

Does designing your home have you confused? Elements of Design's Owner & Lead Interior Designer Lina Quintero answers your questions each month.

Question: I like modern interior design, but not minimalism, how do I combine the two in my home?



The good news is that these two styles of interior design share many similar inherent characteristics. As a foundation, both styles incorporate furniture with clean, linear, straight lines. For a modern look that moves beyond minimalism, I recommend selecting fabric choices that will add a bit of warmth. For instance, instead of using a cool grey fabric, consider using a warm gray with lavender undertones. This addition of color will add interest and achieve that warmth that is often missing from minimalist designs.

Even though the goal is to achieve a modern design without the constraints of minimalism, I still recommend keeping the number of accessories to a minimum. Personalize the space and heighten the interest level by investing in quality artwork. Artwork makes an impression and the amount of available wall space will help you to determine how many pieces are appropriate for the area in question. Another great way to add interest to modern design is to incorporate depth by bringing in various textures through fabric, window treatments, and pillows.

Question: I have 18' ceilings and I have small windows along the top. I want to block some of the intense Arizona sun from coming in but I'm not sure what kind of treatment to put up.



As we all know, this is a very common problem in Arizona. However, unless it is a significant concern, I usually recommend focusing window treatments on the primary windows that are at eye-level instead of the small windows that are near ceiling height. It is important to keep in mind that if a shade or window treatment for a high window is 18' off the ground more often than not, unless you purchase a remote controlled shade, the window essentially becomes inoperable. Typically, remote controlled shades are significantly more expensive than their counterparts.

If you feel that addressing the primary windows is not enough, the best option for the small high windows outside of remote controlled shades are shades that blend seamlessly with the surroundings. For example, consider a honeycomb shade from Hunter Douglas. Honeycomb shades by Hunter Douglas offer the ability to create that seamless appearance because you can select a fabric that will blend with your wall color.

Question: What if I want to incorporate an ethnic or religious interior design in my home? Do I need to run this theme throughout the entire house?



Naturally, the larger items in a room such as a sectional, bed, or dining room table will eat up most of the space in any given room. If you are going for an ethnic or religious interior design, I recommend that you choose a neutral style for the larger high budget furniture items so that these items maintain their use outside of an ethnic or religious inspired design. The most effective method of infusing an ethnic or religious inspired design style is to strategically splash smaller items of representation like pillows, throws, and accessories. The aforementioned items will not overpower a room but certain fabric patterns and accessories clearly set the tone and establish the specific ethnic or religious theme.

In my own home, one design trick that I used to display my Colombian artifacts was to isolate a specific wall in my kitchen. In this defined area, I chose to hang many of the representative items in tribute to my culture. The design does not overpower my kitchen and the wall has developed into a conversation piece for guests. More often than not, ethnic and religious trinkets that are purchased from shopping bazaars, flea markets, or street-side vendors in International countries will personalize a space and best of all they will not break the bank!

Question: When is it okay to have different types of fabric on one furnishing?



Combining various types and styles of fabric on a single furnishing is a fabulous way to achieve a custom look that adds a tremendous amount of character to the item. When mixing multiple fabrics, be sure to separate the “body” of the upholstered furniture from the “cushions.” Have fun and get creative by mixing not only the fabric styles but also the materials. Don't be afraid to design a chair with leather on the body and chenille on the cushions. By and large, it is more visually appealing to select a print or colorful fabric for cushions and maintain a solid color fabric for the body versus the alternative.

Question: What types of flooring are good for my children's rooms?



When considering flooring options for a room that is frequently utilized by children, the two most pressing factors to keep in mind are safety and function. It is wise to select soft, comfortable flooring surfaces as kids tend to crawl, play, and lay on the floor. Soft, plush carpet is a standard choice but, bear in mind that most soft carpets are not considered to be highly durable and the wear-and-tear will show almost immediately.

Carpet tiles are a wonderful and inexpensive option for a kid's room. Carpet tiles are easy to install, they can easily be replaced, and they add a great punch of color and texture to the room. If you have preexisting hardwood floors in the room, carpet tiles can be installed directly overtop the wooden floors. As your child matures, the carpet tiles can easily be removed to reveal a more sophisticated look for your teenager. Another popular option is cork flooring. Cork floors are resilient, versatile, and they help to soften a room.

Question: What are the best window treatments for sliding glass doors?



Sliding glass doors are specifically designed to be easy access doors. As a result of their inherent purpose, any design concepts for window treatments should not limit or prevent the intended function the sliding glass doors. In most cases, it is more effective to have the motion of the window treatments move from side-to-side as opposed to drop-down shades. When closed, drop-down shades will prevent or minimize access. On the other hand a side-to-side moving curtain or panel allows for easy access.

I recommend using panels made with creative fabric blends. The customization options are limitless and along with a decorative rod, an elegant set of panels will provide an aesthetically pleasing and functional solution. Try extending the rod by eight to ten inches on each side so the panels have enough room to stack without getting in the way of the overall function.

Send your design questions to Lina at feedback@mediathatdelivers.com and visit Elements of Design at www.elementsofdesign.com.