

# living rooms

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**relaxing talking listening thinking**

The space where a family relax together, or entertain friends, is sometimes considered the hub of the home.

Many homes today have more than one living area - one as a relaxed centre for family interaction and another for entertainment, such as hosting visitors, watching television/movies or listening to music.

Relaxation is the key to a successful living area, and there are many ways to achieve a stylish space that can be used comfortably on a day-to-day basis.

Seating should be comfortable to support a diverse range of gatherings and activities, and the atmosphere convivial so that people can unwind here. Nobody will want to sit long on an uncomfortable sofa or in bright, intrusive lighting conditions.

If you entertain a lot, you will need coffee and side tables for refreshments and maybe stacking chairs that can be added into the space as needed.



**reading lounging looking resting**

Easy access to doors, light switches, windows, telephone, stereo, television etc. is essential so the furniture layout should allow good flow and circulation through the space. Central grouping of sofas, chairs and low tables to encourage conversation and interaction is better than scattering pieces around the edge of the room. A living room needs to be flexible and respond to changing requirements and activities.

The time of the day the space is used, how often it is used and for how long it is used determines many other aspects of the styling and design. Is it on view, subject to a lot of wear and tear, easy to maintain? Or is it only used when entertaining guests, isolated from dining/kitchen spaces and generally only used in evenings?

Emphasise interesting architectural features with colour or orientation, such as a fireplace or bay window. It may be an area of the home where loved objects, art, photographs etc are kept and put on display. Storage for books, games, DVDs and CDs is necessary to keep it clutter-free.



### location orientation access flexibility

Although there are traditional ideas on where the living room should be positioned within a home, there are options to consider whether building or renovating.

In every house there is a place where people instinctively congregate, and this may not be where the designer or homeowner had intended. It might be the place with the best view, or great natural light or it may even be the kitchen! If renovating, the current situation of the living room may be better suited to a bedroom or study, and the living area relocated to a place where there is better outlook or more light/sun.

Formal living rooms used to be positioned at the front of the house so that guests didn't have to walk through functional/personal spaces, however the front of the house is sometimes on a noisy street and not at all suitable for communicating or listening to music.

Many living spaces are positioned with access to the garden/pool/deck, which is most often away from the street, at the rear or side of the building.

The important thing is to be aware of the changing patterns and needs, and to be flexible enough to develop your living room in response to these.



### cosy colours

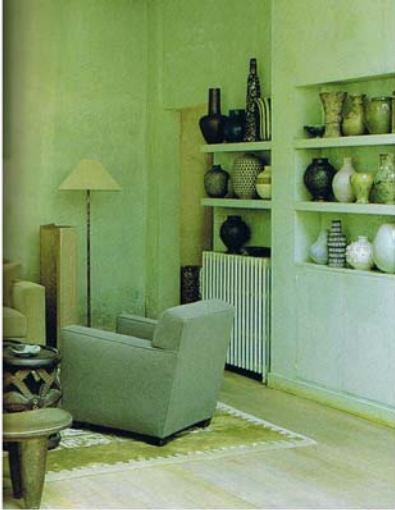
The corner of this living room borrows colours from adjoining spaces to give a feeling of flow between one room and the other. It feels warm and welcoming, with pale ochre walls and rich burgundy furnishings.

**Resene**

the paint the professionals use

It is also quite relaxed with the darker and practical fabric on chairs, and blackboard for kids to write on. The rug under the seating area adds warmth and will keep it a little quieter for busy family living.

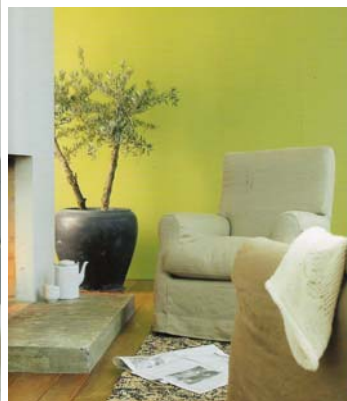
The floor spaces also appear to be fairly clutter free so it allows easy access through the space.



living + playing + working

If you have very young children you may choose to use the living room as a playroom as well, then as they grow older it may double up as a study/computing space. Or adults with a home office may use a corner of it for a workstation or meeting room.

This lounge is restful with calm green and pale duck-egg blue shades teamed with a pale timber floor. Built-in shelving accommodates a collection of vases, which are safely out of the way of little people.



### colours energising uplifting fresh crisp

The brightly coloured furniture and rug in this otherwise neutral room inject energy into the space.

The living room with neutral and natural looking linen furnishings is uplifted by the fresh green painted walls.



**moody blues   entertaining at night   furniture on wheels   on the move**

The loft type lounge on the left is separated from the open space by a free-standing screen behind the sofa - probably a room used by adults and only at night.

The furniture in the room on the right is on castors, which makes moving it around very easy to meet the needs of changing activities within the room.



**enveloping   demarcation   side-tables + lamps**

A demarcation from the passage and thoroughfare has been achieved in this sitting area by painting the walls a contrasting colour.

The strong green complements the raspberry sofa, and wraps around the seating area, almost like a 'protective blanket' - enveloping and cocooning.

Small tables are essential pieces of furniture in any living room - in front of the sofa/armchairs or either side of them for easy access to stow cups/glasses, remote controls, books and magazines. They are often where additional task lighting is required for reading or craftwork so a good place to position table lamps.

Side tables get a lot of wear, so need to be practical and easy to keep clean. Those with timber or laminate tops are quieter and easier to keep free of fingermarks than glass or marble.





## fireplace timber warmth glow

This fireplace is the focal point of this sitting room and is enhanced by the mirror and side lamps on the mantel piece.

The walls are painted a rosy pink to add to the warm glow it creates in the room. The mirror reflects light from the windows on the opposite side of the room and makes the room feel larger.

If the room has a pleasant outlook, say into the garden, the seating arrangements can be changed to enjoy the view in the summer months when the fireplace is not being used. In this case the sofa can even be positioned with its back to the fireplace which will totally change the orientation of the room.

Gas fires are a more popular option today for easy living, but still give a room a cosy and welcoming feel.

Years ago the whole family always gathered around the fire, but now the television is often the pivotal piece of equipment in a living room. This also dictates the positioning of the seating furniture to a large degree.



## cool warm shiny glossy rough rustic

Coral sofas contrast nicely with the peppermint green drapes and cushions in this lounge which overlooks the garden.

A paint finish has been used on the walls of the casual living space to add to the rustic styling of worn wood and cosy cotton rugs and cushions. Again coral and green have been used, along with yellow and pink.



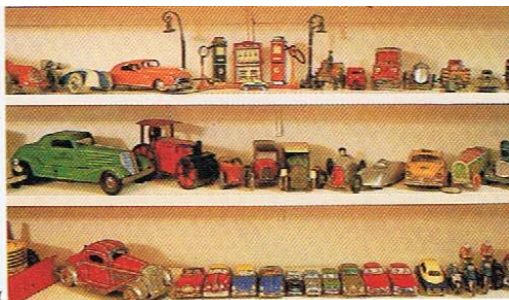
### **cushions + comfort + colour**

Cushions add comfort to a sofa or chair and people can arrange them to support their particular body shape and size.

They are a great way to bring colour into the living room and may add contrasting texture such as silky sheen against a matt fabric on the furniture.

If they are going to be used in family living it is best to consider covers that can be zipped off and easily cleaned or washed.

Macrosuede or similar fabrics on cushion covers are low maintenance, especially if young children eat snacks in the living room or loll on cushions on the floor to watch television or play games.



### **collections + treasures**

Born collectors have no trouble to decorate their homes as their acquisitions fill every corner with interest. Collections need not be expensive - often today's junk is tomorrow's treasure.

The flair with which you display the collection is as important as the items themselves. Lighting helps to add focus, quite mundane objects skilfully grouped together and well illuminated can take centre stage. But collections should never dominate the room and its main purpose.

And remember collections of small objects can be high maintenance when they become dusty. Protect fragile objects, such as textiles, from sun damage, and keep breakable objects up high or in cabinets.

An eclectic display of objects with a common theme in colour or texture unifies their being grouped together. Or a number of small pieces of art grouped together looks much better than dotting them individually around the room.



### eclectic combinations

Styling and theming a room is often achieved with the furniture pieces from a historic or ethnic source. Older or pre-loved objects give a space 'perceived history' and often tell a story. The old cane chair or floral rug could be from Grandma's sunroom or porch, while the chest and cabinet may have been collected while travelling in Asia. It is these collectibles that tell us about the lifestyle of the homeowner. These pieces can easily be integrated with modern furniture in homes and apartments.



### natural + neutral linen + leather texture + gloss

Many people prefer to have their living rooms furnished in very neutral colours which are often serviceable as well.

Beige on beige... but if this is your selection ensure that there is some relief with contrasting textures such as linen, macrosuede, leather, matt and shiny textiles, rough and smooth surfaces, mixture of patterns and prints.





### **family living loose covers washable surfaces**

Young children tend to want to be near their parents, so if you have children you will need to make your living room practical without turning it into a nursery. Washable loose covers on furniture and cushions, cleanable wall surfaces, such as paint or wallpaper, big baskets or boxes for storing toys away, sturdy bookcases and low cupboards for games and art materials are a good starting point. And for safety, add non-slip flooring, secure lighting, out of reach power outlets and media equipment. And avoid heavy, sharp pieces of furniture, such as glass top coffee tables. High shelves can display special or delicate possessions in safety.

Comfortable and portable seating is sensible. Ottomans and lightweight armchairs are great to move around as needed. A sofa or day bed works well against a wall or in a sunny corner of the room. Built-in furniture or a modular corner sofa may work quiet successfully in a larger family living room, and double up as spare sleeping accommodation.



### **storage + serving**

Shelving and cabinets may accommodate stereo systems, artworks, books, ornamental accessories, games, crafts, office equipment and computers in multi-functional living spaces.

A trolley can be very functional for wheeling drinks and platters of food to the room from the kitchen. The centre table above is made from an old wooden door which has been mounted on castors. This makes it very easy to move around on the parquet floor.



## conversation areas + furniture placement

The distribution of seating defines the areas for conversation in a living room. The most common compositions are the 'U' shape or 'L' shape.

A parallel distribution where two couches face each other is normally used when they occupy a central space away from the walls. This can feel confrontational, but placing a coffee table in between reduces this feeling.

Two sofas placed at right-angles ('L' shape) work well and keep the room open. Two chairs side by side can be used instead of a second sofa. This seating arrangement can be 'anchored' by a floor rug under a centre table.

Large open spaces can be broken down into smaller areas with the use of screens or free-standing shelves/cabinets.

If a sofa is positioned away from a wall, the back of it can be made to look more interesting by placing a narrow sofa table behind it. The sofa table could display decorative objects or a pile of books.

The scale of sofa, chairs and tables is determined by the size of the room. A 2.5 seater is usually more useful than a small 2-seater sofa. In a larger room a 3 or 4 seater sofa may convert to a comfortable bed for overnight guests.



These sofas are arranged in an 'L' shape with two timber tables in centre, which are anchored by the floor rug. There is plenty of space around the furniture for people to walk. The centre tables can be moved to become side tables for the sofas if required.

## light in living rooms

The level of lighting should achieve a relaxing setting and the intensity should be adjustable for the way the room is going to be used. Several lamps in the living area can pick out the specific area being used, such as a reading corner, a conversation nook or more general lighting for sitting to watch television.

Both side lamps and overhead lighting levels can be controlled with dimmers - lowered to provide a relaxing atmosphere or increased for various tasks.

Lamps on side tables placed either side of sofas divert attention down to seating level, especially suitable if there is a very high stud in the room.



Floor lamps that can be moved beside a chair or sofa are ideal for reading or writing type activities. A pendant lamp has been installed over the desk in this sitting room to the right.

It is worth seeking the help of a qualified lighting designer to assist with selection of lighting for your living room as there is such a vast array of lights available to choose from.



### retro revival

This room has a real retro feel because of the application of orange, brown and green furnishings with the black and white rug and the curvaceous coffee table. With the timber floors and harder surfaces it is more suited for entertaining adults rather than general family living.



### treasured collectables

This warm and cosy space is created with natural textiles, rustic accessories, grouped pictures, piles of books and the glow of a slow burning candle.

It looks inviting and interesting, and at the same time feels relaxing and comfortable.

### vibrant ethnic

This living space is bright and colourful and reflects the owner's exuberant personality.

All pieces have been collected on travels and bring back lots of memories of the people and places visited.



## **candles oils fragrance flowers living plants**

Candles grace any room, whether formal and elegant or rustic and casual. Candlelight creates the mood for intimate and convivial conversation.

The fragrance of oils and candles adds to the sensual experience of a room. But remember not to use highly scented candles if refreshments are being served as they tend to overpower the taste and smell of food and drinks .

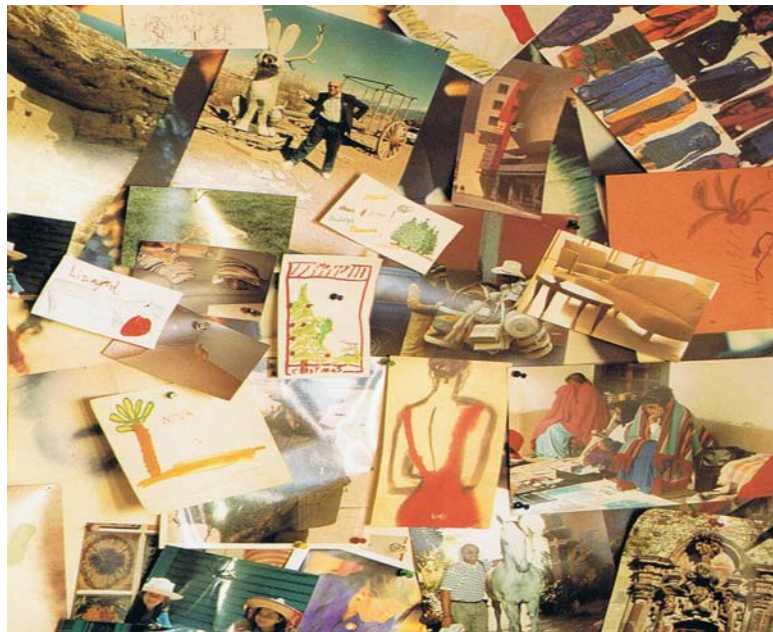
The smell of freshly cut flowers can inject a sense of 'living things' into a room, the same way that pot plants bring the outdoors into the space.

One abundant indoor plant will have more style than several small struggling ones. Ensure plants are kept in good health - select easy-care varieties if you are a busy person and don't have time to pamper them.

Make your living room a space to regain your equilibrium, lounge about, restore your energy and refresh your mind.



## **tell a story about your life in the living room with pictures and photographs**



compiled by

- Colourwaves - Jill Carroll

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**Resene**

the paint the professionals use