

# Cheerful Decorating

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How I love to play with home décor. We can enjoy our home as an arena for free play. Our home is a place of potential comfort where our personal preferences can be expressed. Over the years friends have asked me for tips since I am known as an amateur interior decorator. The key word here is “amateur” and I said “decorator” not “housewife.” I wonder how an “amateur housewife” would act.

The guiding principles below were learned from my mother, my architecture designer brother, books, home building, renovating and decorating our various homes and meddling with other people’s spaces. It is great to know some basic decorating “rules” so you can confidently break them. It will give you a sense of “I know what I am doing. It’s my space and I’ll make it look and feel the way I want.” There are so many places in the world that you have no control but in your home you are the queen or king. Enjoy your creative power.

## Some rules to follow or break

### Outside

Choose an accent or “punch” colour for your front door that welcomes your family and guests to your home’s entry point. Avoid “welcoming” them to your garage door. Fade out your garage door with a paint that blends with the exterior walls of your house.

### Inside

1. When creating a room’s colour scheme choose the wall paint **LAST**. Paint is your most economical decorating tool with a million colour choices. There are limited options with carpeting, upholstery, curtains and bedding schemes and they tend to be high price items – unless you are an enthusiastic garage sale hunter.
2. If a room feels heavy and dark, even if it has “beautiful wood,” you can transform it with light coloured paint. Old fashioned paneling can take on new life with paint.
3. To have a balanced space place the biggest piece of furniture on the wall facing the entry or door. We tend to feel comforted by seeing a couch, bed or some other inviting piece when we enter a room. It tells us where to go to settle.
4. Large pieces of furniture are usually best when aligned with the architecture of the space. If you have a focal point, like a fireplace at a corner diagonal, have your next heaviest visual piece, probably a sofa, facing it at the same angle.
5. When you want to create a space to walk through a room allow 3 feet or more between furniture and walls.

6. In small homes use only one colour on walls and only one floor treatment to give a sense of space. Every time we begin and stop a colour we create a visual space. You can use this in the reverse to make a large space seem smaller.

7. Private rooms such as bedrooms are often painted or papered in different colours to designate a personal space. Small washrooms or bathrooms provide a space to be daring and bold because we spend brief periods there. Additionally, if you are anything like me, seldom do you go there to entertain.

8. Have something black in a room to help ground the space.

9. Trendy furniture is as expensive as classic. We are apt to tire of trendy looks and they quickly become “dated”. However, it is fun to buy economical and trendy accessories.

10. You can give public areas like the living room some flair with something living (plants, fish tank), something to read (magazines, books) and something that reflects your personality and interests (painting, statue, collections).

11. Hang wall décor at eye level so that pictures in areas where you sit, like the living room, are lower than when hung in hall ways.

12. Hang wall decor congruent to the furniture. Avoid a picture “falling” off the edge of a couch. You can use a sofa, dresser, bed or chair as a horizon line for images.

12. When grouping wall images create a steady bottom horizontal and side vertical line. If a picture in a group is hung more than half its width from the other pictures it may look lost. Groupings work well if there is a repetition of either a theme (cats, scenery, flowers) or similar colours. The wall space can be imagined to be a piece of paper on which you are creating a balanced view of many objects.

13. The only time to “step hang” (one step up from another) objects and pictures is on staircases. Again, we want to stay congruent to the room’s architectural lines and not have our eyes fighting with it.

14. Have fun. You can place a delightful stuffed animal on a chair in the living room or in a guest room. Put a humour book like Calvin and Hobbs on the coffee table. You can hang a fun painting, saying or poster. In our home we have the Mona Lisa reflected in one of our bath room mirrors. The refrigerator is a great place for affixing playful and

personal items. Hang an animal portrait at a pet's eye level above her feeding dish. Remember, it's your home and the closest you will be to "living in your own castle."

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