



Decorating Children's Rooms

As a parent, summer can be a time of mixed blessings, because...the children are home. Whether they are grandchildren, visiting adults, college kids, teenagers or young ones, having children in the house makes a difference in a caretaker's schedule, priorities, and activities.

Summer can be the perfect time to consider tackling a project with your child, such as cleaning, reorganizing and redecorating their bedroom. When a child is willing and able to help in the process, this can be a fun, engaging and highly rewarding activity.

Ask yourself: does your child's room reflect their personality? Whether they are lively and animated, or serious and quiet, a child's bedroom should reflect, encourage and honor these personality traits.

It is easy, although rather expensive, to find a theme for decorating kid's rooms in a catalog or store, and buy the whole thing, lock, stock and barrel. Color coordinated, trendy, and appealing to the eye, this is a simple and effective way to create a colorful scheme and complete, themed bedroom starting from scratch.

Most of us, on the other hand, already have furniture and collectibles to work with, but need to pull them together in a more attractive and useful way. Let's discuss some of the unique needs of kid's bedrooms.

The needs of babies and pre-schoolers change quickly, so it is advisable to start with a theme or color scheme that can take them through the first five years, at least, with minimal changes. Whether you choose primary stripes, pastel plaids, a nature or character theme, keep it generic enough that it enables the room to change along with the child. A crib becomes a bed, the changing table becomes a dresser, and the rocking chair can be pulled into another area of the house, yet the original decorating scheme can remain the same until kindergarten.

If you have school age children with just the bedroom basics, now is the time to reconsider each piece. Is it being used? Could it be improved with paint? Do we have enough storage? What can we add or subtract to make this room more attractive and comfortable for my child? Ask them what they like, and listen to their ideas.

Color is a wonderful place to start, and it inspires you to work together. When my daughter was a young teen, she wanted a lime green bedroom. As her room was halfway down the main hallway of our home, I preferred that the color not be too jarring to the

passerby (mainly, myself!), so I went to the hardware store and brought home a myriad of paint swatches in light greens, from melon, to sage, to bright lime. After some discussion and compromise, we agreed on a green more subdued than she would have chosen, yet brighter than I would have liked. We later added touches of lavender and purple with white, and the result was a fun, energetic new bedroom, perfectly reflective of her.

When choosing furniture, keep versatility in mind. Bunk beds or a daybed with a trundle can accommodate sleepovers, while keeping the floor area open for play. If the room is large enough, an older child could choose between a double bed or two singles, and the room could be also used as a guest room. Consider keeping a dresser in the closet, if space allows. Other things that may be suited for the closet include toy chests, bookcases, or built-in shelving for storage.

Speaking of storage, fully utilize the closet space for shelving and storage needs. Picture books, clothing, or toys that the child has outgrown, but is not ready to part with will need sturdy boxes or plastic bins that can be stacked, with the rarely accessed things on the bottom. Consider installing a closet organization system to make the most of the closet space you have available.

Once the walls are painted, the furniture is in place, and the storage has been addressed, utilize a large bedroom wall for shelving. As children grow, they accumulate an amazing amount of stuff, just like their adult counterparts. Trophies, framed photos, books, knick knacks, and treasures gathered from adventures and given by friends are important to kids, and should be displayed where they can be seen and appreciated. Shelving options include tall bookcases, simple fiberboards and brackets, or cabinets with open shelving. Most kids will fill shelves quickly, so opt for as many as you can.

Many older children will choose to decorate whatever wall space remains with posters and magazine cut-outs of their favorite sports, music or fashion icons. As this practice is often distracting to parents, I recommend that you designate the wall behind or next to the door as the pin-up area. You can purchase or construct a large bulletin board and mount it on this least visible wall, and hopefully keep the clutter to a minimum, at least for a few years.

Inspirational items that kids might like to build a room around include toy trucks and cars, western items, sports, dolls, flowers, butterflies, or travel. Chances are there is already a budding theme happening in your child's room. Take their interests and favorite colors, and help them build a room that they can enjoy being in, share with friends, and look back on with fond memories.

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