

ASK THE EXPERTS

From interiors and gardening to DIY and eco design, our team answers your questions



INTERIOR DESIGN

SALLIE CHATER

Founder and director of her own interior design company, Interiors at 58, Sally believes in creating luxurious, elegant and original schemes at affordable prices

A TOUCH OF GOLD

Q I love the gold trend but am worried about it dating or looking too ostentatious. How can I incorporate it tastefully?

Kirstie Manuel, Perth



Add interesting accessories, such as these pineapple ornaments, along with a lamp and chair bases, to bring in elements of gold

A Gold tones have been a part of room design for centuries, and if used well, can look glamorous rather than gaudy. The key to incorporating gold is to follow some simple guidelines. Firstly, use it in moderation alongside more natural textures for an elegant rather than flashy effect, then pair with complementary colours and choose tones wisely.

Try starting in the living room, with a gold-framed coffee table teamed with gold accessories such as lamps, candles and decorative objects – West Elm has a good selection. You can even add golden handles to existing cupboards or drawers for an affordable instant update.

Next, think about the other colours you'll be using – gold-framed furniture and accessories look fantastic with navy blue and emerald green. For a dramatic look, you can also pair it with furniture in darker woods, and keep an eye out for gold handles and legs. The tones will be beautiful together and, if you want to update your look in the future, it's easy to replace the hardware.

If you prefer lighter colours, combine soft powder pinks, whites and neutrals. Mixing gold with textures such as rustic woods, sheepskin and marble, rather than silks or other metallics, will create a stunning effect. And for wow factor in your dining room, choose chairs with gold legs, teamed with a rustic wooden dining table for timeless glamour. A gold mirror would make the perfect finishing touch, but choose one with a slim frame to avoid the theme becoming overpowering.

If you still feel cautious, opt for pieces in brushed matt gold or antique brass. Both are more subtle than their glossy counterparts and arguably more timeless than copper and rose gold. Just keep your mix of tones and textures to a minimum for the most sophisticated look.



Shutters aren't just useful for light control – they also help prevent heat build-up

INDOOR COOL

Q My first-floor flat always gets very hot in the summer months. How can I keep it cool? *Felicity Brown, Cobham, Surrey*



ECO DESIGN

OLIVER HEATH

The UK's leading expert in sustainable architecture and interior design, and a familiar face on TV

A With our unpredictable climate leading to hotter summers and colder winters, it can be a struggle to keep the temperature within our homes at a comfortable level the whole year round.

There are several ways to approach this problem, depending on how much money you want to spend and the level of control you have over your home. Insulation such as cavity wall and insulating render systems are effective in keeping your home cooler in summer and warmer in winter, but if you're in rented accommodation or have a tighter budget this can be a little impractical.

Blinds are often inadequate for reducing temperature because as soon as the sun's rays are through the glass, they'll begin to heat up the space beyond. External shading is a far more efficient solution. Shutters on the outside

of the window, for example, will reduce the levels of light entering your flat and therefore keep the temperature down.

A slightly greener solution would be to introduce deciduous planting outside your windows – in the summer their leaves will shade the sunlight and in the winter when the leaves die off, your flat won't seem too dark. Alternatively, you can buy a solar-control window film – when applied on the inside surface, it will reduce incoming solar heat by 80 per cent, filter UV rays by 99 per cent and reduce glare by 80 per cent.

Natural ventilation through open windows can also be effective. Sash windows will let cool air in at the bottom and hot air out at the top, but the best way to make natural ventilation work in any home is to create a draught by opening windows on either side of your property. ▶

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