

Media Outlet: Living etc

Date: 01.01.13

Circulation: 98,250



Four steps to THE PERFECT ROOM FOR A CHILD

A space that's big on personality and style, but has a practical side, gets top marks



1 PLANNING MAKES PERFECT
Before you think about decoration, it's important to get the practical aspects of a child's room right, says Catherine Hooper at online shop Little Baby Company. 'Consider how the space will be used: do you have a separate play area, or will this space end up housing most of the toys?' Will the bedroom be shared, now or in the future? Might built-in storage be an option? Are there enough power sockets or do you need to fit more?

Also bear in mind that, although it may seem like a good idea to allocate the smallest bedroom to a baby or toddler, kids grow up quickly. So will provide more space for the inevitable accumulation of toys and, as your child grows up, a homework area too. 'It can help to draw up a simple floor plan', says designer Ursula Westwagh, whose company Room To Bloom specialises in children's interiors. 'Try to zone the room according to activities like sleep and play, consider different layouts and decide what makes the best use of the space.'



2 ROOM TO ADAPT
Children's needs will change as they grow, so choose furniture that can be modified as a child gets older, and try to avoid anything too age-specific, says Ursula Westwagh. 'If you make your decisions at the start, it means you shouldn't have to update your child's space so often over the coming years.'

Children love to personalise a space, and schoolbags often have bags of character, as do vintage toys. For letters like them, try to The Woodland. For old school games, browse junk shops or go to The International Antiques & Collectors Fair.

Vintage furniture is often timeless, the modern pieces can complement the style of other rooms. An iron bedstead can be painted any shade, while old crates are a fun alternative to standard shelving. Head to A Barn Full Of Bricks for a vintage bedstead. For crates, try Fern & Blossom, £22 each.

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HOT PRODUCT

Pencils wallpaper

Once upon a time, if you wanted a mural you had to get busy with a paintbrush or call in a professional. Today, Mr Penwall will print any image onto wallpaper, and it has an amazing array of existing designs. We love Pen Pal from the Hide & Seek range, £27 per sq m.



4 STAY SAFETY AWARE
If you're decorating a nursery, try to paint the walls at least a month before the room is used to ensure any odours are gone. 'Use non-VOC paints, including floor paints and varnishes,' says Jenny Dalton at online design magazine LittleBig. 'Or consider the Airscape Purifying Paint from Ecos, which neutralises pollutants in the air.' Avoid positioning a cot close to a radiator or window, as babies are sensitive to temperatures, and aim to keep the room around 18°C. In a toddler's room, make sure cupboards and shelves are securely screwed to walls in case they are used as an impromptu climbing frame, and don't position furniture next to a window. Use socket covers, tuck leads away, avoid toe kicks and ensure blind cords are out of reach.

3 MAINTAIN YOUR HOME'S MOOD
Decorating a child's room can be as exciting as going to the rest of your home. A mistake parents often make is thinking a child's space has to be cubby, says Jane Burton at textile house Folia. Although it should be somewhere that kids can express themselves, it still needs to feel like the rest of the house, so don't compromise your own taste. 'Decide on a focus early on, and if you're not sure where to start, choose one thing you really love – it could be a poster, a vintage toy or a fabric – and plan your scheme around it.'



This modular crib has bed features, drawers, a changing table and shelving. It comes with a bed, a bookshelf, a desk and a chair. A great bed to be submitted for the old not drawers. With Number 41 Design Products.

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Choose your BEDROOM STYLE



Look 1 FOLKSY AND FUN

- ✦ **THE IDEA** Add a playful touch to a nursery with cheerful wall stickers. Available in hundreds of different designs, they are inexpensive and simple to apply. Plus they can easily be removed without leaving sticky marks, so are quick to update too.
- ✦ **GET THE LOOK** This is the Seasons wall decal by Wall Candy, £45, available at Funky Moose.



Look 3 DJ IN THE HOUSE

- ✦ **THE IDEA** A cool kid's room doesn't have to mean black walls or outrageous colours. This striped ceiling adds a funky edge that will please parents too. The same goes for framed vintage vinyl, which adds instant kudos for image-conscious teens.
- ✦ **GET THE LOOK** Try Chelsea stripe wallpaper, £59 per 10m roll, Cole & Son. Find album frames, £12 each, at Urban Outfitters.



Look 2 ARTISTIC GALLERY

- ✦ **THE IDEA** It's never too early to encourage children to curate their own gallery of artworks. Choose graphic prints and images that relate to a child's hobbies and interests for a sophisticated alternative to cartoon characters or twee motifs.
- ✦ **GET THE LOOK** For a good selection of original and inexpensive artwork, log on to ebay.com. Pick up bony white frames at Ikea.



Look 4 POPS OF PRETTY COLOUR

- ✦ **THE IDEA** Transform the simplest of rooms in an instant with some well-chosen decorations. Try strings of colourful bunting, or hang bunches of pretty paper pom-poms together for maximum impact.
- ✦ **GET THE LOOK** For pom-poms like these, head to Paperpoms, or find instructions to make your own at marthatboat.com. See the Bengalee Upholstered footstool by Alphabet Interiors at modernhighstreet.com.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GLOUCESTER FROM TOP LEFT JANE DOUGHERTY/CONTEMPORARY.COM, WEL, INTERSPACE, PINDAROSE, JON PRODEL, LAUREN PEREZ

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Combine cool design with elements that can be adapted as your child gets older



Look 5 BOLD ACCENTS

- ✦ **THE IDEA** Make punchier shades work by combining colours with care. This royal blue hue would look childish teamed with primary red, whereas accents of this juicy bright orange give a sharper, more modern feel.
- ✦ **GET THE LOOK** Laguna Bay emulsion, £13.49 for 1.5l, Crown, is a similar shade. Fatboy has bright orange floor cushions, £59 each.



Look 7 SMART STORAGE

- ✦ **THE IDEA** Maximize floor play space in a shared room by positioning twin beds end to end. These made-to-measure frames feature stacks of built-in storage, and their low-level design means they can be used as casual sofa-style seating too.
- ✦ **GET THE LOOK** To find a tradesman to build similar beds, log on to interpeople.com.



Look 6 ENTER WONDERLAND

- ✦ **THE IDEA** Many a little girl dreams of a princess bed, but if a four-poster is a little on the grand side, an inexpensive canopy adds a fairy-tale touch. Compromise on costly wallpaper by opting for a grow-up design that kids will love as well.
- ✦ **GET THE LOOK** See the Princess bed canopy set, £22.95, Miquele. This is Flamings wallpaper, £52 per 10m roll, Cole & Son.



Look 8 VINTAGE VIBE

- ✦ **THE IDEA** Greys are big news in grown-up interiors, and can work equally well in kids' rooms. These bold, tonal wall stripes provide a great neutral background, which can easily be updated with colourful linens and accessories in any colour you choose.
- ✦ **GET THE LOOK** Walls in Night Jewels 1 to 5 emulsion, £24.29 for 2.5l, Dulux. Day bed, £299, Bump. Duvet cover set, £40, Feather & Black.

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