



LIGHT TOUCHES: Large mirrors opposite a window help bring natural light into a room; choose upholstery fabrics that are stain resistant, so that you can cope with accidents and provide lots of side tables for guests,



LIVING FOR THE SUMMER

*Summer is a great time to upgrade your living room. **Richard Bond** reports.*

When designing a living room it is important to ensure it will be a room that can be used, rather than admired, so function and practicality are your prime concerns.

The first decision is the area of focus in your room: this is often the television, but could equally be a fireplace or picture window. Once that is identified all design considerations, especially furniture groupings, should reference it.

Your living room is likely to be your most important social space, so ensure you have plenty of comfortable, but non-bulky seating: thick arms on a sofa mean

less seating area for the floor space it occupies. No matter who will be using the room, choose upholstery fabrics that are stain resistant, so that you can cope with accidents that will inevitably occur.

Providing a number of occasional tables at the side of chairs will also help by avoiding people having to stretch too far to put down drinks. It will also minimise the possibility of TV remotes and reading glasses going missing. Place tables near electrical sockets so that you avoid trailing cable trip hazards. Alternatively, if you have located tables over large floor areas, consider installing floor

mounted sockets; these provide great flexibility and in the current age ensure mobile phone charging is easily to hand. With that in mind, it is also worth upgrading to electrical sockets with USB connections, to facilitate phone charging without the loss of a valuable three-pin socket.

Natural light is always the best environment during the day, so ensure you allow maximum light through your windows and avoid crowding them with overly fussy window dressing. Use window treatments to frame the view outside, but at the same time consider how fabrics will appear when your blinds or curtains are closed, as this is often a dominating aspect in the evening. When it comes to decoration, wallpaper has a much softer feel than a painted surface,

MIRROR IMAGES

To bring extra light and views into a living room place a mirror directly opposite a window. This elongates or widens the feel of the room as your visual range is extended beyond the wall you are looking at, it brings in natural light from the outside and can give you a second chance to experience the view from the window.

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so if the budget can stretch opt for this. Avoid painting ceilings white, as this is extremely stark. Either tone to the wallpaper or, if your walls are painted, coat the ceiling in the same colour (with the potential of picking out coving in another accent colour – or white). Paint wood in a satin, rather than a gloss finish, to ensure sheen without shine for a more contemporary look.

Overhead lighting is important, but really for the look rather than practical use as it generally forms a harsh environment. Create an intimate look for the evening, by using a mixture of wall-lights, floor lamps and table lamps. This will allow you to alter the feel of the room as required, providing maximum flexibility in one of the most vital spaces in your home.