Planning the Living Room

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HOME SURROUNDINGS have a direct influence on the health and happiness of the family. The living room is the center of family life. Through the good times together and in the entertainment of friends in this room, parents and children grow into an appreciation of each other. "Living rooms are made to live in; that is, to play in, to work in, to read in, to sing in and to entertain in."

Not many years ago, every home had a parlor which was closed to the family the greater part of the time and opened only on state occasions. The kitchen or dining room served as a social center for the family. Today the whole house is used. The parlor does not exist but in its place is the living room. It does not require a large expenditure of money to make this a liveable room, to give it an atmosphere of home. Things in themselves may be very beautiful but they will never make a home-like living room unless they have something more to recommend them. They must be appropriate, useful and well placed to make an attractive, interesting and comfortable living room. The real homemaker can get these results with inexpensive furnishings. However, this room will not "happen all of a sudden." It requires thought and work—a testing of ideas.

General Plan and Outlook
Since the living room is the center of family social life, it should be flooded with sunlight and fresh air. The southeast is probably the most
desirable location for the living room. It will have the sun in winter. Vines and trees can be used as protection from the heat of the day in summer.

At least one-fourth of the floor area should be windows. These should be placed so that cross ventilation is possible. A group of windows break the wall space less and are more attractive when decorated than single windows. Casement windows give good ventilation.

A living room should have a pleasing outlook—a window box, bed of flowers, a garden or trees. The living room should be the largest and most attractive room in the house. It should always be comfortable.

Pattern and Texture

Every living room must have some pattern in the furnishings to make the entire room interesting. If there is too much pattern, the effect is one of confusion; if there is too little, the effect is monotonous. The rug and walls may be plain and the drapes and upholstered furniture figured. The opposite plan may be used effectively. Even with these furnishings well selected as to pattern, the decorative objects used in the room may be carelessly selected and placed, and as a result, the good effect of well selected pattern in the other furnishings may be destroyed.

The texture of the materials that are used in house furnishings has a definite relation to the result. Generally, smooth walls call for smooth finished draperies, and rough walls, rough finished draperies. Soft rugs require draperies that will fall in soft folds. Coarse rugs require curtains of a coarse material.

Wallpaper

Wallpaper should be selected in bright sunlight in order to get the best results. Unless a room is large and spacious and the homemaker can afford to have new paper each year, small or inconspicuous designs are generally more satisfactory. Large designs make a room look smaller than it really is. Heavy dark furniture requires paper of more design and color. Light furniture requires more delicate design in paper. Furniture of a certain period requires period paper. Rooms opening together should be papered alike or in colors that blend in order to give an appearance of space.

Furniture

Whether furnishing a living room for the first time or remodeling the present one, there are a few essentials in furniture selection that
must be kept in mind. Uncomfortable chairs have no place in the modern living room. Furniture that is not well built and will not stand daily use is not worth buying. Over decorated or queer shaped furniture, whether of wood or upholstery, is worthless. Comfortable, well built, plain design are the essentials to look for in furniture. In buying upholstered furniture, a davenport and one chair may be alike. A second chair may be of different material. Wooden chairs are used with upholstered furniture. No piece of furniture should be purchased because it is the style. Avoid buying "sets" of furniture. If a number of pieces crowd the living room or strike an inharmonious note, they are useless.

Large pieces of furniture are placed first, parallel to the wall. (Fig. 3.) In this position they take up less room and cause less confusion in the general appearance of the room. If the room is too long, it can be made to appear in better proportion by placing the large pieces of furniture crosswise of the room. The placing of furniture is determined by lines of travel, room balance, and use.

No furniture should be so placed that it is in the way in passing from one room to another. It should not be necessary to move furniture in opening doors. Spaces free of furniture are needed in every room.

![Fig. 2.—Floor plans of living rooms showing furniture arranged in centers of interest.](image)

The second thing to consider in placing furniture is balance. A davenport with table may be placed near the wall opposite the fireplace to balance room furnishings. A piano and a bench with a lamp may be placed on one end of the room to balance the davenport and table at the
other. Light weight pieces of furniture may be arranged together to form a heavy group to balance a large piece of furniture. For example, a screen with an easy chair, small table and rug near a window give a heavy effect. Pieces of furniture of the same height should not be placed together.

Those pieces of furniture that are used together are placed together. (Fig. 2, 4, 7). Furniture should be so arranged that the room looks interesting and inviting the instant one enters. Everything should be planned for singing, writing, reading or visiting. Thought for the satisfaction of these wants should be the real object of the whole plan. There may be a music group consisting of piano and bench with a lamp. A writing group would include a desk and chair with a picture above, a candle or flowers on the desk, a window and lamp. (Figs. 2, 4.) The furniture in a reading group might consist of an easy chair beside a book case, a table with a bowl of flowers; the entire group near a window. An attractive view may be the center of another group. An easy chair, a flowering plant in the window, a table with a magazine, might complete this group. A bay window with upholstered seat, comfortable chairs near by, a table with a bowl of flowers would make a social group. Another arrangement of furnishings for a similar purpose would be a davenport before a fireplace, a table at the back with runner, lamp, and bowl of flowers. (Fig. 7.)

There is no one arrangement of furniture to secure centers of interest. Only through repeated rearrangement and trial can interesting centers be planned. If the large pieces are placed first, the smaller pieces can probably be arranged near them. To get the best results, furniture has to be lived with and tried out in different arrangements. Sometimes, new ideas can be found by observing the arrangement of furniture after a number of guests have departed.

Color in the Living Room

The living room of the average American home is too small to use bright colors as background. Even though a number of rooms open together, the walls are too near to permit the use of bright colors. The greater number of families have to live with their furnishings for years. They will tire quickly of bright colored walls. Neutral colors are restful and can be lived with for a long time. Bright colors have a place in all living rooms but they must be used in small amounts. Carefully blended, they may appear in wall finishes and in rugs in the smallest rooms if the effect is that of a unit; that is, touches of bright colors must have a definite relationship to the whole color scheme.

Light colors are used in dark rooms and dark colors in light rooms. Rooms with north exposure must have warm colors in the background—orange, yellow, tan, red. Rooms with south exposure must have cool colors—blue, green, blue green, grey. The cool colors may be used advantageously as touches of color in north rooms. The same is true of warm colors used in south rooms.
"Better Homes in America", Washington, D. C.

Fig. 3.—An unusual arrangement of desk and chair. Well placed, it breaks the too regular effect of the other furnishings in this group.

Color Schemes for Living Rooms

1. Walls, grey figures on a grey blue background; rug, taupe with rose and blue; curtains, blue grey; furniture, taupe (plain) and dark wood; decorative objects with touches of blue, rose and gold with possibly a little green.

2. Walls, tan with blue and orange in indistinct figures; rug, darker than walls with blue and tan design; curtains, soft blue; furniture, dark wood; decorative objects with touches of orange and blue combinations.

3. Walls, yellow grey walls; rug, mulberry; curtains, mulberry with tans and yellows and grey-greens (cretonne); furniture, mulberry (plain) and dark wood; decorative objects with touches of blue and yellow.

4. Walls, cream; rug, dark mulberry; curtains, cretonne in cream
EXTENSION CIRCULAR 228

Fig. 4. — Furnishings attractively arranged in a difficult corner of a living room entrance.

6. The general scheme of room decoration is: Floors, woodwork, walls, ceiling—neutral; curtains, upholstered furniture, rugs—brighter; decorative objects—brightest.

A well selected color scheme will give a feeling of comfort and cheerfulness to those who use the room. If it has been carefully chosen and well carried out, the room will be a complete unit.

Decorative Objects

A room may be well planned and furnished as far as the background, furniture selection, and arrangement is concerned and still be lacking in a homelike atmosphere. This is given by certain decorative objects which must be as carefully chosen and placed as the other furnishings. These tie the room together and make it pleasing, attractive and livable. It is better to have too few decorative objects than too many.

Decorative objects such as table runners, magazines and pictures are placed parallel with the surface they decorate.

The following suggestions may be of interest: first, destroy or store all decorative objects that do not fit into the plan of the living room and if there are still too many, use only a few at a time; second re-arrange those that are left; and third purchase a few as the “right” ones are found.

Decorative objects that give touches of color and variety in line in living room furnishings.

Growing plants (Fig. 2).  
Bowls of flowers, berries or grasses (Figs. 4, 5, 7, 8).  
Pictures (Figs. 2, 4, 5, 7, 8).  
Table runners (Fig. 8).  
Candles (Figs. 2, 7, 8).  
Mirrors (Fig. 8).  
Baskets (Fig. 8).  
Vases (Fig. 8).  
Lamp shades (Figs. 2, 5, 7).  
Books (Figs. 2, 4, 5, 7)  
Book racks (Figs. 2, 4, 5, 7).  
Magazines (Figs. 2, 7).  
Screens.  
Desk furnishings (Fig. 4).
Pictures are hung flat against the wall. They may be held in place by one or two straight wires (Fig. 7) or a brad in the wall. The method used will depend upon the weight. The idea is to have the support as inconspicuous as possible in order not to detract from the picture. Pictures give the best effect when hung at eye level on a plain wall or on one which has an indistinct figure. The space between windows is not always good because too bright a light may destroy the beauty of the picture. A picture which seems to radiate a glow of light can be used to brighten a corner. Pictures should fit the space in which they are placed—an oblong picture in an oblong space. Several may be used together as a group to balance a large picture. In this case, they should be framed alike.

Pictures should be of pleasing subjects. There should be a real story visualized. Copies of famous paintings can be purchased for very little. Many excellent pictures for framing can be found in current magazines. Pictures of landscapes, flowers, animals, famous men and women are good subjects for home pictures. No room looks well with a great collection of pictures. A few, well selected, is the rule.

Calendars have no place on a living room wall. At least not more than one, and that of small size, should be used. If the pictures are good, the calendar should be removed and the picture framed or used unframed. No photographs or very few have any place in a living room.
Use of Mirrors

Mirrors may be used in living rooms to reflect small objects and thus intensify their beauty. A plant, bowl of flowers, rose or lighted candles are more attractive if reflected in a mirror.

A mirror used opposite an entrance will seem to give space to the room. Over a fireplace, it will serve the same purpose. A mirror will make the room more beautiful if it reflects a picture on the opposite wall. Mirrors may be used to better advantage than pictures between windows. A mirror can be used to increase the light in a room if placed so as to reflect sunlight or bright colors.

Fig. 7.—An effective use of a mirror.

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