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comfortable dwelling

10 Common Decorating Mistakes
That *Fill Homeowners With Regret*



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Have you ever purchased furniture, put paint on the walls, or brought home a new decor item only to discover that something just doesn't feel right?

You're not sure what it is. Is it the wrong colour? Don't neutrals go with everything? Is it the wrong size? The wrong style?

If this has ever happened to you, you're certainly not alone.

Any home can look like it belongs in a magazine, no matter what the size and what the decor budget. Just look at the range of bloggers and designers out there. Some are repurposing Ikea furniture and making it look stunning while others are buying \$15,000 sofas and it just looks... okay.

As an Interior Decorator, I've been in hundreds of homes over the past decade. From multi-million dollar estates down to 600 square foot apartments, I've seen every mistake in the book. And I'm usually there to fix it after the homeowner has spent thousands, or even tens of thousands trying to make it look great on their own.

Many homeowners think that if they just follow some pictures and blogs they found online that they can make it work and skip the decorator's fees. And some can!

However, the vast majority of homeowners who DIY their design end up spending *more money* than had they just hired someone to oversee the

vast number of considerations required when putting together their rooms.

Furniture, finishes, and the other products that fill your home are expensive at any budget level. There's no doubt about it.

And home is where you spend the majority of your time. Your environment should be somewhere that showcases your personality and makes you feel proud.

Some people get excited over decorating their homes. They could spend all day in showrooms picking cabinetry, hardware, and furnishings.

For others, it's overwhelming and a bit intimidating.

Whether you're someone who loves the decorating process, or whether you'd rather hand it all over to someone else, I wrote this book to act as a checklist and help you avoid the most common (*and expensive*) mistakes through the process.

It doesn't matter if you're building from scratch or just redecorating one small space in your home, the information contained in this book will be eye-opening and useful to getting it right the first time.

The compilation of these top 10 mistakes comes from what I see and what I'm asked most often when in client's homes.

I'm going to share with you secrets that manufacturers *don't* want you to know...

And tidbits that most decorators and designers hold close to their chest to make you pay for them or are too inexperienced to fully understand themselves.

My goal in writing this book is to help make your world more beautiful. Our environments shape who we are and how we interact with ourselves and others.

A well decorated home does a *lot* more than just give you bragging rights when friends come over.

When your environment looks good and functions well, we *feel* better. We're more creative. We're more productive. And we're happier overall.

We've slipped into a world where filtered social media posts don't only apply to human forms... they also apply to homes.

So I'm going to explain how these filters create unrealistic expectations and set homeowners like you up for disappointment. And how you can create a Pinterest-worthy home despite all of the filters and fakeness that exists online.

And, because our environments impact us everyday, we'll also speak to the things that impact the health of your family.

I'll disclose that I'm an Interiors Professional, *not* a doctor. However, we pay close attention to the research done by environmental scientists and behavioural psychologists who conduct studies on how the things in our homes can cause heightened anxiety levels, dangerous gasses, and feelings of lethargy.

Your home should be a temple of peace. A muse for inspiration and creativity. A gallery of who you are as an individual. And a welcoming and relaxing space for guests.

While I couldn't include every consideration for decorating and design into this short read, I'm confident that you'll find the next 10 chapters practical and useful. So, let's dive right in!

Flooring Fiascos

There are a few common errors that homeowners make with their flooring, but the biggest (and most expensive) one is choosing a busy bossy flooring material.

“Bossy” floors are materials that limit your design choices now and into the future.

Bossy flooring includes woods with strong red tones like cherry. Patterned cement tiles. Trendy neutrals like the recently passed grey trend. Or busy grain heavy hardwoods.

Sure, it can make a statement today. And you just might love it for a few years.

But in 5 years time that trendy floor will look tacky... and because it's such a statement, you'll be left hating it or footing the bill to replace it again.

Unless you're decorating to sell within a year or two, your flooring is an investment that will stay with you throughout most of your life in your home.

So installing trendy floors instead of timeless classics is a hard *no* because it'll be difficult to change your decor as time goes on.

When choosing a flooring, aim for a material that goes with everything. Your floors should be like a good pair of denim so that you don't have to consider your flooring every time you make a change to your decor.

Here are my top tips for selecting a timeless flooring material:

Consider your home's style. If you live in a Victorian home, bleached nearly white hardwoods won't look right once the trend passes. However, in a beach house floors that are bleached will always look like they belong.

Avoid trendy neutrals. Many homeowners choose neutrals because they feel it's the safest bet. However, neutral trends change about every 5 years.

In the 90's we had the pinky beige era. We can walk into any home with pinky-beige tile or pickled oak flooring and immediately *know* those floors are 30 years old. Most people's reaction to those floors now is "*this needs updating*".

Then it was the orangy tuscan trend. Remember the heavy orange travertine, and how limiting it is to work with now? These floors screamed early 2000's and immediately date the room.

Then we moved into a yellow-beige which, during the grey trend, we all tried to strip from our homes as quickly as possible labelling it as "builder beige".

Ooh the grey trend. After 20 years of different beige variations, we shifted to the cooler end of the spectrum moving towards a modern cool grey around 2010.

About 5 years later, we collectively decided that grey was too cold, and decided that greige (*a combination of grey and beige*) was what everyone needed.

And now in the 2020's we're seeing very little grey anymore in home design showrooms. We've moved to the heavy contrast between stark black and stark white (*which we haven't seen in 40 years since the 1980's*).

See my point? Trendy neutrals are *trendy*, not timeless!

Now, I'm certainly not advocating that you run coloured tile throughout your entire home.

But when it comes to flooring, classics like mid-tone and blonde hardwoods are best with very little grain pattern are usually the best choice.

Look at what you already have in your home. It's a huge mistake to ignore the hard surfaces that already exist in your home -- *especially if you have no plans to replace them in the near future.* Things like countertops, existing tile, and adjoining flooring all need to be considered when choosing your new flooring options.

Even if you're going with a low cost material like laminate, flooring is a hefty investment. Especially if you're flooring it through your entire main floor. So getting it right is *key*.

We discuss flooring with all of our Interiors clients -- from DIY all the way up to Full Service -- because it truly is a critical element to how a room comes together.

Picking the Wrong Paint Colour

When you walk into the paint store and see over 1,500 colour options, it's easy to get overwhelmed.

We often hear “*it's just paint*”, but getting your paint wrong will ruin the entire space. Your walls represent the biggest surface area in your home and your paint colour will dictate whether the space feels cohesive and well designed, or disjointed and off.

One of the most common errors I see homeowners make is deciding they want to redecorate a room, then heading to the paint store.

Repeat after me: *paint is the last thing we choose in a renovation, not the first!*

Yes, your lighting matters when it comes to selecting the perfect hue. But it doesn't matter as much as you might think it does (or as much as the paint store employees may tell you)!

What matters more when choosing your paint colours is how it relates to everything else in the space -- your hard surfaces, your large furniture pieces, and even your window coverings play an integral part in the colour that should end up on your walls.

Here are the biggest considerations when selecting the perfect hue for your walls:

What's already in the room. As I mentioned, hard surfaces like tile, cabinetry, or countertops all must be considered when choosing a paint colour.

Every neutral colour has an undertone to it. Not everyone can see the undertones right away, but they do exist!

And contrary to popular belief, **neutrals do NOT go with everything.**

Put a yellow beige tile next to a pinky brick stone. It looks awful together.

You know how colours look different in every room?

Most untrained professionals will say that the light changes the colour. That's not exactly true. Light will bring out the *undertones* of the colour, but the colour doesn't change in the light.

Placing other neutral colours beside the neutral surfaces that already exist in your home can either counterbalance what exists, or highlight the undertones in your current surfaces.

So, if you have a pinkish granite, you might think that painting the walls a clean blue grey will help to modernize the room...

But all it will do is make that pink granite stick out like a sore thumb and make you hate it even more.

It's not just hard surfaces that you need to consider. Large upholstered pieces and window treatments are also expensive elements of your space and should work seamlessly with your paint colour.

You need to stick with undertones that already exist in the room.

For example, if you have an open-concept kitchen and living room with a stacked stone fireplace surround and a yellow-beige countertop, then grey walls probably aren't going to look right. They'll simply make your countertop and stone feel dated.

That doesn't mean you can't participate in the grey trend. It just means that you may need to go to more of a light taupe in order to get the look you wanted and learning to love your stone and countertops again.

When it comes to paint, grey is not just grey. White is not just white. And beige is not just beige. You only have to take a trip to your local paint store to know that this is true.

Windows + what's outside of them. White walls are hot right now. But the pictures you see online are *heavily filtered* with exposures raised to make whites appear more crisp and bright.

Unless your home is made of glass, you likely don't have enough light to make a true white like Chantilly Lace by Benjamin Moore look like the stark white you're seeking.

Don't believe me? Look up to your ceiling. You likely have a pure white or bright white paint up there... but it probably looks a little bit grey.

Things like bushes outside of your window can make white paint look like a sickly green during the daytime.

Now, this doesn't mean that if you have greenery or standard sized windows that you can't achieve a white look on your walls.

You just can't do it using a pure white paint.

If shrubbery casts a green spell on your walls, then you may need to choose a light white with a bit of pink to it to counteract the green and get the white colour you were hoping for.

Unless you're a Decorator trained in colour, you'd likely bypass a colour like Benjamin Moore's Lily of the Valley when looking through paint chips because it looks like grandma's house on the card.

However, because green is opposite of pink on the colour wheel, the pinkish hue will cancel out the green reflection and leave you with the

pure white look that you were after -- rather than the puke green you might have achieved choosing a pure white paint.

Clients are often amazed that we can do a paint colour consultation online because we've been told for *years* that light and exposure are what dictate paint colours.

The truth is though, whether we're at your home or consulting online, it's the undertones present in the space that truly narrow paint choices and help you focus on the best one.

Now, we've just been talking neutrals here. But sometimes you want to put some colour on the wall.

Colours do *not* have undertones like neutrals do because all colours (except Primary colours) are made up of other colours.

Colour is a lot easier to get "right" than neutrals are because the differences in colour are easier for most untrained eyes to see.

If you're just getting started with colour, or feel that you haven't made great colour choices in the past, think about combining colours that are the same level of muddiness.

When you put two colours next to each other, often one will appear muddier than the other.

Now, there are no inherently "muddy" colours. It's all relative to what you pair that colour next to.

But if you partner colours with the same level of muddiness they're likely to work -- no matter what the combination.

The other key to making colours work in a space is to repeat each colour at least 3 times throughout the space.

When we do consultations with our decorating clients they'll often say to me "*I want a pop of colour*".

Clients often take that phrase to heart and feel that a "pop of colour" is simply adding a pair of toss pillows to a room.

Yet when we add colour in just one spot and don't repeat it elsewhere, it seems out of place. This is often the reason why homeowners can't seem to make colour work for them.

Installing Trendy Tile

It feels as if tile trends are changing every time I walk into a showroom!

Tile is a fantastic way to add interest to your kitchen, bathroom, entryway, laundry room, or mudroom so it's easy to get swept up in all of the beautiful design possibilities.

However, as much as I'm obsessed with the array of patterns, textures, and colours available in tile, I encourage you to reign it in and stick to timeless tiles that are suitable for your home because...

... tile is incredibly messy, expensive, and inconvenient to change out!

When you rip out tile, the material it's adhered to also comes out (like drywall, subfloor or cement board). So, when you redo your kitchen backsplash, it also means redoing the drywall over the entire area. When you re-do your ceramic floors, you can count on doing the subfloors also.

Tile isn't that expensive, especially when we're doing a small area like a backsplash. So, often homeowners will justify their bold choices by the low(ish) pricepoint. Many designers do the same because adding some trendy tile photos to their portfolio will really beef it up. Yet if you want to avoid a major inconvenience and expense down the road, trust me, it's best to stick to the timeless classics like a white subway tile.

That said, I totally get it! Plain white or cream subway tile can get boring.

So, here are some of the ways we create interest with timeless tile for our Interiors projects:

Create inlays and borders. Our powder room floor was installed 20 years ago and is a combination of a neutral taupe 4X4 tile and a smaller 2X2 white tile.

Pretty boring if you just install 4X4 tiles in rows.

However, our tile has a border of the 4X4 tile around the perimeter of the room. Then a smaller band of the 2X2 white tile just inside of that. The middle of the floor has the 4X4 tile again, but this time installed in a diamond pattern.

Still classic and timeless, yet it's also interesting enough to still look gorgeous 20 years later.

Sure, installation would have cost a bit more, but nowhere near as much as it would have been for us to tear up the floors again now that we're redoing that space.

And, the added cost of installation can typically be offset by the tile itself because classic tiles tend to be less expensive.

Of course we aren't only limited to square ceramic tile. We could do something similar with white subway tile in the shower. Run a classic brick pattern $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way up the shower stall. Then add 2 rows of a slimmer subway tile installed vertically and stacked. Then continue with the brick pattern above to create a beautiful and interesting look.

Mix up the classics. Mixing classic tiles can create interesting and timeless looks.

Some of the classics include the aforementioned subway tile, 4X4 square tile, 2X2 square tile, penny rounds, basket weave, arabesque and hex tile. You usually find classic tiles buried at the back of the tile showroom as they feature the most trendy pieces out in front. So you may need to go digging!

Combining different classics together like penny rounds with square can create interest and make your floors look more dynamic.

Stick with classic colours. We all remember the pink and avocado green tiled bathrooms. Man, those were a pain to renovate!

Classic colours for tile are white, off white, cream, and taupe.

If going dark, stick to black or navy. But use dark tiles sparingly.

Brick is also relatively timeless, but you need to be careful with the colour. Stick with the classics and know that brick sucks a lot of light out of a room because of its low light reflective value.

Buying the Wrong Sofa

Your sofa is one of the most well used (and expensive) pieces in your home. So it's important to get it right!

I go into a lot of details over on our Style Blog at www.comfortabledwelling.com. Search for [5 Expensive Mistakes To Avoid When Buying a Sofa](#). There, I cover things like how to properly test for comfort (*hint... if you're doing a "sit test", you're doing it wrong*), what to look for in fabrics, what size to look for, and what makes a quality piece that will last for decades. So I'll avoid speaking to that here as you can get that information on our website.

There are 2 other places I see homeowners get it wrong *all the time*.

First, they get the wrong size sofa for the room. Sometimes we're just working with what we have. We move in, and because we can't afford to buy all new furniture right away, we have to place the wrong sized piece into our new home. Not much we can do about that except live with it until it's time to buy new.

However, it's a crying shame when homeowners unknowingly purchase the wrong sized piece and then scratch their head wondering why their new living room isn't quite as expected!

Without coming over to do a layout consultation and taking proper measurements of your room, it's tough to say exactly what size sofa you should get. But here are some things that you should definitely consider:

Skip the condo sized furnishings. It seems logical that smaller spaces require smaller furnishings... but that couldn't be further from the truth! Adding small scale furniture to a tiny room can make it feel cluttered.

Instead, when working with a small room we want to use fewer, larger pieces.

I love wrapping a small space with a big sectional.

When we use larger pieces in compact areas our mind will think the space is bigger because it's holding grander pieces.

Avoid bulk. When I said large pieces, I certainly didn't mean bulky. You know what I mean, right? Those overstuffed sofas that were so prevalent in the early 2000's (and that, for some reason, men still love to this day)?

I think we gravitate towards overstuffed bulky pieces because they look pillowy and comfortable. Yet they're actually an ergonomic *nightmare* for your hip, back, and joints.

All that being said, unless you have a giant room, bulky pieces will make a room feel more cluttered.

Instead, look for pieces with taller legs and cleaner lines.

Measure and plan your layout before you shop. There's nothing worse than finding a sofa you love only to discover it won't fit. There's also nothing worse than walking into a furniture showroom and aimlessly wandering without a plan.

If you're simply replacing what you have and the scale is right, then measure your sofa before you leave.

However, more often than not, furnishings weren't purchased for the room you're redecorating, so you'll be starting from scratch.

When planning your layout, you'll want to follow basic principles like not pushing all your furniture up against the walls.

If you aren't hiring an interiors professional to do your layout for you, here are some guidelines to consider when planning for your sofa:

- You'll want a minimum of 18" between pieces (like a coffee table or adjacent chair) to allow for movement in and out.
- You'll need a minimum walkway of 2.5 - 3' in an average sized home and 4' in a larger home.
- Your rug should be longer than your sofa by at least 12" on either side and the front legs of all furniture pieces in a conversation area should sit on the rug.
- To calculate how far from your TV your sofa should be, take the diagonal measurement of the TV in inches and multiply by 2.75. For example, if you have a 42" TV, then your sofa should be about 115.5" away from the TV ($42 \times 2.75 = 115.5$).

Improper Lighting

Let me ask you this... do you feel better on a sunny day? Or on a cloudy day?

Most people feel better on a warm sunny day than on a cool cloudy one.

Now let me ask you another question. Do you believe that artificial light (like screens) impact our sleep patterns?

Most people would agree.

We know that we have to put devices away in the evening so it doesn't impact our sleep and mood. However we are also discovering that layers upon layers of bright LED pot lights are also impacting our stress levels and sleep.

Now, this doesn't mean that we ditch LED's. We did make the switch because they're more energy friendly after all. However, we really want to pay attention to the way we layer lighting into our space and what bulbs we use throughout our home.

Let's begin with the types of lighting we need.

When we are designing spaces for clients we look at **three layers of lighting**.

First is overhead lighting. These are your pot lights, chandeliers, pendants, and flush mounts.

Second is task lighting. These are your floor and table lamps.

Third is accent lighting. This is what makes the space come alive and feel higher end (without a huge investment).

Here are some things to consider when it comes to overhead lighting:

In working spaces like kitchens, bathrooms, and your home office you'll need more overhead lighting and the bulbs should be brighter.

These are ideal spaces to install pot lights in addition to chandeliers or pendants.

However, in quieter spaces like living and dining rooms, it's best to avoid rows of pot lights and to opt for a single overhead light like a chandelier or nothing at all.

There may be a few other lights to put in the ceiling when we get to Accent lighting, so don't go running to install drywall just yet!

If you're insistent on installing pot lights into living and sleep spaces, be sure to have the electrician install a dimmer switch. It's a very inexpensive addition that you definitely won't regret when trying to unwind!

Scale matters! When measuring for a chandelier, bigger is better. Our rule of thumb is to measure the width of the room in feet. Double that number. Then that's the number of inches that you want your fixture to be *at minimum*.

For example, if you have a 14' wide living room, your light fixture should be a *minimum of 28" in diameter*. (14 X 2).

Plan for clearance. Door swings are the biggest miss when homeowners shop for light fixtures. Most people prefer the look of a semi-flush to a flush mount fixture. However, you may not have the room when the door is open to pull it off! Be sure to measure door swings and how much drop you have before you begin shopping. (*FYI - drop is the amount of space between the ceiling and bottom of the light fixture.*)

Now let's move into task lighting. Here are some general guidelines to follow:

For working spaces like kitchens and baths, consider where you're completing tasks.

For example, under cabinet lighting can be helpful to add extra illumination when chopping with sharp knives.

Beside bathroom mirrors where we do our grooming, we want sconces.

(Side note: Light bars that go above the mirror give off unflattering light. So, if you're renovating your bathroom, opt for sconces on either side of the mirror instead whenever possible.)

For relaxation spaces like living rooms and bedrooms, turn off or dim the overhead lights and think about where lamps are needed to illuminate the room should you forego overhead lighting in the evening.

Using only lamps at night can really help improve sleeping patterns so consider the types of activity that you tend to do in that room.

Your favourite armchair may require a reading lamp so that your eyes don't strain while reading a good book.

One of the softest ways to light a room with lamps is to radiate light inwards by placing lamps in the corners of the room.

A conversation is also a task! If you're speaking with someone across the room, can you see their face and expressions when the lamps are on?

Shades are also important to consider when it comes to task lighting. Opaque or dark shades will only allow light to escape from the top of the shade, casting a more concentrated light source. This can be good while

reading, but not so much if you're trying to light a dark corner.

White or linen shades allow filtered light to come *through* the shade and from the top of it casting a more flattering light that spreads out around the room.

Accent lighting is not a necessity like overhead and task lighting, however it's an inexpensive way to make your home feel more expensive and to call attention to the things you really want to highlight.

The biggest mistakes that I see homeowners make with accent lighting is that they go a little too fancy.

For example, I was once in a home where the builder had put *purple accent lighting* in the main living areas!

What's worse is that it was built in behind a bulkhead and not accessible to change the bulb without tearing out drywall.

My client hated purple. So of course, she never flipped that switch on in her living room. But this was a shame because there was a stunning fireplace that would have been beautifully illuminated had it been done right.

Here are some ideas on how to tastefully use accent lighting in your own home:

For built-ins, place a small spotlight within each shelf to illuminate your decor displays. Custom millwork is a heavy investment, so this small addition can really help it shine.

In kitchens, place lighting into glass cabinets.

Wash your window coverings with a couple of spotlights to make your windows feel like a high end hotel. To avoid having two circles of

spotlight on your curtains, cross the light so that the fixture on the left is pointed at the curtain on the right and vice versa. This will cast a soft glow, instead of a weird circle.

Illuminate your fireplace with sconces.

Make artwork appear more expensive by placing art lights above them on the wall.

Fast Furniture

“I want it all. And I want it now.” - Queen

That should be our motto nowadays. We decide that we want to redecorate a room after a decade of living with it, and all of a sudden we need to do everything right NOW.

Then we begin shopping and realize just how much everything costs.

I can't tell you the number of times that people come to me saying they want all new living room furniture, paint (done by a professional painter) and new flooring. And their budget... *is \$3,000.*

Because it happens so often, I now give all of our clients a handy Budget Guide that outlines what common furniture items cost. Each item is broken down into low quality, good quality, and designer quality so that we can have a budget discussion and manage expectations. (You can get a copy of the Budget Guide [here](#)).

So, if we're looking at the guide you'll see that a good quality sofa will cost about \$2,000. A designer quality sofa will be \$6,000+. And a low quality sofa is around \$800-\$1500.

Of course, this is just a guideline. But it's a great knowledge to take shopping with you.

I'm certainly not saying that you have to budget every piece in your room from the “good quality” or “designer quality” columns. We often mix from low, mid and high when completing renovation and decorating projects for clients.

However, there are certain things that are better to save for rather than compromising on quality.

Sofas. You likely sit on your sofa every day. Plus, it's a large piece that's tough to ignore.

Don't be fooled by furniture stores stating that things are high quality just because they're made in North America. In order to say that, the piece just needs to be assembled here. Often the frame, foam and parts come from overseas and are mass produced as quickly and cheaply as possible.

If your sofa regularly retails for less than \$1,800, it simply *cannot* be good that great of quality. The math doesn't add up -- even for huge companies at scale.

Typical furniture store markups are about 2.5 times what they paid for the item.

(And yes. This is the same for online stores claiming to have cut out the middle man. Their logistical costs are just as high as the brick and mortar stores! It's all a gimmick!)

That means that if you purchase a sofa for \$1,000, the furniture store bought it for \$400.

(Before you go hating on your local furniture store, they didn't *profit* \$600. Their shipping costs alone would be over \$100. Then they'd have to pay a receiver. Plus their overhead. Commission to the sales reps. Etc. etc etc...)

The wholesaler also has to make a profit. So they have to make that \$1,000 sofa for \$200 or less in order to have a viable business model.

Considering decent quality upholstery fabric wholesales at around \$10/yard (*for a large company at scale*) and the average sofa requires about 17 yards of fabric... that leaves just \$30 for the hardwood frame, labour, foam, templating, etc.

Doesn't add up, does it?

Before the 1990's inexpensive sofas just didn't exist. We saw a massive shift in the industry during the Trading Spaces days in the early 2000's with pressures applied to manufacturers to get sales prices to the "perfect" \$899 pricepoint.

Foams started being sourced overseas (*we won't get into offgassing here... but needless to say it's not great for our health*).

Expensive fabric costs were cut by sewing back cushions to the sofa frame to cut many yards of fabric. This leaves a very sensitive seam that rips more often than it stays closed.

Softer woods were used in frames to cut costs.

And much of the process was shipped overseas.

Listen, I'm *not* saying you have to spend \$6,000 on a sofa. I have a \$1,900 sofa at home. It's 6+ years old and still in perfect condition despite many spills, parties, and four pets.

But I firmly believe that a sofa should last *decades*. Not for 3-5 years as most furniture store pieces do.

We purchased a sectional from a "high end Canadian furniture brand" at the same time as our other sofa. It was around \$1,500. Today it's ripped in the back, the foam is caved in, and there's simply no saving it. So we'll have to spend another \$1,500 to replace it.

So that means in 6 years I spent \$3,000 when I could have spent the additional \$400 when we originally bought it and not had to do it all again.

Always buy the best sofa you can afford. It doesn't have to be the best of

the best, but if it's not a decent quality, wait and save up just a bit longer. Your wallet will thank you in the long run.

Mattresses. You spend more time on your mattress than any other piece of furniture in your home. Plus, the older we get the more a quality mattress matters.

Now, this is where price doesn't necessarily equal quality because mattress markups are about **900%**. Yes, that's about the same as movie popcorn and nearly *3X's the markup on funeral caskets.*

You can buy a really solid quality mattress for around \$1,000 if you go to a reputable mattress outlet or buy online.

I personally love Endy.com mattresses. This isn't sponsored, we've just heard rave reviews from our clients who have purchased and love them.

You can spend \$4,000 on a great mattress from a mattress retailer, but you may love this \$1,000 mattress just as much.

Luckily, most mattress brands offer a 60-120 day in-home sleep test. If you hate it, send it back!

Rugs. A high quality rug will make any room feel more luxurious. Even when placed on cheap laminate floors!

There are four common rug constructions:

Flat weave rugs are generally very inexpensive as the pattern is printed on, rather than woven in. These are great in muddy areas like entryways.

Machine Woven rugs are less expensive because they're done on a machine. Because of the restrictions of the process, pile height is generally restricted to about 0.5". Machine woven rugs use a latex backing to hold them together. There are the rugs that you see inside of

most retailers because of their more affordable price points. However, the most concerning thing about machine woven rugs is the toxic offgassing effects of VOC's that can last up to 5 years in your home! This is the same gas that makes paint smell so harshly. (You can read more about the harmful effects of offgassing [here](#)).

Hand tufted rugs are made using a tufting gun. Every loop of pile is done by hand and then cut. If you like a thick pile, then you'll love a hand tufted rug!

Hand woven rugs are the most expensive and longest wearing rug type. Every knot is tied by hand. You can save money on a hand woven rug by looking for ones with a thicker yarn that requires fewer knots!

I'll get into more on rugs in a later chapter, but generally when you're buying a rug here are the biggest things to avoid:

- Synthetic materials of *any* kind -- even if recycled.
- Glue-like backings (prevalent in machine made rugs)
- Viscose. It looks gorgeous, and is often used to give a less expensive silk look, however if you get it wet, your rug *will* fall apart. (Make sure to look for this if buying rugs from HomeSense and other big box stores as many of their rugs contain this material)

Window Treatments. Cheap window treatments can take an expensive room and make it look like a dormitory.

No, you don't need crazy swagged treatments like we had in the 80's and 90's.

But custom window treatments always look more polished.

If you showed me the photos on your Pinterest board, it's likely that 80% or more of them have used custom window treatments of some kind.

Window treatments last for decades so they're worth getting right the first

time.

Bed linens. Again, you spend $\frac{1}{3}$ of your life here. Good quality sheets will run about \$250 for a King Size. And it's worth every penny.

It's not just thread count that matters. Many manufacturers pump up their thread counts by using low quality yarns in order to trick consumers into thinking they're getting a deal.

Not everything in your home needs to be a splurge. **Here are some places you can save:**

- Rarely used pieces like accent chairs and side tables
- Light fixtures (as long as you get the scale right!)
- Toss pillow covers (but use better quality inserts that are down or down alternative)
- Decor items (again, scale matters but pricepoint doesn't)
- Closet and cabinet fittings
- Tile. Porcelain is just as pretty and long lasting as ceramic (*though a tile expert may disagree, you won't notice the difference I promise!*)

Kitchen + Bath Layouts

Getting your kitchen or bath layout wrong doesn't only impact the aesthetic and resale value of your home. It also causes frustration during everyday life.

Things like bumping into your partner while working in the kitchen or a lack of space to do your makeup can be rather frustrating... no matter how beautiful your kitchen or bath is.

I was at a client's the other day who went to their local cabinetry shop to help with their kitchen layout.

As of right now, their kitchen is straight out of the 1970's with dark cabinets and door pulls in the middle of the doors.

Dishwashers weren't prevalent back then, so when it was later installed, they plopped it on the back wall wedged between the stove and refrigerator.

An awkward peninsula cut the space in half and made it feel a lot darker than it should with the large window, passthrough and sliding glass door.

The cabinet vendor gave them an okay layout. Putting the stove on one wall and the sink on another. But the fridge, dishwasher and sink were still all in a row!

Upon inspecting the layout, I saw issues right away. The first was a lack of a working triangle. Everything was stacked on one wall with the stove being at an awkward angle from there.

If you were working in that kitchen, the person unloading dishes would be blocked by the fridge doors if someone else was in there cooking. And the chef would be shuffling all over the place spinning like crazy!

I'm certainly not saying that there aren't great people working at cabinetry vendors. Some of their designers are extremely talented. But keep in mind that their main job is to sell cabinets.

Our job is to make sure the room functions well for you. We just look at things a bit differently than the vendors do!

For this client we created an efficient working triangle *and* managed to place a small island completely opening up the space. Working with standard cabinet dimensions, we also gave suggestions to make the cabinets look a lot more custom and high end, even given their low budget.

Honestly, a kitchen layout concept is not something I recommend DIY'ing because it's so crucial (*and very expensive to fix once installed if something if off*). You can get a kitchen layout done by an interiors pro for under \$1,000 including selection of finishes. That's including trade quotes for the work and a plan to pull it all together!

However, if you are having a go at it yourself, here are my best tips for getting it right:

Place the stove first on an outside wall. If the stove is on an outside wall you'll be able to vent it more easily. We love to make the range a feature in most kitchens because it's the *prettiest* of the appliances and you can really make a statement with your range hood.

Next place the refrigerator and the sink in a triangle pattern within working distance of the range. You'll also want to think about other appliances like wall ovens at this point if you plan on adding those. You don't want wall ovens to be too far from a surface to put down your pans when you remove hot food!

The dishwasher should be next to the sink. Your garbage and knives should be too. And, storing your dishes within reaching distance of the

dishwasher creates the strongest workflow.

Go vertical with your storage placing the things you don't use as often on higher shelves. Buy the tallest cabinetry that you can! If you have 8' ceilings, use 36" uppers. If you have 9'+ ceilings, opt for 42" instead.

Consider a place for large appliances. If you drink a smoothie every day, you may want an appliance center built in so that your blender can remain plugged in without cluttering up your countertops.

Stand mixers are pretty enough to be out on display, however consider where it's going to sit when planning your layout because they take up an awful lot of counter space. I like to put them in corners where the countertops are deeper so you don't lose any working space.

Use drawers around your stove wherever possible. Store pots and lids in the lower, bigger drawers. Store cooking utensils and spices in top drawers for an easy grab-and-go solution.

Make sure all walkways are large enough. You'll need 36" through most walkways and 42-48" in cooking zones. I wouldn't go too much larger than this for efficiency and I *definitely* wouldn't go any smaller either.

Don't forget about your electrical and lighting plan. Allow for sufficient outlets around the countertop and even inside large cupboards where you might store small appliances. Be sure to include ample layered lighting also.

Hardware Horrors

Hardware is the jewelry of your kitchen. Getting it right can really elevate the space. Getting it wrong, can make your kitchen look cheap or cluttered.

Hardware can really add up! In my kitchen I counted 42 knobs or pulls. So, even if you're purchasing bargain hardware, the expense can really add up!

Not to mention, hardware choices can be difficult to change once you've drilled into cabinets. If you change your mind and want a pull where a knob was, you'll be left filling holes and redoing the finish on the cabinets... which is sometimes impossible to match.

There are 3 places I see homeowners get hardware wrong:

Wrong finish. You don't have to match your hardware to your faucet or light fixtures, but you also don't want the hardware to be the only place you use that metal.

The key to mixing metals is to repeat each one multiple times throughout the space.

If you have silver on your faucet, appliances, and lighting then do brass for your hardware, that brass is going to look out of place.

If instead you found some mixed metal lighting that incorporated the brass, and added a few decor pieces in the same brass tones when styling, everything will feel more cohesive.

Buying all the same hardware. Using the same knob on every cabinet will look underwhelming and make your kitchen feel less expensive.

On the other hand, using the same large pull on every drawer and cabinet can make even the largest kitchen feel cluttered.

Mix up knobs and pulls throughout the kitchen for the perfect mix.

You don't have to stick to knobs on the doors and pulls on the drawers, either. Turn pulls sideways on some of your larger doors to really make your kitchen stand out.

Wrong scale. If you have 36" drawers, a tiny knob or pull is going to look really bad. You need to consider the size of cabinet you're installing the hardware onto when picking your pulls.

Window Treatments

Window coverings aren't nearly as complicated as they were in decades past. We no longer deal with swags and other complicated finishes.

That said, I still see as many mistakes in window treatments as we did 10 years ago when I began in the field!

Window treatments are like the eyebrows of the room. If you're anything like me, you know just how much of a difference eyebrows can make, and it's no different when it comes to window treatments.

Window coverings can be put into two categories: hard treatments and soft treatments.

Your hard treatments are your blinds. Though keep in mind that they may be made of soft materials like a silk shade or a roman (*just to confuse everyone*).

Soft treatments are your fabric coverings like curtains and valances.

In most homes we use both hard and soft treatments. However, in very modern homes where we're going for a more stark look, we'll typically skip the soft treatments and stick to a sleek blind only.

Here are the biggest mistakes homeowners come to regret when it comes to hard window treatments:

Doing the same treatment in every room. This isn't always a mistake, however your hard treatment plays a strong part in the colour scheme of each room.

Many homeowners will just pick one shade in white or cream because the process of picking blinds is so overwhelming and they'll stick that same blind in every single room.

But every room serves a different purpose. You'll want varying levels of light filtering. Different levels of privacy. And maybe even different colours depending on your decorating scheme.

I especially see this mistake made in new builds because homeowners need to order their window coverings well before the build is finished. More often than not they don't have a decorating plan in place at that point, so they just stick white roller shades in every room in the house.

Blinds are expensive -- *especially when you're doing custom*. They're well worth the investment, however it can be challenging to choose the perfect ones when you don't have a plan.

The easiest solution is to leave your window covering choice until *after* you have your decor plan for each room. The colours, fabrics, and textiles really dictate what you do with your window coverings.

Also, when you bring in a window coverings professional, prepare for that meeting by understanding what light control and privacy levels you require in each space.

Access. Many of us have smaller rooms where at least one piece of furniture sits in front of a window.

When installing new hard treatments, you'll need to consider how you'll open and close them.

For example, say you have a sectional with a couple of windows behind it. Are you going to climb over your sectional to pull the cord on your blinds every time you need to open them?

If you have a soft close where you push the blind up, can you reach as high as it needs to go?

Automated blinds, while pricey, are very popular because they eliminate

these issues.

Mounting position. In my back den we have gorgeous custom blinds that were installed by a previous homeowner. However, they look bulky and weird because they were mounted outside of the window frame rather than within it.

This means that I have a big roll sitting above each window in a room that is *screaming* for a sleeker look.

This isn't the blind vendor's fault. These particular blinds have two layers so that they can roll down and be totally opaque or partially opaque. So, they're a lot thicker on the roll than a standard roller shade and couldn't be mounted inside the window frame. They were left with no choice based on the homeowner's selection.

But this is why it's important to consider whether you want an inside mount or outside mount *before* choosing your blind style.

An inside mount means that the window treatment will live inside of the window trim.

An outside mount means that it'll sit outside your window casing.

These looks are very different and there's a place for both of them. Your decor style, preferred soft treatment, and the decor style of the room will dictate which direction you'll go.

Now, let's switch over to soft treatments. Here are some of the mistakes homeowners make when choosing soft treatments:

Addressing windows. In general, your soft treatments should address *walls* not windows.

What I mean by that is, if you're doing draperies, they should sit on either

side of the window when closed rather than in front of the glass.

When hanging your rod, extend it 12” past the window on either side (*maybe more for larger windows*) to ensure that your curtains don’t block off precious light when open.

Too short. This is probably the most common mistake that homeowners make and they make it one of two ways:

First, they make the hem of the drapes too short. Your window treatments shouldn’t look like flood pants. They should sit just ¼” off the floor -- *and no more!*

Second, your curtains should be hung about 2” from crown moulding or the ceiling in most cases. There are exceptions to this (mostly when ceiling heights are very tall), however in most homes this is a pretty safe rule to apply.

Too skinny. This usually happens when homeowners use pre-made draperies. Honestly, you *cannot* get a custom look with pre-made panels. The wrinkles never fully come out and the width is never wide enough.

That said, sometimes pre-made panels are all the budget allows for, and that’s okay!

To determine the width of your drapery, measure the width of the window to the outside of the frame on each side. Then apply a multiple between 1.5 - 3.0 depending on how lush you want your draperies to be.

We usually use 1.5 if you’ll never close the drapes.

2.0 if the fabric is more structured.

And 2.5 if the fabric is thinner.

We reserve a multiple of 3 for very formal rooms in traditional homes.

For the sake of example, let’s say you’re addressing a window that’s 60”

wide. If the curtains are purely decorative and won't be closed, you'll need a minimum 90" of draperies (or two standard panels).

If you wanted the drapes to close, you'll need about 150" (or 75" per side).

This means if you're doing pre-made panels, you'd need two on either side for a total of four panels (*because store bought panels are almost always 48" or 54" wide*). Also note that with pre-made panels you'll have an open seam right in the middle of the curtains on either side since one panel isn't enough for most windows.

If you're going custom for your window treatments, our Custom Window Treatment Consultation will mean working with an interiors pro who does this every day. I'll help you get it right and even get you a quote from our workroom or local vendors.

Using The Wrong Rug

Rugs are powerful pieces in pulling a room together... but they're so often misused!

Choosing the wrong rug can make your room appear *much* smaller. It can also make the room feel cluttered.

On the flip side, the right rug can make any room feel a lot more put together and luxe -- no matter what your style.

As a bonus, they also protect your expensive flooring.

Rugs are probably the #1 thing I get asked about during a consultation. They can be quite confusing!

We already talked about buying the wrong rug materials in the Fast Furnishings chapter. Synthetic materials like nylon or polypropylene produced on machines to create more affordable rugs geared towards a higher retail sell through. But these rugs also contain VOC's and can produce dangerous offgassing in your home *for up to 5 years!*

We also talked about avoiding viscose in family spaces. Viscose is a *beautiful* material and is very prevalent in rugs because of it's softness and sheen. However, when viscose gets wet, you can kiss your rug goodbye. So, if you have kids, pets, or like to entertain, avoid viscose at all costs. Unless, that is, you like buying new rugs often!

There are a number of other rug mishaps that I come across on a daily basis:

Rugs that are too small. If you can see the floor between your furniture and your rug, it's too small.

Many people think that they need to leave a band of wood showing

between their sofa and their rug... but doing so makes every room (even large ones) feel smaller and more cluttered.

This is because when you float a rug between furnishings, it creates an outline. Our eyes follow outlines naturally creating visual clutter and making the room feel smaller.

A rug that's too small also can wreak havoc on your floors -- especially if you have hardwood. The space in front of your furnishings takes a lot of abuse and can scratch easily.

In most rooms, ensure your rug is large enough so that the front feet of every piece in the conversation area sits on the rug. Ideally the rug should go about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way under your sofa.

If your room is large, then the rug should be large enough to fit all four legs of your sofa and chairs.

In the bedroom, your rug should extend 12-18" around both sides and the end of your bed.

This means that a 5'X8' rug is likely too small for *any* room in your home (except kids rooms where beds tend to be smaller).

8'X10' or 8'X11' are the most common rug sizes we use in most homes.

Rugs that are too simple or too busy. Pattern gives our eye something to focus on and creates interest in a space. When there is little colour in a room, pattern becomes even more important.

However, mixing patterns can be tricky when you're not used to doing it every day.

Take stock of what you already have in your room. If you have a lot of pattern already, it can be best to stick to a solid or textured rug like a jute,

sisal, or solid wool piece.

If you want to play with pattern, consider the patterns you already have. Do you have a small scale pattern on your pillows and accent chair? If so, go with a larger scale pattern on your rug.

Rugs that are the wrong colour. Too often homeowners choose to go neutral on their rug because that seems like the safest choice. However, we've already determined that neutrals can be *more* difficult to work with than colour because of the existence of undertones that are difficult for untrained eyes to detect.

We use neutral rugs a lot. We also use coloured rugs often as well. But getting the colour right can be difficult, *especially when buying online*.

This is because of the way rugs are photographed and how cameras use light in order to depict colour into prints.

Rugs are typically photographed on the floor.

Light hits horizontal surfaces like floors and ceilings differently.

To see this, just look at a white room where the walls and ceiling are painted the same shade of white. The ceiling will always look more grey than your trim and walls do.

Cameras read light in order to capture images.

So, a rug photographed on the floor will almost always look different in person than it does in a photo. No matter how many professional lights they used to shoot it.

If you're buying a synthetic rug, it's usually far less expensive. Therefore you may feel comfortable taking your chances and buying online.

However, if you've saved to invest in something more natural like a hand-tufted or hand-knotted wool rug, it's not something you want to get

wrong.

Rugs are *very* expensive to ship because of their size. So even if you can return it, after the shipping fees and restocking costs it's not always worth it. Even sites like Wayfair.com are starting to charge return shipping and surprise restocking fees on large items like rugs.

We like to use vendors that we can purchase samples from. We stock over 120 rug samples in our design studio and have over 7,000 rugs available through our vendors that provide samples at a very low cost.

Working on your rug selection with someone who can get you samples can really help ensure the colouring of your rug is right for your room.

What to do next. . .

Right now you're likely feeling one of two ways. Either you're excited to jump into your next decorating or renovation project and feel fully armed with all of the information needed to make it a success...

Or you're feeling overwhelmed not having realized the dozens of considerations that go into each and every element inside your home.

No matter which way you're feeling I urge you to slow down and begin with a plan.

Every beautiful home begins with a plan.

Maybe you're ready to redo your entire home from top to bottom. In that case this part will be easier as you're taking on the entire project all at once.

However, most homeowners will renovate their home in stages, planning one single room at a time with little consideration to the rest.

I urge you to plan your entire home (or at least all adjoining spaces) before starting a single project.

The choices you make in one room flows into the next. So it's important to have a plan for your entire home to avoid retouching completed spaces in the future.

I may be biased, but I *highly* recommend you consider hiring an Interiors Professional to help with your project.

Most homeowners don't realize the range of services available to them.

A paint colour consultation can cost about the same as a good can of paint or two. That's fantastic value compared to repainting (*or hating*) your entire room.

And, if you want everything done for you, we can help with that also.

At my company, **Comfortable Dwelling**, we have created a number of packages to meet you where you are. Whether you're doing a small budget redecorating project or a \$250,000 renovation, we can offer the expertise you need to take your space to the next level.

Every project begins with a free Discovery Call to ensure we're a good fit for you and your project.

We'll review a brief questionnaire to learn more about your style and what's not working in your home. Then, if we feel we're the perfect match to take on your project, we will walk you through our consultation options.

Step 2 is a working Consultation and it always happens after the Discovery Call.

We offer one-off consultations for paint colours, layouts, and window treatments.

Or, for larger projects, we will discuss main priorities and ideas to help you feel confident that we're the right team for the job.

Either way, we're working on your home during this consultation. It's something that's *deeply personal* and I don't take that lightly! So the Consultation is the perfect way to dip our toe and ensure the partnership is a good pairing before moving any further.

Step 3 is to pick your package. If you decide after the Consultation that me and my team are the right fit for you and your home, we will review

our package options and help you select the one that's best suited to your project and preferred level of involvement.

We have packages ranging from DIY where we'll help you form the plan and then you shop for yourself, all the way up to luxury full service where all you need to do is write the cheques and approve the selections.

And, in case you're wondering, we serve clients throughout Canada in-person and worldwide virtually.

Get started by booking your free Discovery Call at comfortabledwelling.com/services.

I sincerely hope that what I've given you in this book changes your life in some way.

Whether we work on your project or not, I like to think that you completing this read means that I've played a small part in making your home special. That truly warms my heart.

Cheers to making your home stylish, comfortable, and a reflection of who *you* are. You've worked hard for your home. It's time to make it shine.

About the Author

Heather Prestanski is an Interiors Professional who feels it is her purpose in life to help people create spaces that showcase their personality and tells the world who they are. She seeks to install timeless design that complements the style and period of your home or commercial project while letting everyone know exactly who resides there.

Heather doesn't just consider herself a Decorator. She acts as an interiors consultant having studied design, decorating, textiles, and behavioural psychology. She teams up with her husband Kyle, an environmental scientist, to create healthy environments that welcome families.

Heather created the 10 Step Impressive Interiors process to avoid costly mistakes, manage trade partners, and ensure that her and her **Comfortable Dwelling** team don't miss any other details that will bring your space from *tired* to *timeless*.

She offers a full range of decorating services touching living areas, bedrooms, kitchens, baths, basement renovations, new builds, office spaces, hotels, outdoor living spaces, and more.

To find out whether Heather and her team are the right fit for your project, book your free Discovery Call at comfortabledwelling.com/services.