



THE PERFECT ARRANGEMENT

How you arrange your furniture can make or break a room, both from a functional and an aesthetic standpoint. As you place your pieces, keep in mind the following considerations.

TRAFFIC PATTERNS

This is the most important aspect of a successfully arranged room — as good as it might look, if the room doesn't work you won't enjoy spending time there. If you can't cross it without walking through a conversation or come and go without passing in front of the TV, the room doesn't work. Ideally, furniture should direct traffic around the room's perimeter so as to avoid being intrusive to the people and activities in it, and allow at least two feet of space for traffic paths.

FOCAL POINTS

Every room should have a focal point — a place for the eye to rest. Some rooms have a natural focal point, such as a picture window with a great view or a built-in wall unit. Where a natural focal point is the case, your furniture should be arranged around it in such a way as to capture people's attention. If it doesn't have a natural one, a room's focal point will consequently become its largest piece of furniture (the couch in the living room, the table in the kitchen, the desk in the den, for example).

BALANCE

A room in which all the big, heavy pieces of furniture are gathered together in one part of the room will look off balance. The key to an aesthetically appealing arrangement is to distribute visual weight evenly throughout a room, which you can do by "mirroring" a weighty item with another one or with a grouping of lighter items. You also want to be mindful of the scale of items next to each other — setting delicate side tables next to a bulky, oversized couch won't work.

VISUAL INTEREST

When all the furniture in a room lines its walls or is all the same size or height, the layout can look sterile. Bring furniture closer to the middle of the room, which will create a traffic path around the outside of the room and help make carrying on conversation a little easier, or try positioning your furniture on an angle. As well, a room's layout should include furniture of varying heights and sizes — the eye should move up and down as it scans the room.

Go Green

Most commercial furniture polishes are petroleum-based and release harmful chemicals into the air you breathe at home. Keep your furniture looking shiny and new with non-toxic products you probably already have in your kitchen: Mix two parts olive oil with one part lemon juice; rub the mixture into the wood with a cloth; then polish it dry with a clean cloth. Always give the mixture a good shake prior to use, as the two ingredients tend to separate when left to sit.

