



Design Elements

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Space and its impact on orientation, circulation, inter-zoning and fixture and furniture arrangements
- ✓ Develop design programmes and concepts that solve spatial problems in an interior.
- ✓ Explore different aspects of colour schemes

Design Elements

Space

The decoration of a room is a good point to pause and think about, what a given space would be required to offer in the coming years. Think about its purpose and whether it is being utilized properly.

Function

Consider all the activities that take place in a room. A bedroom, for example, may be more than just a place to sleep. It may also be a place where someone can exercise, write letters or read. Similarly a kitchen may be much more than a place to cook. It is as likely to be a room where the family eats or they offer suppers to some informal friends.

Changing the use of a room is often beneficial. When designers plan a project, they follow a specific sequence.

1. They examine and change the structure, if necessary.
2. They plan the arrangement of the furniture.
3. They plan the lighting.
4. They select the scheme.

The order of the stages is quite specific; each operation logically follows the completion of the previous one. For example it is not possible to positioning of light fittings before you have planned where the furniture is going to be sited.

There are many reasons why people want a change in the structure of their house in some way:

New Room Use

They may wish to convert an existing guest room to a dressing room.

Change of Lifestyle

Maybe the change of job is allowing someone to spend more time at home and hence the need arise to join up a dining room to form a spacious sitting room.

Additions to the Household

On arrival of a new baby some extension is needed to be built.

Proportion Need Correction

Would the removal of a picture rail improve the division of space within the drawing room?

Natural Light is Insufficient

By enlarging a window you might make a darker corridor more inviting.

Floor Plans

When assessing space try to imagine the walls are invisible and that each room flows into the next. This can reveal new possibilities, and you may decide to dramatically reshape the space by removing or erecting partition walls. A floor plan is invaluable for working out the best use of space in a room. Draw the plan to on 1 centimetre square paper, with, for example, a 1 centimetre square representing 20 centimetres in reality (1:20). Measure the walls and draw the outline of the room, marking the position of doors, windows, and fixed feature such as radiators and power sockets. Write measurements around the outside of the plan for easy reference. You can then draw in the new lay out for the room, including furniture, television and any built in features like cupboards and shelves. These must be drawn to the same scale as the room. This will be an invaluable source of reference when choosing furniture, light fittings or new doors. It will also prove helpful for estimating quantities for paint or wall paper and curtains or blinds.

Dimensions

The floor plan will also help while deciding the furniture and decoration. Flexible furniture will increase the uses of a small space- for example; a sofa bed can transform the living room into a spare bedroom when needed. Again there can be many imaginative ways of making storage space, for instance by using drawers or casters that slide under the bed.

Room Too Small

Working with limited space can be a challenge, taking advantage of some small space tips can make a big difference in how a room is perceived. It is possible to give style even to a very small space. With some thought and imagination you can do some exciting, functional things with small spaces. While developing an interior design plan the following points must be considered to maximize the perception of a space.

Expand the View

Reduce unnecessary walls to create more open, flowing space. Consider creating partial walls or pass through areas as a way to create more openness in the floor plan. The space can be planned in a way that on entering into a house, you can see through the immediate space and partially into the next one. The sense of intrigue draws your eye toward the far room and invites you to explore the larger, attached space.

Co-ordinate the Colour Scheme

Visually connected rooms feel larger. Paint the areas of the house in a common colour scheme, which will tie the rooms together, giving a perception of larger space.

Define individual spaces using area rugs, furniture, art work or perhaps an accent wall colour if the architecture provides a distinct wall space to accommodate it.

Unifying the Floor

Use one flooring style for all adjoining rooms on the same floor. It will create a sense of continuity and connectedness, especially, if the floor plan is small.

Install Recessed Lighting

Recessed lighting creates a greater sense of height in areas with lower than usual ceiling. Though, these fixtures don't intrude on the space physically. But the pool of light created adds warmth and sophistication to the scheme.

Maximize Scale

When purchasing furniture for a small room consider two seater sofas instead of three seater (even on the three seater sofas, hardly three people sit together). Large overstuffed furniture can overwhelm a small space. Minimize doesn't mean doll house furniture, though. It is important to get the scale right for the specific room you are working with.

Utilize Multifunctional Furniture

Versatile furniture pieces can be used as extra seating and much needed extra space at the same time. A storage ottoman is a great example of this particular small space tip. It can perform three different functions at the same time as a coffee table, storage, and extra seating. Also consider a small pull out sofa that can be converted to a guest bed when needed.

Get Creative

Look for unique or oddly shaped areas which can be good locations for built in cabinets and display areas. Recessed wall areas such as light niches, for example, provide decorative and storage space without intruding into the main living area.

Use Mirrors and Glass

Mirrors and transparent items help to create a sense of space. A mirror's reflection tricks the eye into believing that there is a window to additional, adjoining space. It is a very strong tool used for maximizing the small spaces. Transparent items create a sense of openness. Consider glass topped tables and glass fronted cabinetry and minimize the use of heavy, dark wooden objects in small spaces.

Consider a Murphy Bed

This bed can be folded up against the wall, when not in use. This can be used in a bedroom which has to function as a home office as well.



Reconsider the Curtains

If windows have attractive mouldings show them off by avoiding curtains and opting for some natural bamboo blinds or sort Roman shades for privacy and texture instead? The absence of curtains will result in less intrusion into the space. Or an attractive window treatment that sits well within the window frame could be a perfect solution for a small space. The greater the difference between the colour of the wall and the curtains, the more the curtains will visually intrude upon the space.

Small Space Tips for Specific Rooms:

Bathroom

- over the toilet cabinetry (storage)
- Shallow wall mounted cabinetry (storage)

Bedroom

- Murphy bed
- Trundle bed (Compact yet expandable)
- Desk/ dresser combo(multipurpose furniture)
- Closet system.

Kitchen

- Combination range hood microwave(effectively combines the two spaces and saves counter space)
- Corner banquette(built in eating area)

Other

- Large checker board floor patterns can create an illusion of greater space in a room.
- Paint the ceiling lighter in colour than the walls to increase the sense of height.
- Install floor tile on a diagonal to increase the sense of floor expanse.
- Select furnishing that blend in with the background colours of the room.

Room Too Big

Working with a large space can seem almost as challenging as dealing with a small space sometimes. In a very large living room if the furniture is too far apart, it will not look very functional. Being able to communicate properly in a social setting requires proper placement of furniture and an environment which can enhance interaction.

Large rooms with unusual proportions- such as an L shaped room also needs special consideration. It is often easier to divide such spaces into two or more separate areas. For example you can either create areas for different activities or you can arrange two groups of seating. Alternatively, the areas can be defined by different decorative treatments, perhaps by painting walls in one area and using wall paper in the other.

Select Large Scale Furniture

Larger scale furniture and art work will carry more visual weight in a big room. It won't have as much tendency to disappear within the scene. But using items of larger scale should not be confused with over stuffing the room with furniture and accessories; however the right balance is important.

Create Social Islands

Multiple seating areas are more practical a choice for a very large room, than having to shout across. Create several conversation groupings within the space. Area rugs should be used to further anchor these social areas and enhance the perception of smaller, more intimate spaces within the larger design.



Warm the Walls

Hues on the warmer side of the colour wheel seem to move forward and visually envelope a space to create a greater sense of intimacy. Take advantage of this by painting the walls in warm colours.

Bring the Ceiling Down

A perception of a lower ceiling can be created by painting the ceiling in a darker tone than the walls.

Introduce Texture

A strategic mix of tactile qualities can create a visual interest- drawing you into space. Texture depth can be accomplished through a careful choice of flooring, upholstery, draperies, furniture and even accessories.

The careful use of groupings, scale, colour, and texture can turn a very large space into a welcoming, accommodating and fictional area, perfect for relaxation and entertainment.

Points to Remember

- Do not block light by putting tall items in front of the window.
- Work out the 'traffic flow' through the room to allow freedom of movement.
- Avoid placing square or rectangular pieces of furniture at an angle in a corner as it creates dead space.
- Place television and computer screens away from the window and direct sunlight to avoid poor visibility.
- Place furniture to make maximum use of natural light.
- Make sure that the door into the room and the doors of the cupboards can be opened easily.
- Place lamps and electrical equipment near the sockets.
- In a dining room don't forget to allow enough space around the table to move around.
- When designing wardrobes be careful to allow sufficient depth for coat hangers- 60cm/2ft should accommodate most.

Colour

Colour is one of the most uplifting and practical ingredients you can bring into a scheme. Almost all designers have a magic wand in their tool box. It is called colour and it can:

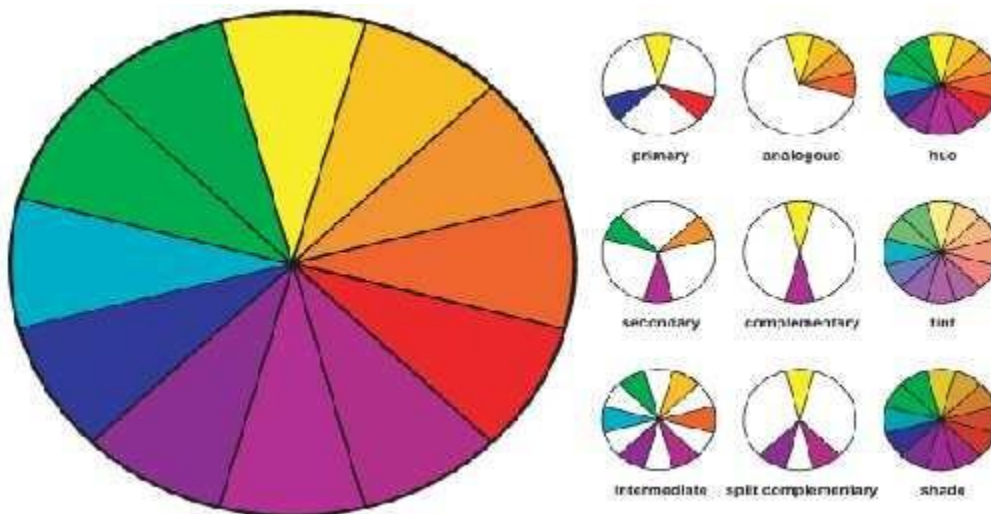
- evoke a particular period
- change the proportions of the room
- make a small room look larger;
- lighten a dark room;
- help to create a certain mood;

- make a room feel 'cool' or 'warm';
- link different objects and areas in a house

A good colour scheme costs no more than a bad one. In the same way as you would not have to pay more for a chocolate ice-cream than for a vanilla, prices do not vary according to colour or flavour. A good colour scheme adds value to everything present in the room whereas a bad one loses every charm altogether.

The Colour Wheel

The colour wheel is the representative of the way we perceive light. It is a tool to demonstrate relationships between colours. Understanding its principles gives a fundamental knowledge for designing beautiful colour schemes.



Primary Colours

Light is comprised of the colour spectrum. This spectrum is what we see in the rainbow. It is amazing that this splash of colour is built upon only three fundamental colours or hues. They are called the primary colours because they exist alone and are not created by the mixing of any other colours. These are red, blue and yellow. These colours lie an equal distance apart on the colour wheel.

Secondary Colours

The colours created when mixing any two primary colours are called the secondary colours. I.e. green colour is created by mixing the two primary colours yellow and blue, red and yellow make orange when mixed together.

Tertiary Colours

This mixing process can be extended further to create the tertiary colours. These are also called the intermediate colours. These are created when one primary colour is combined with one secondary colour are combined in equal parts. I.e. a blue- purple hue is developed when the primary colour blue is combined with the secondary colour purple. The colour wheel demonstrates how the different hues visually relate to one another.

Tints, Shades and Tones

Various degree of colour strength can be created by adding white or black to a particular hue. This way they take a slightly different flavour from the starting colour.

Tint- adds only white to create a tint of a particular colour i.e. the colour pink is actually a tint of red.

Shade- add only black to create a shade of that colour.

Tone- add various degrees of both black and white to a colour to create a tone of that colour.

The elements of colour related to the colour wheel also play a role in perception of space when you consider the colour schemes and colour psychology in the mix. These important aspects should be considered as part of the planning because they affect an overall look and feel of a room.

Choosing a Colour Scheme

When designing a colour scheme for a room take time to consider some important questions.

Selecting Appropriate Colours

Ask yourself these questions in order to narrow down the choice of colours:

What is the room's function?

In a bedroom you may find pastel colours more acceptable, while in a child's playroom primary bright might be more appreciated.

How much time is to be spent in the room?

A strong vibrant colour may be fine for the cloak room but unsuitable for the bedroom where more time is spent.

What is the orientation of the room?

If it is north facing you may counteract the coldness of the light by introducing a colour from the warm side of the wheel. Whereas, if the room faces south, this will allow you to base your scheme on one of the cooler colours.

Does the size of room need adjustment?

By painting or papering the walls in warm dark colour, you can make a large room look smaller.

What mood you want to create?

Is the living room for example to be lively or tranquil?

Will the room be used mostly during the day or at night?

For a room like dining room, which is mostly used at night make sure that your selection looks good in artificial light.

What are the colours of the existing possessions you want to accommodate in the room?

These may inspire the starting point for your scheme.

If the room is to be a place for rest and relaxation, soft greens and blues will tends to work well in prompting rest and would be good consideration for bedrooms.

On the other hand, more attractive social spaces like dining rooms or living rooms might benefit from colours on the warmer side of the colour wheel. Whatever the case, there is no particular rule about colour and where particular colours must go in the home.

Colour and Light

It is very important to consider the natural light when choosing colour because light can either bring a colour to life or deaden it. First beware of the type of natural light coming into the room. The colder the light the better suited it is to use warmer colours- cream as opposed to brilliant white; terracotta rather than orange, aquamarine instead of turquoise. Secondly observe how the external factors affect the light in the room. The light in the built up area is filtered and flattened and is quite different to that found in the open spaces. The amount of light that a room receives also has a profound effect upon colour. A room with abundant sunlight from windows facing south will convey a warmer glow on the wall colour, whereas a room facing north will reflect a bluer light off the wall. It is tempting to paint a dark area brilliant white, but this will only make it look dingy. Work with the character of the room rather than trying to force a colour scheme on it. Dark rooms look magnificent painted in rich shades such as mushroom or vermilion red. These dramatic colours are ideal for the room used mainly in the evening or in winter i.e. dining room or cosy living rooms.

Consider the effect of artificial light on colour. In rooms with only one overhead lighting source the light becomes diffused and the colours become dull. It is therefore best to create a layered scheme, including up lighters that can be used to wash a wall or spotlights that highlight key features. The choice of bulb and shade is also important. Halogen bulbs produce a clear white light that has the least discernible

effect on colour. However it is diffused or reflected. The halogen light is too bright for room intended relaxing. Here the warmer glow of the tungsten bulbs is more comfortable.

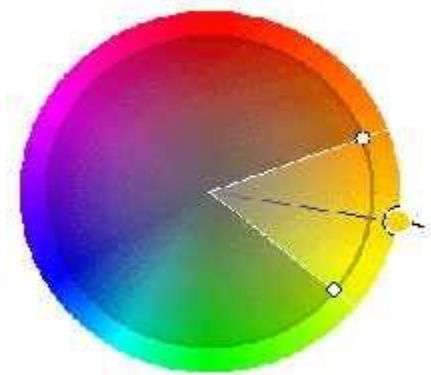
Before completely painting a room with a chosen colour, paint a sizeable area on one wall of the room and observe how the colour looks at different times of the day and evening. If you decide that it is not quite the right hue that is finally required, you can fine tune it by trying a shade or two lighter or darker. The process will help you get the right colour scheme actually required and will save time and money.

Colour Schemes

An interior design scheme can be inspired by anything, such as a beautiful rug, a beautiful pattern; even nature itself can spark the imagination. The possibilities are endless. A key to developing a good interior design scheme from any source of inspiration is to pull out a single dominant colour and then support it with one or two other colours from the scheme but in lesser amounts. Working to achieve the right ratio between the colours within the scheme is very important. It can often make or break the look. Even if there is no particular inspiration for a scheme, still tempting interiors can be designed from these common colour schemes.

Analogous

This type of colour scheme consists of the hues which lie next to each other on the colour wheel. It usually projects a very unified and cohesive look. Analogous colour schemes work best if the colours are all from either the warm side or the cool side of the colour wheel and not a mixture of both.

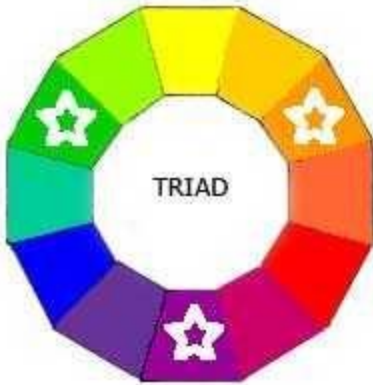


Complementary

Consider using complementary colour scheme, if you want to bring attention to the room. The main palette consists of the colours opposite to each other on the colour wheel.

Triad

This colour scheme consists of any three colours equally spaced around the colour wheel.

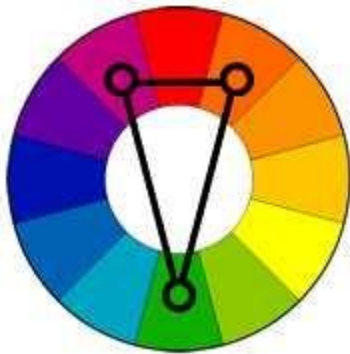


Monochromatic

In this approach one colour is used in various tints, shades and tones. Black and white may be introduced within this type of colour scheme. A monochromatic colour scheme can look very sophisticated and unified. The key to success with this scheme is creating variations with the chosen colour scheme.

Split Complementary

This is a variation on the complementary colour scheme in a slightly more sophisticated way. It is composed primarily of one dominant colour and two hues that sit across on either side of its complementary colour directly across the colour wheel.



Colour Psychology

When planning a room scheme, interior design colour psychology should also be considered. The appropriate interplay of a colour and its tonal value, help to achieve the feel that is required for a room. Colours can be perceived as warm or as cool depending on where they lie on the colour wheel. In interior design colour psychology, the yellow, red and orange region is considered as warm colour zone. Whereas the purple, blue and green area is considered to give a cool feeling. There are beiges and muted greys that don't really have a warm or cool projection in interior colour psychology. These are referred to as temperature **neutrals**. The colours on the warm side of the wheel are advancing colours and give a closer and cosier feel. If you have to decorate a large space that lacks intimate appeal, consider using colours

from this part of the spectrum. On the other hand hues from the cool side tend to recede visually, suggesting an open space. These are therefore good to use in small spaces.

The Warm Colours

Red

Red is associated with passion, heat and energy. This colour is very bold in its pure form. It can be very elegant and add a lot of character to a colour scheme- both traditional and contemporary. It is a good accent to green family which lies opposite red on the colour wheel. The stronger values of red can be highly stimulating and overpowering. Even in its softer tint of pink, red can add much design to a scheme. Traditionally pink was associated with love, and romance also this is now disappearing. Red is also appetite- inducing which is why many restaurants are decorated in this colour. The deeper, greyed values of red- plum rose and burgundy- add warmth richness and elegance without being too overpowering. Like all warm colours, these benefit the introduction of a little contrast by a cool colour or definite neutrals such as pure white, black and clear grey.

Orange

Orange is associated with sunshine and cheerfulness. It brings together the energy of red and intellect of yellow. In its pure form it is as demanding and advancing as red. Orange in Greek mythology was the colour attributed to Zeus, the supreme ruler of the gods.

Orange creates a highly stimulating scheme if its stronger values are used, or when it is contrasted with black, white or its complement blue. Use these strong combinations for children's rooms, or to create a welcoming entrance hall. When used in its more muted form it is less overwhelming. Terracotta flooring, apricot fabrics or other muted varieties of this hue can be quite pleasing to the eye.

Yellow

Yellow is a joyful and uplifting colour associated with summer. The symbolic colour of the life giving sun hence linked with nature. Yellow is associated with creative energy, the mind intellect and power and symbolises wealth. Almost any value of yellow will bring warmth and light into the darkest and coldest room. Yellow can create a focal point with a neutral. The paler yellows have a high reflective value, it can make a small and dark room look much larger and brighter. In its pure form yellow can be overwhelming. Its lighter tints, however, can look clean and fresh. As an accent colour yellow can provide a nice level of pop in a design scheme.

The Cool Colours

Purple

Purple is associated with tranquillity, opulence and fashion in interior design colour psychology. Because of its position on the colour wheel where warm and cool meet, its bias towards red or blue determines its degree of coolness. It takes on warmer characteristics with red tones. Some tones of violet can be bit intense, but pastel lavenders give a very fresh and uplifting feel to a room.

Blue

Blue is associated with calm, trust and sensitivity. Blue can easily be paired with many other colours and is therefore a common choice in a colour scheme. Usually it is used with white, greens and yellows.

Green

Green is the colour of nature, relaxation and rest. Green is very versatile in working with other colours as it is the colour of nature. In many cultures green is also the colour of fertility. Today, the 'green' image also sums up the current refusal to accept pollution and spoiling of our environment. Coming half way between the warm and cool colours, green is the colour of harmony. It is easy on the eye and creates an atmosphere of relaxation. When green is contrasted with its complement red, the result is very stimulating. Green colour recedes, so in its pale values, it gives an impression of space. Most greens are cool so you might need to warm them up with few contrasting accessories and crisp neutrals.

Colour Tones

Tonal values play an important role in interior design colour psychology. Lighter tones are more reflective and therefore we see these, as moving away from us. They give us illusion of more space. Whereas deeper and darker colour tones reflect less light and appear closer to us. This creates a sense of more closer, intimate space. Consider both hue and tonal value when planning a design scheme.

When planning a colour scheme you need to think about many things: the size and shape of the room you are going to decorate, its orientation (that is which way it faces), and how much natural light it receives.

You also need to consider the intensity of the colours you choose. If you put too many similar tones together, the effect will lack contrast, therefore different tonal values should be combined. This is particularly important when working with monochromatic scheme, or one based on neutrals or when you are decorating your room with mainly plain surfaces. The secret of all interior design lies on combining the practical with the aesthetic. It is therefore wise to choose the mid and darker tones for those surfaces which receive most wear such as the floor and upholstery, and to use paler colours on the

walls and ceilings which are easier to wash or clean. Stronger and pure hues can be introduced in the shape of accents and accessories.

Bringing in Harmony

One of the most harmonious colour schemes is made by working with different values of one colour, to create monochromatic or single colour scheme. Such a scheme is calming and relaxing and when blues or greens are used, it suggests space and elegance. Colours that are next or adjacent to each other on the colour wheel, naturally harmonize each other.

Bringing in Contrast

Contrasting and complementary colour schemes are most stimulating and therefore should not be used for areas used for relaxing. You can create contrasting schemes by using two dynamic opposites: blue/ orange, yellow/ violet, red/ green but also think about the tonal contrast and the use of a neutral as a link. In a scheme if pale primrose is combined with rich plum- purple, cream can be used as the neutral. A simple way of creating a contrasting scheme is to combine a warm with a cooler colour, which needs not necessarily be the complete opposite, blue can be used for instance with yellow.

Creating a Feeling of Warmth

All the warm colours- in their various tints, shades and tones, work well in cold, dark and north – or west facing rooms. The warm colours can be used to create cosy atmosphere. The warm, long wavelength colours include red, red/ orange, yellow/ orange, yellow and some yellow/ greens. You can also use their various tones, tints and shades such as pink, rose, wine red, gold, apricot, yellow and terracotta to create the same results. For added interest you can use strong cool accents into mainly warm scheme.

Creating Excitement

The way you put colours together is called creating colour harmonies, although sometimes you may create excitement rather than harmony. For instance, a stimulating affect can be created in the children's playroom by using contrasting or complementary colours. Try combining a warm with a cool, such as red with green, blue with orange, purple and yellow. All these colours are direct opposite on the colour wheel, and can be very strong and dominant. A softer and still stimulating scheme can be created by using pale and subtle values of the complementary colours, or by pairing yellow and blue, grey and pink. It is also a good idea to add plenty of textural contrast to exciting stimulating schemes. To do this shiny and light reflecting surfaces can be combined with rough rustic and matt light- absorbing ones.

Creating Calm and Relaxation

There are the adjacent or neighbourly colours, which are found next to each other on the colour wheel. When creating a relaxing scheme, work with colour from the same family. You can try yellow/ green and blue/ green. Calm schemes can include mainly warm or mainly cool colours. For an even more relaxing

scheme, you can work with monochromatic colour scheme where different values of one basic hue are used.

Using Neutrals

Natural and neutral textures can also be used to create a relaxing area, but they should come from the same family. The only true neutrals are black, white and grey. When these three non colours are used together, they can be highly stimulating, especially if combined with bold patterns and lots of different textures. These days other accepted neutrals(although some may include different colour bias) include cream, beige, off white, mushroom, brown and the colours of natural untreated materials, such as wood sea grass, jute, slate.

Pattern

Design schemes are referred to as colour schemes but there are two other ingredients which are as important as colour and without which a scheme lacks depth and interest. It is the skilful use of pattern and texture that makes the scheme blooming. Pattern has been used for thousands of years to decorate houses, objects and people. Patterns may be printed directly on the fabric, or woven into the fabric during manufacture. Very often a pattern can be the starting point for a complete colour scheme, with the colours in the pattern providing the colour palette for paints, plain fabrics and other accessories. Many of the designs developed in the primitive times are still with us.

Different types of Patterns

There are basically four types of patterns:

- Geometric
- Floral
- Motif
- Pictorial

Successfully mixing patterns also requires an understanding of scale and density.

Geometric Patterns

Stripe- this type of geometric pattern is decorative yet it can also serve the purpose of deceiving the eye. It is also a space manipulation tool. Vertical stripes make a surface appear taller. Whereas horizontal stripes create a sense of width. Another example of geometric patterns is a check design. Checks are versatile and can fit within a wide range of settings both formal and casual. A crisp, clean, tone-on-tone pattern could be perfect for upholstered dining room chairs in a formal setting. Whereas, gingham check could be great for casual country house setting.



Floral Pattern

This is perhaps the easiest interior design pattern to recognize. As the name suggests the focus is on the flowers of all kinds. A floral pattern provides a soft touch to a design scheme. Even multiple floral patterns can also be used in a design scheme. In that case you can calm the action down by the addition of some geometric stripes or checks else where in the design scheme.



A floral interior design pattern is especially useful for conveying a sense of historical or period style.

Motif Pattern

In the visual sense a motif refers to a repeated image. It can be either representational or abstract. Representational designs are based on nature- moon, stars, sun, shells, flowers and the like. Suppose in a design scheme if a bathroom is decorated with pictures of re-occurring sea shell design. Sea shells can either be stencilled or prepared along the top of the wall like a border. A sea shell shaped soap dish can be used for soap. This is an example of representational motif, in which the designs are based on nature and the images are repeated in the design scheme.

Abstract designs are based on geometrically formed shapes.

A motif interior design scheme can be used to demonstrate a strong theme and unity in an overall design scheme. A motif can be introduced through fabrics, floorings, wall coverings and accessories.

Pictorial Pattern

Pictorial pattern though similar to motif pattern, is more scenic in nature. It can be used to provide themed anchoring to a particular era or style i.e a jungle theme in a child's bedroom.

It can also be a bit more grown up. Like draperies with images of Greek Urns in a kitchen environment-tying in with other Greek elements in the space. Another possibility could be fabric depicting, an old

English hunting scene used on the draperies of an office or den. This will add a masculine flavour to a space. If you intend to use pictorial interior design pattern, try starting out small. Some throw pillows could be a good starting point.



Choosing and Buying Patterns

One of the fun elements of designing and decorating a room comes when you have to choose and mix of patterns and colours. While choosing pattern consider factors such as scale, colour, tone and content.

- Experiment with mixing and matching: try Stripes and checks, stars and stripes.
- Choose two dominant patterns of the same scale and you will find that they fight each other for your attention.
- As general rule the best results are achieved by arranging for the largest areas (walls floors, curtains) to take on the largest scale patterns and the smaller items correspondingly smaller patterns.
- Always view pattern from distance from which it will be viewed in a room. By holding the sample at a suitable distance from a mirror you will get the right effect
- Curtain sample patterns are best viewed with some light behind them rather than facing the light. This will give a good idea of how the material will appear when hung at a window.
- When using several patterns in one room make sure that they are linked. Choose patterns with colours, themes, motifs or textures in common.
- You can also develop your own patterns, picking up motifs from other elements in a room. For example, you can trace patterns from china to use as a guide for embroidering table linen, or you can cut out elements from a printed fabric to use to make appliqué designs.
- The simplest way to mix patterns is to choose a decorative pattern first, then co-ordinate a plain or semi-plain fabric or a stripe in a different scale, all in same colour palette. You can then use combinations of all these fabrics for the window treatment, upholstered furniture and cushions. Consider using a checked fabric for sofa and then overlaying it with cushions in different combinations of patterns, for example stripes and checks for a floral with a small gingham check.

Mixing Patterns

Books in their various covers and designs; the way pictures and prints hung on the wall; the play of light and shade; the shapes of different pieces of furniture- all these form patterns in their own right. A play of patterns can be very effective and sometimes enriches the whole scheme. When properly used it will give added depth to the whole room. What is the key to successfully mixing interior patterns? The answer is simple it depends upon the relationship between density and scale.

Scale

Scale is how big or small a pattern element is on the wall paper or on the fabric. This especially has to do with its size. The scale of a large flower is greater than a small rose bud.

Density

Density is how tightly grouped together the elements of the pattern are. A rose bud pattern on an open solid coloured back ground would be less dense than the larger intertwining pattern which shows little, in any background.

So in this example, the large floral pattern is both relatively larger in scale and denser than the open, smaller rosebud pattern. In order to add sophistication to the overall scheme, you can combine interior patterns of different scale and density i.e. if you are using floral you can use a dense, large multi-floral pattern on the throw pillows resting on a solid colour, yet textural sofa. When working with interior design pattern keep in mind the overall colour scheme. The elements of design work best when together not alone.

Stripes and checks can be an easiest pattern to work with. They work well alone or with any of the other pattern families.

Using Patterns Successfully

A successful room scheme includes not only colour but also an effective use of pattern combined with textural and tonal contrasts. Like colours, patterns can also help to create calm feelings, or they can excite you, or entice you, drawing you into the room. Patterns can also change the proportion of space or can suggest modern or period look. Bold patterns work like warm colours, they tend to advance (appear to be coming towards you) Therefore they work best in large and cold spaces. Small patterns are like cool , pale colours , they tend to recede(seem to go away from you) This way they create an impression of space, and can be used effectively in small space but very small mini- prints tend to fade into insignificance if used over a large area. To avoid this happening, you can go for an interesting texture rather than a design.

The use of pattern can also set a specific style, either a period or modern style. The right choice of pattern and colour can enhance the architectural features of a room.

When choosing a pattern, think about its design and scale, and the surface on which you will use it. Heavily patterned curtains and bold carpet designs can be dominant. Patterned curtains can be effective against plain walls. If you want the window to blend in with rest of the décor in the room, choose curtains that co-ordinate with the wall coverings.

Taking Care

There are certain areas in the home where too strong patterns should be avoided- on kitchen work surfaces, for example, where they can cause eye strain. Wall tiles in bathroom and in kitchen need careful selection- too bold a pattern can become irritating.

Texture

Texture is a key element for making a space interesting and inviting. Textural depth can be created by mixing items of different texture in a design scheme.

A room without texture, though nicely composed, looks flat and boring. Imagine a smooth glass tube, a tactile waffle weave throw, a luxurious chenille drapery panel, a shiny lacquered cabinet- all these when included in a scheme will move the eyes around the room taking in all the details.

Textural juxtaposition is a critical element to overall success in any interior environment but becomes even more powerful in a monochromatic scheme.

Visual texture can be perceived as warm or cool, similar to colour. For example a glass table would evoke cool qualities because of its clear smoothness when compared to a cross- section tree trunk that is playing the role of a unique end table. Mixing warm and cool textures in a space can make it more sophisticated. The eye is drawn from one detail to another. Focusing texture to one side of the temperature spectrum can create a sense of harmony.

Texture in fabrics emphasize mood within a room. A grand dining room is synonymous velvet, brocade, pasley and taffeta, whereas a romantic bedroom brings to mind voile, light weight cotton and ribbon trims. Texture can be used to create the smart town house look of smooth linen, and suede. Every fabric you choose has textural significance, so be aware of how you can use this to add another layer of interest to a room. This applies not only to foundation fabrics but also to smaller items-denim cushions embellished with wooden buttons are the perfect addition to a relaxed family room, for example, whereas cashmere ones trimmed with satin look sensational on a leather club chair.



Colour and Texture

Surface textures also affect the way we perceive a colour – many textures absorb light, some reflect it; others filter and diffuse light. Sometimes the same colour can appear quite different, depending on the way the surface reacts to light.

It is another reason why you need to look at the fabrics, paints samples under the lighting conditions in which they will actually be seen.

Many people think of texture as a purely raised, rough or sculptured surface. Actually all surfaces have a texture, even if perfectly smooth and bland, such as plastered walls that have been painted with matt emulsion paint. This texture absorbs light slightly, making a colour look weaker. The same colour on a shiny surface, such as gloss paint, silk fabric, glazed tiles, will look brighter and stronger, as the light is bounced back.

The rough textures of exposed brick or stone walls, planks of wood, natural flooring and coarsely woven textiles absorb light, and therefore make the colour appear darker, richer or in some cases duller. Light diffusing textures such as sheer muslin, voile fabrics, allow the light to pass through, making the colour appear softer and more delicate. Heavily textured items can create very interesting effects. Because of their uneven surface, light is reflected, absorbed and reflected differently across resulting in varying values of colour. You can use this in a room where you want to add an extra visual element.

Texture can also work like colour to bring surfaces forward or can give the impression that they are further away. For example the shiny and silky textures- glass, brass and chrome- seem to come to you; whereas the rougher, soft and light absorbing textures- velvet, tweed and jute – do the opposite and seem to move apart. As a result the colour of highly glazed ceramic tiles stand out much more than the same colour on a bath towel.

Setting a Style Through Textures

Texture can also help to set the style of a room- for example some textures are definitely more traditional and are suitable for decorating period rooms. Brass, velvet, brocades, lace and feathery ferns, for example, all have a period feel, while chrome specially if combined with smoked glass, brushed

aluminium, black ash, slatted venetian blinds all have a more modern look. Some texture, however, such as brick and stone and leather are timeless, it is the way they are used which creates a special look.

It is very important to achieve textural balance when selecting materials. This means choosing a variety of textures within a scheme – which will complement and contrast each other while at the same time will relate to the overall style.

Softening Texture

Shiny textures are too busy and stimulating and can almost be disturbing if too many are used in the room. This is often seen in the bathrooms and kitchens. A calmer feel can be created by balancing shiny textures with soft and delicate light filtering textures. Rough textures can be very harsh. You can soften them by using some light filtering surfaces. The softer and light absorbing textures sometimes appear claustrophobic, especially if they are on a dark coloured surface. They will look more effective if contrasted by silks, shiny and light diffusing textures.

Textural Contrasts

Think about different textures and you will see that it is possible practically to feel as well as see different textures through the mind's eye. Pick out some of them and imagine how they would look when appropriately distributed among walls, ceilings, floors and furniture. Contrast their qualities; weigh up their surfaces and juxtapose them in your mind. Rough can easily go with smooth and matt with gloss- but what rough with what smooth and what matt with what gloss, are the questions of taste and situation. For example brick walls would better be contrasted with linen or cotton, or smooth white finish of shutters, than with silk, or velvet.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Designing Commercial Interiors, (2012) By Christine M. Piotrowski, Elizabeth A. Rogers, IIDA*
- ✓ *Professional Practice for Interior Designers,(2011) By Christine M. Piotrowski*