

How to Create a Calming Retreat

“Simplify.” It's the word on everyone's lips right now. As life grows increasingly chaotic, all anyone wants is to simplify, and the concept is certainly carrying over into interior design. Even those who prefer a traditional look are trying to streamline, pare down, de-clutter, de-stress, and... simplify. You want a space where you can breathe, where you can relax, and where you can reconnect. To create an oasis of your own, follow these five guidelines:



1. **Color:** Keep the colors quiet. This doesn't mean they need to be pale (although pale colors work nicely), just that they should be lacking intensity. Avoid reds, oranges, and yellows, as well as bright greens, blues, and purples. Rich color is fine, as long as it stays muted. Deep grays, browns, blues, and even burgundy can have a very soothing effect. Light colors will make the space feel more open and airy, while darker ones will make it feel more cozy and enveloping. Apply this concept to your furnishings as well as your walls.
2. **Fabric:** Keep pattern to a minimum. Use it for accents only, like toss pillows, or small pieces of furniture, if you use it at all. Patterns make a space feel active, where solids provide an opportunity for the eye to rest. This doesn't mean the space will be boring. You can make up in texture what you've removed in pattern, to create a room with wonderful depth and movement. Contrast fabrics like linen, cotton, chenille, leather, suede, silk, and fur, for an experience that is more tactile than visual.
3. **Light:** Use task light rather than general light, or in non-designer terms, use lamps rather than overhead light. If you're trying to relax and have a quiet conversation, there's no need to have the space lit up like an operating room. If it's a spot to curl up and read that you're after, a lamp will provide better light with less eye-strain than an overhead light, which casts shadows. Lamps also allow you to choose the color of your light, via the shade material, which will help to set the mood you're looking for. For brighter light, choose white or cream shades; warmer light, tan or taupe shades; and for a truly moody look, use black or metal shades, which will create dramatic pools of light.
4. **Storage:** Clutter is the demon of the decorating world. Even if you're so used to it that you don't even notice it, your subconscious does. It's taking note of every item on every shelf, every scrap of paper in every pile, and every toy in every corner. You cannot de-stress when surrounded by mess. Get rid of what you don't use, and give yourself enough storage for the things you do. You will recognize the change immediately. This one tip could change the way you feel *in*, and feel *about* your entire home.
5. **Accessories:** Accessories are a very important part of a fully completed room design. They are the things that show your personality, and that make your space feel lived in. Even so, less is more. Instead of trying to showcase every item that has ever been important to you, select the ones that have the MOST meaning and impact. When possible, opt for one or two larger items, over a larger collection of small items. If your knick-knacks must remain on display, group them together in one area, rather than spreading them all over. Not only will this help the room feel lighter, but you'll be able to appreciate them more.

Your home should be your haven – your eye of the storm outside. By applying just one or two of these tips to each room, you'll feel calmer every time you walk in the door. If you're not sure how to get

from where you are to where you want to be, or just need to start with a clean slate, visit www.onlinehomedecorating.com now, to select and download your perfect space, instantly.

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