

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

PICTURE PERFECT

Q My husband and I have moved into a larger house and have lots of blank walls. What's the best way to fill the spaces without breaking the bank? *Teresa Bond, Kent*



When choosing art for your walls, vary the concepts throughout your home

● Email your questions to us at house.beautiful@hearst.co.uk or post to House Beautiful, Unit 9, Apollo Business Centre, Trundleys Road, London SE8 5JE

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A I'm sure you can't wait to personalise your new home, but with lots of walls to fill, it can get costly. There are affordable solutions available though. As you have a large space to deal with, it's a good idea to choose varied concepts for different areas to avoid repetition and ensure a balanced feel.

If you like contemporary art and want one or two larger pieces in a room, try online site desenio.co.uk, which has a fantastic collection of statement pieces at reasonable prices. Alternatively, art.co.uk has prints in all styles, including some giant ones that have real wow factor and are perfect for big reception rooms. Consider placing one large piece centrally above your sofa or use two similarly sized ones either side of a fireplace.

A gallery wall, created using a selection of smaller frames, is a good cost-effective choice for tricky spaces such as stairwells. Or simply use sepia-toned personal photos for even better value.

Wooden or metal fretwork wall panels often come in large sizes, neutral tones and affordable prices, and are a great way to add interest in rooms that already have bold prints or colours. They're particularly impressive displayed in multiples if you have a very large area to cover.

If you're not keen on buying art, wallpaper is an easy way to add colour, depth and tone. Textured wallpapers, such as faux silks or grass cloths, are fantastic for creating a subtle feeling of warmth and luxury, meaning you can keep wall decoration to a minimum.

Shelves are also useful for creating a focal point on blank walls, and are the perfect place to store attractive personal items and objects. Choose a style that complements your scheme, and if you have beautiful glassware or crockery, consider using open shelving in the kitchen for an attractive, but practical look.

Finally, don't forget mirrors! A large design is often more affordable than a similarly sized piece of art. Pick one with an intricate frame for maximum impact and use in darker areas to bring light into the room.



Take elements from nature to stimulate your senses

AS NATURE INTENDED

Q Incorporating natural textures and materials seems to be a trend that's growing in popularity. Which kind are best and what are the benefits? *Sabine Welsh, Hartlepool*



ECO DESIGN

OLIVER HEATH

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

A Introducing natural materials into your home enriches your overall experience of the space and stimulates senses other than just sight. Texture, for example, is fundamental to touch. Douglas fir timber has a very pronounced grain, so is a great option, while wire brushing other timber planks will raise the grain, creating a lovely tactile surface. Textural contrast can promote a feeling of calm and relaxation, too. The placement of stone tiles next to timber creates a temperature contrast from cold to warm, while a sheepskin rug on top of wood gives a soft-to-hard contrast.

Another option is to mimic elements of nature that are more difficult to use indoors. Pools of water have absorbing and relaxing patterns of movement and reflection, but

it wouldn't be practical to have them in most homes. However, you could use hand-glazed tiles to produce similar visuals of reflection, creating the impression of motion as you pass by. These patterns have been shown to have a beneficial effect on both blood pressure and heart rate.

Similarly, printed wallpapers and fabrics can help to recreate the textures and complexities found in nature. As with all natural materials or their imitations, proportion is very important. An entire room of panelled timber or floral wallpaper is bold and striking, but can also be overwhelming. Proportional design, which highlights contrasting textural surfaces and uses pattern and natural colours in small areas, will energise a room and create a mindful, sensory space. ▶