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MY TOP
TIPS ON ROOM DESIGN

BY RENA BARCLAY



Designing a room can be overwhelming. There is a great deal of choice available on the market, and it can be difficult to know where to begin. Even as a Professional Interior Designer, I go through basic steps when approaching a project. It keeps my mind organized and focused. If I start from the beginning, the rest seems to fall into place.

My primary advice to anyone is to think about the look you want... collect photos from magazines, look at designer's websites and keep a list of things you see that you like and don't like. Putting preliminary thought into the sort of décor you want to create is the first step, and once this is done, the design process can begin.



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1. Floor Plans are essential! Doing a scaled drawing of the room incorporating furniture to the same scale is the only way to form a finished vision of the space. Furniture placement on the floor plan will determine the exact sizes of the furniture needed and will also help with the disbursement of fabrics and therefore color throughout the room. I would never attempt to design a room without doing a floor plan first.

2. Every room needs a starting point. This can be a favorite painting, a lovely piece of furniture, a gorgeous fabric or rug... anything that catches your eye. It must be something that you know you will enjoy living with on a day to day basis.

3. Once you have found your starting point, then a scheme can be developed. At this time, the fabric shopping begins. I usually combine 6 or 7 fabrics to create a room scheme – all of the different textures, patterns, scale and color which work well together. You must consider the content of the fabric when specifying for various uses within the room... upholstery weight fabrics for upholstery, less durable can be appropriate for curtains, etc.

4. When it comes to the fabrics, let there be one chief. Find something of good quality and if it is expensive, use it sparingly. Even in small amounts, a special fabric will be noticed and will give importance to the room. Use less expensive fabrics on the larger quantity items, such as sofas, club chairs, and curtains. This will help stay within budget but still, create a high-end appearance.

5. One WOW factor piece of furniture is needed in every room. Again, this doesn't mean that it has to be expensive... it needs to be impressive. It could be a gorgeous 18th-century chest, a fabulous mirror, a beautifully painted bookcase or a flea market find...it needs to have presence. This one piece has the power to carry the room.

6. When investing in upholstered furniture, buy the highest quality that you can afford. It will be worth it in the long run! Good quality always outlasts bad, and it is a case of "you get what you pay for"... higher quality upholstery comes with better detailing and tailoring. It is truly worth the extra cost.

7. Try not to skimp on labor costs. Don't engage a curtain maker or upholsterer because they are inexpensive. Well experienced craftspeople (and, they are not necessarily expensive, by the way) can work magic with most any quality of fabric they are given. A set of curtains with well-made pleats and generous interlining will speak a thousand words. Labor quality is of the highest importance.

8. Mix up finishes and texture when choosing furniture and artwork... beautiful wood, paint, metal, glass, and acrylic all work well together and keep the room interesting. The same goes for contemporary and traditional art. Mix them together, the result is exciting. Also, be creative with paint! Paint will do wonders for an unloved, tired piece of furniture and can give it new life. Don't discard something because it is dull or boring without thinking of the possibilities of repainting it.



9. Don't forget trimmings! Using trims does not necessarily mean using large tassel or bullion fringes. Trims add detail to upholstery, cushions, and curtains. The trims can be kept very simple, but by edging the skirt on a sofa with a small braid or using a decorative cord as welting on a cushion, a finished look will be achieved causing an overall pleasing effect.

10. Lastly, cushions and accessories; both are important and make such a difference to the overall look of your finished room. Cushions, whether used on sofas or in chairs, are a great way to introduce a special patterned fabric or to add a bit of needed color. Use good quality cushion forms... I always go with 50% Goose Down/50% Duck Feather. Accessories add another layer to the interior and enable self-expression. They represent the owner's taste and personalize the space. Also, collections make a great impact when displayed interestingly. Cushions and accessories are the ultimate finishing touch.



My last bit of advice is actually to use your room! Don't be afraid of everyday wear and tear. It is much more important for one to enjoy their surroundings with family and friends. Things will wear out eventually and will need to be recovered, but that is easily done, and the memories made by those who have used the room will last a lifetime.