to visually expand one small area like an entranceway, powder room or hallway or an entire home, the same tricks apply to make ceilings look higher and walls recede." (See sidebar.)

Extending your colour palette to adjacent spaces creates a sense of continuity and expansiveness, so consider using the same colour palette in a hallway or connecting rooms, whether in the same or variation of shades.

Tricks with paint

Lydia Thammavong of Rona offers tips on how to take advantage of paint to make a small space feel larger:

Stripes

Paint a horizontal stripe around all four walls or on just one wall to make a room look deeper and wider. Thins, vertical stripes will draw the eye upward and create the illusion of height in narrow or short rooms. Alternate stripes of similar shades to create a calm, subtle look that visually opens the space. Choose contrasting colours for a bolder vibe.

Colour tricks

Cool colours like soft blues, purples and greens make a small area feel open and airy. Light colours, soft pastels, whites and neutrals reflect more light, making a room feel larger. Though many believe dark colours make a room seem smaller, the right hues can create a luxurious or intimate mood. Paint walls, trim and the ceiling in varying shades of the same colour to virtually expand a room. Adding an accent wall creates a focal point which adds depth to a room without overwhelming it. Choose a bold or cool contrasting colour for one wall and light and neutral colours for the others.

Maximize light

Assess the amount of natural and artificial light coming into the room. Rooms that have a lot of natural light may tolerate a warmer colour but if there's too much light, a cool colour may make a small space too icy. Reflective surfaces bounce light around, making a space feel larger. Glossy white trim against matte walls, for instance, can reflect light and enhance the feeling of space.



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An ombre wall draws the eye upward and creates a more spacious feel. **RONA**