



# Minimalism or maximalism?

Do you prefer clean simple lines, or do you believe in using every decorative item you love in one room? Or are you in the middle? By Donna White

We are lucky to live in an era that is essentially a creative free-for-all. As a result there are probably more maximalists out there, than there are minimalists. Which one are you? The following simple definitions may help define your leaning.

The minimalist aesthetic is 'less is more'. It has:

- simple lines
- clean spaces
- clear patterns
- one colour or a monochromatic palette

Whereas the maximalist aesthetic is 'more is more'. It has:

- bold gestures
- mixture of patterns
- strong colours

Of course, for every positive word to be said about the two aesthetics, there is a negative one. Minimalism: simplicity vs. spartan. Maximalism: abundance vs. clutter. The only universal measure, and it is one that makes sense, is whether the space feels comfortable and right for the people who live in it.

However, in order to live comfortably in either the minimalist or a maximalist environment, the 'C' word should be addressed. The word is 'clutter', because it is one of the greatest sources of stress in a home. It takes determination, commitment and focus to categorise items you don't want or need anymore. The minimalist will declutter to bring order to their space. The result will be a streamlined and organised home. It will have good storage solutions to handle out-of-season belongings.

Maximalism is a difficult look to get right. Maximalists need to create luxurious, overstated spaces. However,

if they don't declutter they run the risk of living in spaces that are full of mismatching bits and pieces.

As opposite as the two aesthetics are, they do however have one element in common, and that is luxury. The minimalist interior is typified by the quality of the space. In fact, it is not defined by what is not there, but by the rightness of what is there, and by the richness with which it is experienced.

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Maximalism is typified by its richness, its abundance of embellishment and its excess of decoration. The feeling of luxury is enhanced by lots of sensual elements and bright colours. Both aesthetics, however, require careful editing to achieve the best result.

## The minimalist interior

When decorating in a single or a monochromatic colour scheme (using any shade, tint or tone of one colour), it is important to alter textures within the colour. Interest is created by the contrast of texture. To achieve this, apply the 1/3, 2/3 rule. For example, 1/3 shiny, 2/3 matte finishes.

Always have a focal point in each room from which every other element radiates. For example, your sofa in the living room. If all other pieces of furniture, art, and accessories are the supporting act to the décor focal point, you can keep a tight lid on maintaining the concept of a minimalist space.

Balance is important in minimalist design. For example, cushions and

lamps would be arranged in flanking pairs. A chair may be arranged asymmetrically, but it would be balanced by another object of equal weight on the other side.

A minimalist would never scatter a mixture of art and accessories across every surface, or wall. Instead, they concentrate like objects to designated areas. A series of items that are similar make a very bold, but edited statement. For example, think of a wall of black and white photographs in a black frame.

## The maximalist interior

Maximalism is the ultimate layering of your favourite items. It isn't a wild mishmash of anything bric-a-brac. It is a mixture of rich, deep colour and bold patterns.

To achieve a maximalist look for your home, and without living in a cluttered space, it is best to start with a blank canvas. The secret is then to layer the room, little by little until you feel the room has enough. Always place the biggest pieces of furniture first - the artwork, rugs, floor and table top lights - and lastly small accessories on surfaces.

After the placement of each object, stand back and take time to observe. It is important to keep the look balanced by maintaining a consistent 'visual weight'. This is achieved by scale, texture and colour.

Minimalism and maximalism are both in vogue. However, the aesthetic you prefer will depend on whether you like breathing space around each element in a room to appreciate its form and texture. Or, alternatively, do you like depth and richness in a space? To be a minimalist or a maximalist, that is the question. ■