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# decorating *with love*

*Tips for setting up your new happy nest together.*

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You and your new groom have devoted the last several months to planning, organizing, and celebrating your wedding. Now it's time to prepare for your really big day – move-in day. Here, we tell you how to help make the big move stress-free, effectively combine your individual styles, and make smart design choices you both can live with.

## First Things First

Combining all of the furniture, accessories, and personal items you've accumulated from your single lives can be a daunting task, and you will probably be seeing double come move-in time – literally. If you each own the same items, say a treadmill or sleeper-sofa, it's time to pare down. Most likely you won't have the need or space for two of the same things, so you've got to trim the amount of your possessions. Start by focusing on quality and function. Keep the piece that is the newest, most efficient, and attractive. Sell, donate, or toss the one that doesn't make the grade. You don't



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want it taking up valuable real estate in your new home. "Subtracting unnecessary objects from your lives will generate a blank slate, so you two can make a fresh start," says Chayse Dacoda, interior designer and host of HGTV's *Get it Together*.

### Negotiating and Compromise

While it's fairly simple to clear out duplicate items, getting rid of meaningful things may be a bit trickier. First, set some ground rules for negotiations. Avoid throwing something away without checking with your partner first and make a pact that a certain number of things must go - and stick to those guidelines. Respect one

another's feelings by avoiding using labels like 'ugly' or 'stupid.' Throughout this process, you both should make your opinions clear and display sentimental items in a place that you both can be happy with, says Dacoda. "Maybe it's a hidden place, but compromise is crucial."

### Buying New Items

After you've gotten rid of all the extra and unwanted items, it's time to go shopping. Your next step in decorating your new home together is concentrating on buying new items you'll need. Although space and budgets differ, it's nearly impossible to avoid making pricey purchases. Splurge on top-notch appliances and furniture, as

they will last for years. And save on less-expensive accessories because you won't necessarily be skimping on quality. "Lamps, pillows, and other home décor accessories are very rewarding because they're economical and can easily transform the entire look of a room," say Christina Sullivan and Susan Bednar Long, of the interior design firm Tocar.

### Blending Your Styles

The key to blending decorating and living styles doesn't lie in who thinks they have better taste, but in finding a middle ground. Much of what will make your home décor great will be your ability to combine both of your belongings in interesting ways that also show your personalities. Avoid an unappealing mismatch aesthetic by limiting the amount of items that will be displayed - and stick to one unifying theme. Though you don't have to carry the same theme into every room, there should be one or two similar elements that maintain harmony throughout your home. Unifiers, such as matching or complementing colors and patterns, can translate a sense of peace and style.

### Clever Space-Saving Solutions

Now, many couples are maximizing their space in unexpected places. Double-duty items can help ensure you're getting the most out of your square-footage. Storage ottomans store items like remote controls, magazines, and newspapers; and provide extra seating in a pinch. Custom built-in units

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display beloved items and act as room dividers. Coffee table compartments artfully conceal DVDs, books, and CDs. And in the bedroom, a luxe cushioned bench at the foot of the bed can open to reveal extra linens, guest towels, and sheets.

### Engage Your Partner

Even if you don't like your spouse's taste, or lack thereof, it's best not to force-feed yours. Sit down together and collect magazine and newspaper clippings or spend some time watching design-oriented TV programs, and then settle on the techniques you both want to incorporate. If you're having trouble deciding on how to split decorating responsibilities, try designating rooms. For example, instead of fighting over who will take on all of the painting duties, one of you can tackle decorating the living room while the other works on the bathroom. Conversely, if your mate isn't offering much input, "Begin incorporating some of his or her treasured items into the rooms," say Sullivan and Bednar Long. "This can help initiate positive feedback."

### Rest and Relaxation

Just as teamwork is key in any successful marriage, it is also crucial to carve out a little piece of heaven somewhere in your home, no matter how small. If there's no way to create separate sanctuaries, then designate one area as a peaceful respite for the both of you - a cozy haven where you both

can relax and unwind. Usually, the bedroom provides this retreat, and that's why its aesthetic should be neither too masculine nor feminine. "A gender-less, but pleasing decor is good," says Dacoda. Speak openly about how you and your mate want to design the area, so it's favorable to each of your ideas of the vibe you want the room to have.

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Since it's important that the room remains a place of quiet reprieve, don't let treadmills, computers, and bulky electronics infiltrate this 'comfort zone'.

### Avoid Move-In Stress

While there's no guarantee that your collaboration will be free of disagreements, set the foundation for a smooth transition by offsetting stress at the get-go. Start by setting realistic, attainable goals. Combat pre-move anxiety by walking through your empty space together while earmarking furniture and accessories for specific rooms. "This way, movers bring in items according to your

specifications and you can unpack in an organized way - room-by-room," say Sullivan and Bednar Long. Tackle tasks like painting projects, investment decisions (such as remodeling or adding on), and construction plans early on. "Remodeling can be a high-stress situation that you don't want to undertake right after you've moved in," says

Dacoda. "Don't create unnecessary conflict: Finish all major and structural work beforehand." No need to splatter paint all over your new bamboo flooring, or gouge a dent in that priceless armoire. While plumbing, electrical, and structural work should be addressed before moving in, smaller projects like picture hanging and upholstery can easily be completed without too much interference. Couples can actually benefit from undertaking

smaller DIY jobs together, as it fosters pride in ownership and a sense of accomplishment.

Creating a new and welcoming home as newlyweds is something that you and your groom can look forward to. Make the decorating and remodeling projects fun by partnering up whenever you can and respecting each other's opinions and duties. Don't feel pressured to have it all complete right after you've moved in, revel in your post-honeymoon stage. Make a few romantic "picnic" dinners in the living room by candlelight, while you discuss how beautiful your new home will look when you're all done. ■