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Designers Swear By This Simple Formula for a Well-Designed Room, and It Works Every Time

By SARAH LYON | Published on 10/04/25



Credit: Tracy Morris Design / Photo by Jennifer Hughes

KEY POINTS

- Plan your space thoughtfully so that the layout supports function, flow, and practicality.
- Create visual balance by using a consistent paint color as a backdrop.
- Layer your lighting with multiple fixture types on dimmers to enhance mood.

Interior designers are quick to pinpoint the elements that make up a well-designed room. While there are many, some are seen as slightly more important than others—when we asked three interior designers to each share just one factor that makes a room look complete and elevated, they highlighted the following: thoughtful space planning, balance, and a well-planned lighting scheme.

Keep reading to learn more about each of these elements, then apply your takeaways to your own home.

MEET THE EXPERT

- Suzanne Manlove is the principal designer and CEO of Manlove and Company Interiors.
- Tracy Morris is the founder of Tracy Morris Design.
- Sydney Levy is a designer at Anthony Wilder Design/Build.

Thoughtful Space Planning



Credit: Parti Pris Design / Photo by Sarah Crowley

Thoughtful space planning is an integral component of any well-designed room, explains Suzanne Manlove, the principal designer and CEO of Manlove and Company Interiors. You will want to ask yourself, "how do you plan to use the space? Consider the room's flow and functionality," she says.

This involves paying close attention to scale and looking at how the furniture pieces you've selected for the space work together. You don't want to be laying out a room that is difficult to walk through or impractical for your everyday needs, after all.

"Address these needs first, before delving into what actually goes into the space," the designer says.

This way, you won't be left with a sectional that is oriented the wrong way or a TV credenza that isn't needed because you've realized it makes more sense to hang your television above the mantel. Engaging in some detailed space planning will require a bit more work up front, but it will ultimately save you time, money, and energy in the long run.

Balance



Credit: Tracy Morris Design / Photo by Jennifer Hughes

In addition to being well-planned, well-designed rooms have mastered the art of balance, shares Tracy Morris, the founder of Tracy Morris Design. Color.

"A consistent paint color provides a backdrop that ties the entire space together, allowing furnishings, art, and textures to stand out without competing," she says.

Even if you're most comfortable using a white or off-white, that works just fine, as exemplified in the room pictured above that Morris designed. Figure out the paint color you'd like to use on your walls, trim, and ceiling, and then go from there, bringing in your accent pieces.

"That consistency creates calm, while still leaving room for layers of personality through lighting, fabrics, and accessories," Morris says.

A Well-Planned Lighting Scheme



Credit: Design by Anthony Wilder Design/Build / Photo by John Cole

Good lighting should not be seen as an afterthought; it's crucial in bringing a space to life and making it feel more complete, notes Sydney Levy, a designer at Anthony Wilder Design/Build.

"Lighting plays a key role in setting the mood in a space, allowing it to transition seamlessly from day to night," she says.

Like many designers, Levy underscores that layered lighting is essential—she recommends weaving in a few different types of fixtures.

What, specifically, should you look to incorporate within one given living space? "Recessed lights for function, a chandelier for drama, sconces for softness, and table lamps for warmth," Levy suggests.

She recommends placing each piece of lighting on its own dimmer, and as it pertains to brightness, she likes going with a warm daylight bulb.

Keep in mind that while lighting can be pricey to purchase brand new. If you're overwhelmed with the thought of ordering four or more different fixtures for one room, keep in mind that you can turn to secondhand shopping to assist you with this task.

Search your local thrift store for stylish lamp bases and update them with contemporary shades, or scroll through Facebook Marketplace to see what types of overhead fixtures and sconces are listed for sale—there are often many. This way, you can artfully and stylishly improve your room's lighting scheme in a short period of time without breaking the bank.