



Sure, You Can Put That There: How To Decorate With A Roommate

Tips for creating shared spaces where everyone can feel at home.

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Whether you're one of the [79 million](#) Americans living in a shared household or one of seven Chinese [gal pals](#) who bought a mansion for tea-filled retirement years, decorating shared spaces is a pretty big challenge. No matter how long you've known your roommate or how many of their deepest, darkest secrets you've heard, combining your possessions and tastes takes quite a bit of finesse. Never fear—we've compiled some of the most helpful tips out there to make your blended house a home. Because if the Brady Bunch could make it work, so can you. 1. Drink wine. [Why not?](#) 2. Put your heads together. Now that you're loosened up, start the big-picture conversation. Take turns throwing out colors, styles and themes you each love, then the ones you despise. Grab some magazines and log onto Pinterest to discover where your preferences collide—after all, this is an exciting opportunity to start from scratch to create something that resembles your ideal living space. That being said, it's unlikely that either of you is fresh off a total [cleansing](#) of all your possessions, so you'll have to make some

compromises. “When you move in, take the opportunity to collect all the decor that you both already own,” Bright Living’s Coriann Bright [told Brit+Co](#). “Lay it all out on the floor and take a moment to see if any of the items have a common theme, color or look. Use this as the foundation to build a blended design, but be selective. Remember, you don’t have to use everything.” There are also several inexpensive ways to bring a cohesive feel to vastly different pieces, such as “painting or refinishing a couple key pieces of furniture, switching out knobs, purchasing a slipcover or new throw pillows for the couch, and hanging onto both of your wall art but investing in a cohesive set of frames,” [said Lauren Conrad](#).

3. Invest where appropriate. When it comes to heavy-use items like sofas and rugs, you and your roommate may find it worthwhile to go in on higher-quality pieces that will last longer and look nicer. “We wouldn’t get a veneer coffee table, because that would chip in the first six months from people using it,” [said Sophie Wilkinson](#), Head of Design and Construction at [Common](#). “We’d get a real coffee table that would look good, and withstand, and wouldn’t decay.” Don’t be afraid to talk about what would happen to furniture you’ve purchased together should you and your roommate ever part ways. And if they offer to pay more in order to keep the couch, remember to put cold water on wine stains immediately.

4. Function > Pretty Artwork and knickknacks are great, but even more important is designing a space that’s conducive to both of your lifestyles. What activities do you and your roommate both prioritize doing in the living room? Make it easy to shove furniture out of the way for at-home yoga sessions, or set up seating for the coziest movie nights this side of Hollywood. In the kitchen, provide plenty of space for the roommate who loves to try new recipes to stash and access their array of cookbooks. If you both love to entertain, show love to your dining room with mood lighting and a big, beautiful table (or BBT, in some circles.) Such designing around experiential preferences can even prevent disagreements. “When you’re living with roommates, it’s easy to get into tiffs when someone doesn’t wash their dishes or put things back where they belong,” [wrote Katie Holdefehr for Apartment Therapy](#). “While an organized design can’t prevent all squabbles, providing ample public storage space and shelving, setting out a dish rack, and designating spots for kitchen essentials can set you up for successful cohabitation.”

5. Carve out your own slice(s) of heaven. Consider divvying up some design responsibilities and agreeing to disagree—a real “you take the bathroom, I’ll take the laundry room” situation. And unless you bunk up with your roommate—and if you do, it surely won’t be forever, but our thoughts are with you nonetheless—you’ll also get to take full artistic control of your bedroom. Go wild in there! Put a feather boa on a human skeleton!

6. When in doubt, call it “boho.” There’s a reason why an eclectic style will be [popular forever](#), and it’s because we have all had to toss several roommates’ random dishes into one cabinet and call it a set. “It’s all about meshing styles and pulling from a variety of sources, including thrift stores, big-box retailers and your grandma’s stash,” [said Holdefehr of bohemian styles](#). In demonstrating the sentiment by featuring a home in Oakland, she pointed out: “In the living room, a Salvation Army couch sits beside an IKEA coffee table and a Craigslist chair, yet nothing seems out of place.” Phew, the pressure’s off. Time to take a break. By the way, if you mix it up by having a margarita after wine? That’s boho.