



Living big

Lack of space is one of the most common issues people face in their homes. Fortunately, when working with your existing space, it is possible to make it feel bigger – here are some ideas. By Donna White

A luxury is something that you do not really need to live or survive, but is enjoyable to have.

For me, luxury could be about having a lovely priceless piece of art, a cabinet made of the finest inlaid woods, or a chef-grade kitchen; but really, it is all about the luxury of having space.

My home was designed in the 1940s, and this means it has relatively small rooms. I can't extend the property because it is on the cusp of maximum coverage. I could, however, move, but I don't want to. I've started renovating and I want to see it through to my heart's desire.

Too many different colours and patterns can make a space seem busy and disjointed. Currently I am working on the conversion of a country church into a family home.

The clients proposed three different floor surfaces within the main body of the church: recycled timber floorboards, carpet and polished concrete.

As a designer I was concerned how three changes in flooring would defeat the purpose of the open-plan area, breaking the space up into three small compartments.

If a home has a relatively small footprint, one should maximise the feeling of space. You can do this by running with the same flooring throughout; for example all timber floorboards.

Or, if you change the floor surfaces, make the transition in the same colour tones, especially in an open-plan space. If the entire flooring is one colour palette, light or dark, it will not jar your senses and you will have an illusion of a bigger space.

Pale coloured walls also create a feeling of space. In fact, using different shades of the same colour on all walls, rugs and furniture will create a visual coherence that opens up a space.

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Pale colours also provide a light airy background for richer coloured accessories like cushions, flowers and art. However, a light airy room should have a minimal amount of accessories. Clutter and fussiness close in a space, so limit yourself to a few pieces you love.

People often think they need to use small objects to make a room feel big, but this is not the case. I would rather hang one large mirror, one large decorative light fixture and one large painting. A few pieces or large-scale furniture and accessories with the appropriate lighting can give a room a larger more luxurious feel.

Opt for furniture with legs rather than pieces that have skirts that hang directly on the floor and bathroom vanities and toilets that are wall hung.

Additional air and light underneath furniture will prevent rooms from appearing visually overcrowded. Allow natural light to flow freely inside a room because it will open up the

interior and make it seem larger. To this end, choose curtain fabrics that fall softly and stack neatly when drawn either side of the windows to ensure they don't block the natural light. Small rooms can be overwhelmed with windows framed in billowy curtains with lots of pattern.

You can create a feeling of space and volume with artificial lighting. For example, if you rely only on recessed ceiling downlights to light a room, you are in effect only lighting the flow.

If you take the emphasis off the floor, and 'wash' the walls with light, the space will seem brighter and more spacious. Uplighting has a similar effect on a room's dimensions as wall washing. An uplight reflects light off the ceiling and can increase the sense of volume.

Lighting can also define zones. It can also draw the eye through to the area beyond, increasing the sense of space by making the rooms flow easily one into the other. I suggest if you are undertaking home renovations, plan your lighting scheme with a professional designer to ensure that you get the most out of your scheme.

It is no secret that using well-placed mirrors, or mirrored furniture, can make a room look larger by giving an illusion of depth. However, all these space-enhancing ideas will unravel if you have clutter.

The trick to making a small space work is holding back. There must be some breathing room. Emptiness allows the eye to travel someplace and rest. Every space will feel bigger if you leave some things out. ■