



Keep It All In Balance

One of the most important elements to consider when creating a beautiful room is balance. Whether you are the architect, builder, decorator or homeowner, if things are out to balance, the design will be compromised. Let's discuss a few points that will help you create harmony and balance in your personal space.

First of all, balance means weight is evenly distributed. For the purpose of our discussion, let's consider how a well-balanced room contributes to good interior design.

Begin by noting the architectural features of the room in question: its high ceilings, large fireplace or wide windows, for example. Any obvious structural feature needs to be considered before placing the furniture, art and accessories, as these features will often determine the rest of the room's design.

If you have a pitched roof, a tall piece of furniture often looks best when placed beneath the highest point, filling in the empty space. A heavy rock fireplace often requires a substantial piece of furniture across the room, to balance out the visual weight. High ceilings may call for long draperies, to soften and define the long, open space. A large mirror hung across from picture windows not only reflects the beauty of the outdoors, but also balances the light in the room. Large art pieces hung at a height close to the top of the window frame creates a feeling of deliberate placement, as opposed to a free floating, disassociated piece.

Once the furniture is in balance, take time to consider smaller areas of the room, as well. What is hung over and around the furnishings should add balance by matching in scale and proportion. For example, place a horizontal painting over a long console table, or a mirror over a dresser of similar length. Hang framed art low enough so that it relates to the piece below it. A rule of thumb is to hang a painting no more than 6 inches above the top of the sofa, for example.

Another common challenge for homeowners is to determine the size of an area rug. If a rug is too small, it seems to float alone in the middle of a room. Insure that the rug is large enough to at least fit under the front legs of the furniture in a conversation area. If the rug is the right proportion for the furniture, it will ground and define that space.

Pillows on a bed, your welcome mat, and the books in your bookcase should all be the right proportion. One way to tell if the scale or proportion is off is to note empty space: if

the headboard is inconsistently covered, the mat is shorter than the threshold, or the books are half the height of the shelf, they are out of proportion. Create balance by coordinating sizes and filling available space.

When working with accessories for a tabletop, mantle, or other surface, remember that odd numbers are more visually appealing. Grouping a tall candlestick, a medium vase and a smaller plant together is an example of creating a vignette with the three elements of balance, scale and proportion in mind.

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