



Kids' rooms

A HANDS-ON DECORATING GUIDE

Anna Kasabian

ROCKPORT

GLOUCESTER MASSACHUSETTS

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FOREWORD

As you begin to design your child's room and the family spaces in your home, think first about the job your house has to do and your power to enable it to do so. Plan for comfort, peace, quiet, flow, privacy, inspiration, and the safety of the nest.

In researching this book, I asked *Parent* magazine's managing editor, Mary Mohler, the mother of three teenagers, what she thought of getting children involved in the design process. She thinks it's a good idea but points out that older children should have a greater voice than younger kids, who need more limits. After all, the four-year-old who really, really wants a bed shaped like a horse may prefer a cow tomorrow.



To begin the design dialog, Mary suggests asking your child broad questions: What is your favorite color? What animals do you like? What do you like to do the most?

Then get more specific: Would you like to have a fish or a zebra on this wall?

No *carte blanche*, she warns, as preferences can be elaborate. To a reasonable extent, however, you can honor requests, weaving visuals or activity centers into the room.

Mary observes that, by age four, children communicate their likes and dislikes and, by seven, are influenced by their peers. Thus, at seven, children like a major redesign of their room. That's when, for Mary's children, a globe, a personal computer, and bookshelves became important elements.

Overall, her advice is to work with your children and, in the end, purchase what you can live with.

Storage is an important planning focus. Work it in wherever you can. If children share a room, remember to respect their need for privacy. Give each a place to put precious possessions. Consider setting up an alcove for each child or installing a room divider.

Family spaces should be comfortable and easy to clean. One should feel free to put one's feet on the coffee table, and it should be okay for these rooms to look a little messy. Being caught up in how your house looks—especially where everyone gathers to enjoy each other's company—is a turnoff to kids and also, I believe, stunts communication. After all, aren't homes places to convene?

Above all each home should have a room where all family members can do things together. It can include a quiet corner for reading and doing crafts. Such places encourage talking while sharing an activity, like playing checkers.

Embrace this design adventure. Your children's rooms are gardens for their imagination and their dreams.



INTRODUCTION

Often, as I wrote this book, I thought of rooms I ventured into as a child—the homes that welcomed me. I even recalled the mouse family house my father described in bedtime stories. All the rooms and houses I spent time in colored my life—little watercolor scenes always being added to.

The rooms I played and slept in, at the homes of friends and relatives, surfaced. One of my favorites was my Aunt Josie and Uncle Frank's house. I loved its bigness and the massive staircase that curved to the top landing. My cousins and I slid down the banister often. We ran down the wide halls playing cowboy. This house was welcoming and fun, like a big play area. No rules, no fuss from my aunt.





MAKING ROOM

INFANTS

THE BEST WAY TO DEVELOP A DESIGN PLAN FOR AN INFANT'S ROOM is to think through the big picture of your family life. Is this room likely to be used by the same child for several years, or will it always be the new baby's room?

If your family is growing and this is the first of several children you plan to have, consider designating it the infant's room. This way, you need to decorate and furnish it only once for at least a few years. For flexibility, choose yellow as a main color, and keep decorations themed to accommodate both boys and girls.

You will spend a lot of time in your baby's room, so in planning it, take into account your activities, style of organization, and the everyday needs of babies. Infants use bedrooms mainly for sleeping and having diapers and outfits changed. You'll be going in and out of here a lot, tending to these tasks, so storage, lighting, and flooring must be carefully considered.

If possible, choose a room that is not too far from your bedroom so that late-night feedings and diaper changes can be attended to quickly without disrupting the rest of the family. Also, you'll be glad not to run down a long hall or climb stairs when you've just woken up.

In addition, if you've got the luxury of space, choose a room away from where your toddlers sleep. A new baby's fussing can be disruptive.

This chapter on infants' rooms will help you think through design options and offer tips on choosing a theme and accessorizing.

Opposite: Remember how much time you will spend here when you select wallpaper and furnishings. This room's soft, subtle floral wallpaper will not get stale, and it's set up with pleasing reminders that your daughter will soon be at the table playing! Notice the rocker; you will want one for late-night feedings.



Above: Create a fantasy room for yourself and your baby. Here, a soft mint green pastel dominates, and a decorative wall painting suggests a forest. The trees and animals on the walls are accented with bunting and a little painted table; both express the nature theme.



How to Choose a Theme

Before making any design decisions, consider whether or not this room will remain the new baby room. If it will, you should definitely invest in well-made, sturdy furnishings rather than trendy, less durable styles. Likewise, select a theme that will endure, be suitable for both boys and girls, and be pleasing to you. After all, you will be in and out of this room, day and night, for many months.

On the other hand, if this will remain your child's room for several years, choose design options that can easily make the transition from infant to toddler to perhaps a seven-year-old with minimal expense.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What kind of chair would be best for rocking the baby?
- When I greet the baby in the morning, sun streaming through the windows, what colors and patterns will make me feel happy?
- What can be added to the walls and floors for me and the baby to talk about?

Many design choices are available. To come to the right decision, think about themes in broad terms:

- **Fantasy:** This kind of room takes you to a new place and time. It may have nothing to do with the rest of the home's decor. The crib may be surrounded with a tent of fabric, ribbons, and bows, for example, and may remind you of a romantic story you read once. Practicality is not in this room plan!
- **Ultramodern:** This room takes advantage of all that is sleek, clean, and contemporary. Furnishings have simple lines and the palette is in subtle shades of white, off-white, and cream. Carry the theme to the walls and adorn them with black-and-white photographs framed simply in black or white wood. Wallpaper might be simple—perhaps elegant angel wings that accent one wall or a portion of a wall.