

LEARNING MADE EASY



3rd Edition

# Home Decorating

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand



Empower yourself to  
decorate with confidence

Craft your space for comfort,  
function, and style

Master the step-by-step  
design process like a pro

**Katharine Kaye McMillan**

Decorating Lifestyle Coach

**Patricia Hart McMillan**

Interior Design Consultant





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3rd Edition

by **Katharine Kaye McMillan and  
Patricia Hart McMillan**

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand

## Home Decorating For Dummies® , 3rd Edition

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# Introduction

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**H**ome decorating has changed a lot since *Home Decorating For Dummies* first debuted in the mid-90s. Updates abounded in the second edition in the early-2000s, with new information on digital solutions, Internet-based shopping, and computer-based help. Now in the roaring '20s, a new wave of social media influencers show how easy it looks to ramp up a room's style. Many new forms of decorating assistance can be found online, sometimes fee-based or as a complement to online shopping.

What you don't see online, on social media, or anywhere else is all the basic know-how that goes into decorating — all in one place. That's where *Home Decorating For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, comes into play: It's a reference to help you design the way you want to live today. With a modern emphasis on authentically living your best life, this new edition of *Home Decorating For Dummies* promises to get you up to speed on decorating with style while staying on budget, on time, and stress-free.

## About This Book

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This book demystifies decorating — it's like having a pro guiding you step-by-step. Inside these pages, you find the basics on decorating. From space planning to buying furniture to developing your personal style, this book has tons of information. It helps you figure out what you can spend, how to spend it, and how to have the latest and greatest in styles, trends, and technology.

You have one of the best decorating instructors available at your fingertips. Consider *Home Decorating For Dummies* your guide to good decorating decision-making. You find tips, tried-and-true techniques, and helpful hints that will have you decorating like a pro. You won't be breaking the piggy bank to get a million-dollar look, either.

The third edition has some new information about appliances, fixtures, lighting, and designing for the tech-driven lives we lead nowadays. You're more likely to be working or studying from home than ever before. Many people have chosen to telework or launch businesses out of their spare bedrooms or unused dining

rooms. Making these homey spaces work as home offices can be challenging, but with this book you'll find solutions.

Most people need their homes to do more for them as they pursue their passions. Whether its crafting, Bitcoin mining, or running a web-based business, you've got your home working hard for you. You'll find new information, new photographs, and all-new color photos showing the latest decorating trends. You'll also find must-read decorating information and tons of facts you need to get the best results.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

## Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, we made a few assumptions about you, the reader:

- » **You may be decorating a home for the first time, or you may have lots of experience.** Whether this is your first time out of the gate or you're a seasoned hand, this book has something for you. But you don't need any experience with decorating to get something out of this book.
- » **You may be moving into a new home or wanting to give your current home an update.** Whether you're starting from scratch in a new space or you're just looking to update the home you've lived in for years, you'll find the information you need in these pages.
- » **You're looking for information to make home decorating easier.** We hope you enjoy home decorating as much as we do, but we also assume you have other things you'd like to do with your time, too. This book will help you make the decorating decisions you need to make quickly and easily, so you can get back to living your life, content in the knowledge that your home looks its best!

## Icons Used in This Book

As you work your way around this book, you may notice little pictures, called *icons*, in the margins. Icons alert you to important information.



TIP

The Tip icon flags decorating tips from decorators — tips you don't want to miss. With this icon, you find ideas that help you decorate with confidence.



REMEMBER

When you see the Remember icon, sit up and take note — you need to remember this important information.



WARNING

The Warning icon alerts you to any dangers or pitfalls that may blow your decorating scheme or budget.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

The Technical Stuff icon alerts you to technical information, such as the difference between foot-candles and lumens in lighting. You may not need to know these facts, so you can skip these sections if you like.

## Beyond This Book

In addition to the book you have in your hands, you can access some helpful extra content online. Check out the free Cheat Sheet for by going to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and entering **Home Decorating For Dummies** in the Search box. You'll find a list of tools every home decorator needs, furniture lingo, formulas for home decorating, and more.

## Where to Go from Here

What do you do after you've read *Home Decorating For Dummies*?

Get decorating, of course! You can find endless decorating inspiration in more places (virtual and real world) now than ever before. Many people have even started decorating professionally after reading *Home Decorating For Dummies*. (Some professionals with hit decorating shows have bought copies for their staff to read, too.)

Real people sharing their real decorating is a joy to behold. One of the wonderful advents of our age is that anyone can create content. If you're like us, you love watching reels of people redecorating their spaces. Share your content with the hashtag #HDFD on social media. You'll inspire and be inspired by other readers!

Good luck decorating!



# 1 Getting Started with Home Decorating

## **IN THIS PART . . .**

Find out what it takes to decorate your own home like a pro.

Set a realistic budget for your home decorating project.

Measure your space and draw a floor plan.

Understand design principles and decorating lingo.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Making a plan for your home decorating project
- » Considering color, pattern, and texture
- » Looking at design styles and finding the style that fits your needs
- » Focusing on walls, flooring, ceilings, windows, and lighting
- » Taking your kitchen, bath, home office, or media room to the next level
- » Making your bedroom, living room, dining room, and other spaces shine
- » Putting on the finishing touches of art and accessories

# Chapter **1**

# Bringing Your Vision to Life

**Y**ou want to be living your best life. And part of living your best life is having a beautifully decorated house — a house that helps you live the way you want to live. No matter how much space you have to decorate, you've picked up this book because you see yourself living a beautiful life in a (potentially) beautiful home.

This chapter introduces you to the home decorating process, walking you through what's involved from beginning to end. After reading this chapter, you'll have the confidence to start your home decorating process.

# Planning like a Pro

Professional decorators live by the adage “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” Decorators are nothing if not planners. So, if you want to decorate your home — whether you’re redoing every room in a sprawling house or one room in a small apartment — you need to start with a plan. A happy home happens by design.

To realize your vision, you need a plan and a budget. A plan is a formal document with tasks, timelines, and estimated costs. Budgeting helps you break down a project into smaller steps and manage the money you have to spend. Tracking your time and money goes hand in hand with mapping out a plan. A good plan is clear, easy to understand, comprehensive, and flexible. It should be economical (so you won’t run out of money or run up debt), establish your vision standards, be balanced, and be practical. For more on budgeting, turn to Chapter 2.

Space: the final frontier! Well, at least when it comes to decorating, that is. Right now, your space is uncharted. You need to chart your space for size, doors, windows, and key details. Sketch out or digitally draw your space, including the locations of electrical outlets, cables, light switches, and Internet routers.



TIP

Using templates or online programs or apps can help you figure out the best placement of furniture and facilitate movement through the space. Turn to Chapter 3 for more on mapping out your space.

Every design problem (like “How should I decorate my bedroom to get high-quality sleep?”) has a solution. Maybe you have too many solutions in mind. If so, how will you pick out the best one? The point of thinking like a designer is to be focused on solutions. You need to understand your behaviors, your needs, and your vision. To start thinking like a designer, turn to Chapter 4.

# Taking Your Design to the Next Dimension

Whether it’s a piece of furniture or a floor or a knick-knack, every object has three visual surface dimensions: color, pattern, and texture.

Color influences mood, cognition, and behavior. In short, it shapes how you experience a space or an object. You can work with color and color palettes to achieve an effect or solve a visual problem (like an oddly shaped space). Turn to Chapter 5 for the basics of color theory and color schemes.

Pattern adds personality and style. Some styles, like boho, call for heavy layering of strong patterns. How do you layer three, four, or more patterns to get the look



you want? Never fear! It all comes down to dealing with the dimensions and understanding basic decorating rules. Chapter 6 walks you through how to play with patterns to achieve your desired result.

Texture (and playing textures off one another) is a key part of any style. Shaggy wooly animal hides contrasting with slick glass and chrome defines a '70s look, for example. Chapter 7 shows you how to use sensory aspects of texture to craft your room's story and style.

## Considering the Style of Your Designs

Whether you're a purist or an innovator, finding out about the long sweep of style history will give you the basics for determining your decor direction.

Historical styles and periods continue strong in today's decorating. Because these looks are so much a part of the way we live today, we consider them timeless and ever evolving in scale and proportion. Chapter 8 outlines some of history's "top hits" for living in style.

Contemporary style encompasses looks from Modern and Mid-Century Modern to present day. Contemporary styles may draw on many influences over time and across the globe. Chapter 9 hits the highlights of the past few decades of interior design.

Many designers have a signature look. You can be like your favorite designers and decorators when you craft your own look. Chapter 10 takes you through the profiles of some of today's leading trendsetters and guides you on how to discover your own personal style.

Sizing up your options for major furniture types has never been easier. Chapter 11 helps you shop for quality and value while staying in your budget.

## Getting Background Information

With all the choices out there, you need a guide to help you decide on major decorating choices for backgrounds — walls, floors, ceilings, windows, and lighting.

Walls bound your space. They also provide tons of opportunities for unleashing style and concealing things like wiring and insulation (never pretty to look at).

How can you use paint, wallcoverings, and more to create effects? Discover the options for customizing your look using various materials and options in Chapter 12.

How do you choose the best flooring? Avoid walking on pins and needles when picking flooring. Chapter 13 helps you consider your basic needs for comfort, style, and durability, and provides lots of information on technical aspects of floors.

You may not have given much thought to your ceiling, there are stylish options for making a ceiling look interesting while helping it do its job better (which is to conceal wiring, air conditioning, and structural components). Chapter 14 is a must-read for dealing with the ceiling.

Controlling light, corralling heat loss and gain, and ensuring privacy are key when it comes to dressing up your windows. Chapter 15 looks at the top options for achieving your decorating goals.

Lighting makes or breaks the mood and functioning of a room. What's the right kind of light source? How do you deal with lighting problems like unbalanced sunlight and dark areas? How can you spotlight your favorite objects? Chapter 16 illuminates your options.

## Designing Your Kitchen, Bathroom, Home Office, and Media Room

You need decorating know-how to create the four tough rooms: the kitchen, the bathroom, the home office, and the media room. You can add lots of extras to these rooms to make them even more functional and more stylish.

Even if you order takeout five nights a week, your kitchen is the most lived-in room in your house. You use it for everything from cooking to entertaining, which means it has to meet a variety of needs for a variety of users. The hearth of the home truly has very special decorating needs. Turn to Chapter 17 for all things kitchen related.

Just because a room is functional doesn't mean it should be bare-bones basic. The bath — no matter what its size — has morphed into a spa. Whether your bathroom is small or large, turn it into an oasis of comfort with the tips in Chapter 18.

More and more people are working out of our homes these days. Your home office (or library or study) needs professional-level function and style. You need

solutions that work for you when you go to work! Turn to Chapter 19 for practice advice you can put to work.

Screening your favorite shows can be more of an experience than ever before. More and more homes are being built with dedicated media rooms with controlled light, sophisticated sound systems, and special layouts. Chapter 20 takes you through some of the key things to know when decorating for viewing.

## Making Your Sleeping, Living, Dining, and Other Spaces Work for You

You spend one-third of your life sleeping. Select your bedroom's look while keeping in mind function, fun, and style. You'll make different design choices if you're decorating bedrooms for children and guests. Chapter 21 has all the information you need to decorate any bedroom.

Your living room is a public room that's also very personal. You want your living room to be a comfortable, relaxing room with maximum style. Chapter 22 shows you how to make your living room picture-perfect yet livable.

Entertaining at home is bigger than ever. Having people over for dining, screening your favorite shows, or playing games is the "in" thing. Some people entertain in the kitchen or the living room. No matter what rooms you entertain your friends in, you want a functional and fun look. Chapter 23 covers dining rooms, whether you have a dedicated formal dining room or you're dining in front of the TV.

Do you have plenty of space? Get more use out of it! Decorate bonus spaces — such as entryways, attics, basements, porches, hallways, balconies, and lofts — in an attractive and functional manner that gives your home a new look. Chapter 24 has the details.

## Adding Art and Accessories

Art delights the mind and senses. Chapter 25 shows you how to arrange art on walls, shelves, or wherever you want to display what you love.

Accessories can make or break a room. Chapter 26 offers dozens of ways to add flair with accessories.

## TEN TIPS TO HELP YOU DECORATE LIKE A PRO

What's the difference between a beginner and a pro? Being prepared with resources, ideas, and lots of gumption. This list of tips will help you pull off your dreams for a beautiful home:

- **Put together a decorator's bag of tricks.** Literally get yourself a tool carryall loaded with a tape measure, hammer, picture-hanging nails, tape, and other fix-it stuff. This grab-and-go bag of tricks will make decorating less stressful.
- **Be prepared with knowledge.** Research furniture, products, and other purchases before you buy. Read instructions on products before using them.
- **Never consider your place done!** Remain open to change.
- **Get professional decorating help as needed.** Expert help is available — sometimes for free with a purchase or for a nominal fee. Lots of decorating services online can help even the best do-it-yourselfer with expert advice.
- **Keep a list of resources.** Tag painters, tilers, electricians, and handy people in your phone contacts for times when you need a pro's help.
- **Pick a peck of paints to keep on hand.** Touch-up paints for walls, along with spackle to repair, will keep walls looking fresh.
- **Plan the work, work the plan.** Establish stages to keep your decorating projects on time and on budget.
- **Pre-shop for picky people.** Cranky family members with limited attention spans can make shopping a challenge. You may want to pre-shop to pair choices down to two or three options to show them — that way, they won't be overwhelmed.
- **Shop positively.** Do whatever it takes to make shopping a pleasure, whether that means shopping solo or bringing along a supportive friend or partner.
- **Shop virtually.** Busy people can shop online so easily from their devices. Many brick-and-mortar stores have online presences, too. What's great is that no immediate decisions must be made. You have plenty of time to think about what's in the shopping cart before checking out.

- » Setting your priorities
- » Counting and cutting costs
- » Asking the pros for help

## Chapter 2

# Budgeting Your Projects

**F**irst comes the dream, and then reality: the budget. Budgeting involves deciding how much money you can spend and when, where, why, and how you'll spend all your resources (not just money, but also time and talents). A budget can help you make the most (and best) use of all your resources.

In this chapter, we help you set a budget, consider your priorities, get the most for your money, and find free professional help. To plan your work and work your plan, start with your budget!

## Coming to Grips with Your Budget

Be honest: How much money can you afford to spend?

The average cost to furnish an entire home hovers around \$16,000 nationally, but you can count on spending more (between \$10,000 to \$25,000) for rooms with electronics, appliances, and big-ticket items.



REMEMBER

If you're hyperventilating, remember this: You don't have to furnish your entire home all at once. And after you've decorated your first home, you can budget less money when decorating your next home, because you'll already have furniture and accessories to work with. You can manage your first decorating budget by prioritizing, spending strategically, and doing some clever shopping.

# Simplifying the budgeting process

Budgeting is a two-step process:

## 1. Figure out how much money you have available.

No matter what experts say is the bare minimum, only *you* can determine what you have to spend. Determine your *total* decorating budget. Be firm, and don't exceed that amount.

## 2. Decide what you'll spend that money on.

Setting priorities will keep you on track. Do you have a baby on the way? Perhaps setting up a nurse's station is more important than getting new living room furniture. Do you need to set up a home office for your job or to grow your side hustle? Maybe that's more important than redoing your bedroom.

Now you're ready to sit down with paper and pencil (or spreadsheet program and mouse!) and figure out your budget.



REMEMBER

This book deals with decorating, which includes embellishing surfaces and furnishing spaces — basically, working with the room's current structure. Projects with light remodeling — such as changing out wallpapering or flooring or replacing appliances, countertops, and fixtures — also fall within the decorating realm.

# Considering basic budget questions

When setting your budget (and your vision), ask yourself these four key questions:

» **Do I own or rent my home?** Why spend megabucks improving someone else's property? You can visually improve your rental in ways that make good budgetary sense.

Buy only items that you can take with you when you move. For example, instead of installing wall-to-wall carpeting, buy area rugs; instead of built-in cabinets, buy an armoire. Don't paint walls without checking your lease — painting may not be allowed or you may have to repaint them white before you move out.

» **What is my house worth?** Expect to recover about 80 percent of the cost of new fixtures and appliances, kitchen cabinets, thermal windows, or flooring. Upgrades keep a house in style and good condition and help at resale in a buyer's market.



WARNING