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THE
LIVING ROOM



{ A Place to Feel Welcome }

There's lots of talk about kitchens being the center of a house, but the living room is the heart of our family's home. I hear it in my son's voice when he's sitting in his favorite chair and sharing how much he loves to be in his favorite spot. It's a gift to feel truly welcomed and at home in a space, one we get to enjoy and one that offers the gift of refreshment to everyone else who enters the space as well.

It's the place where we come together and share so many great moments. This is where we have family movie night with popcorn and peanut M&M's, enjoy lazy Sunday afternoons watching football, plop down for afternoon naps, and spend the occasional "date night in" with takeout on the coffee table.

Life happens in our living room. We've shared laughs with friends, had intimate conversations over giant cups of coffee, held Bible studies, and so much more. Our house doesn't have a family room, so this room even served as the playroom when our kids were toddlers. Toys were sometimes strewn all over the floor, and

now that the kids are older, it's where we have ultimate LEGO challenges and intense games of Uno.

This is where my family feels at home.

Everybody has their favorite spot. Mine is a cozy corner of our couch, where my coffee can rest within reach on a side table. My husband and our son have dubbed the two side chairs in our living room as their personal thrones. Our daughter prefers throwing herself on a mile-high pile of throw pillows on the floor to unwind at the end of the day.

Because of its importance to all of us, I've spent much time designing our living room and tweaking it to make the space feel just right. I don't want our living room merely to look nice; I want it to tell our story and be an authentic representation of the life we have created. To do this, I focused on flooring and textiles that suited my style, colors and tones to follow my heart, and textures and layers to bring warmth to my neutral palette. My hope is that by sharing my process, I can help you create the feeling you are after and express the story of your family and home.

As a good reminder for you and me, the living rooms in which I've felt most welcomed weren't decorated to perfection, grandiose in size or feel, or all one certain style. The common thread is that they were comfortable. Approachable.

When our living rooms reflect us and our hope for others, they provide an invitation for everyone to be themselves and to stay longer than they intended.

Where to Start

Whether your living room is made up of hand-me-down furniture, pieces collected over time, or a complete set from the local furniture store, I'm going to show you how you can create a living room you long to be in.

Determine what you want to be your focal point. Not sure? Think about the purpose for your living room. Is it for gathering with friends over drinks around the fireplace? Or movie night





with the family? Or perhaps you have a beautiful view and a wall full of windows where you can sit and gaze for hours.

In our living room, the longest wall is also the first one you see when you walk in. I created a focal point by centering the sofa between the two curtained windows. However, something was still missing. While browsing through HomeGoods one day, I found a large, round, wooden mirror. I loved the scalloped edges and weathered wood finish. Placed above the sofa, it created the much-needed focal point you see in our living room today.

Whether it's a fireplace, the TV, a window, artwork, a favorite architectural piece, or a round wooden mirror, arranging your furniture with a focal point will help the space feel grounded and defined.

The Beauty of a Mistake {Textiles + Fabrics}

Our living room hasn't always been the soft, neutral space it is today. If you followed my blog in those early days, you know this to be true. Our living room used to have brightly colored walls and bold patterns throughout. At the time, I let others convince me that I couldn't decorate with white because I had toddlers. Fearfully I heeded their advice. That was mistake number one. We had navy-blue slipcovers on our furniture, deep red and sage-green throw pillows, and black accessories. And our living room walls were painted Wasabi Powder . . . yes, like the insanely hot, green paste you get when you order sushi.

We needed a new area rug for our living room, and I took the opportunity to dive headfirst into the design trends other bloggers were choosing and purchased a dark navy-blue and white Moroccan trellis rug for \$300. I was excited to own something on trend, but from the moment I unrolled that rug, I knew in my gut it was a mistake.

I convinced myself that something so pretty couldn't be bad. That was mistake number two. Trying to make the rug work,

TIP

Not every living room has a focal point, so don't worry if yours isn't noticeable. Take some time to think it through and identify the place that feels most natural to you.



reach out and touch something in the space. I love it when someone comes over and, without even thinking, they reach for a wool blanket draped on the couch, or they run their fingers over a glass bowl.

For the most dimension and appeal, include three different textures into your living room. To accomplish this, you can include both smooth and distressed, shiny and soft. You can also incorporate different materials, such as wood, glass, metal, and wicker. Even your fabric can provide various textures, such as a rough woven linen or a soft wool. From the fabric choices you make to the accessories you bring in, you have opportunities to welcome different textures into your living room and create dimension that welcomes family and friends to find beauty, comfort, and refreshment in your home.

The Family-Friendly Living Room

After we had our first child, people told me a white couch would be impractical. Wanting a family-friendly home, I took the white slipcovers off of our IKEA couch and replaced them with a navy-blue ticking-stripe slipcover.

By the time baby number two came, my living room was littered with toys. I was longing for it to feel like me again . . . back before all the Fisher-Price toys and tiny humans invaded. I considered adding throw pillows, but those would just become landing pads for our kids' cannonballs. Could I style our coffee table with a vase and flowers? Nope—the baby would pull those down. I was stuck . . . until the next time I had to wash the blue covers. I removed them and faced reality—I missed the white. I hurried downstairs and pulled the white slipcovers out from the storage. “Hello, my old friends.”

The moment I put them on, I was refreshed. And I decided I didn't care how many times kids spilled chocolate milk on them—never again would I exile them to the basement. Spills happen,

STYLE A COFFEE TABLE WITH LAYERS

Add personality, texture, and layers to your coffee table in no time! Surface-area vignettes are enjoyable to create, gaze at, and rearrange when you're ready for a small change with surprising impact.

- 1 Place a tray—rectangular or circular—in the center of your table. The defined parameters make styling simpler, keep objects organized, and visually ground the vignette. Trays also make it easy to clear off your table quickly when little ones play or dinner is served in front of the TV.
- 2 Layer larger items first, such as coffee table books or a large vase. I stack at least two large coffee table books toward one side of my tray, leaving room on the other for a large vase or plant.
- 3 Add in a natural element. Fresh flowers or a plant will introduce height, natural texture, color, and life into the space.
- 4 Top it off with a knickknack. I often place one on top of the stacked books. This is an embellishment to your vignette. A shiny object or glass candle votive offers a little sparkle. I've also used smaller picture frames or tiny objects I gathered when traveling. Consider what showcases your style while adding a unique shape. To avoid clutter, I usually limit it to one or two knickknacks.
- 5 Repeat. Style your table anew every season or when your room needs a refresh.



- Throw pillows
- Area rug
- Layered window treatments
- Personal artwork
- Storage baskets
- Table lamps
- Greenery
- Candles
- Coffee table tray
- Books

BRE'S TOP 10 ESSENTIALS



diy Family Gallery Wall

Hanging a gallery wall is one of my favorite ways to add style and reflect who we are as a family. You can share your story through the photos you display, the artwork you choose, or a mix. There are different styles of gallery walls, but I like ones with an organic flow. This also gives us more grace to hang pictures without everything being exactly lined up.

SUPPLIES

- photos
- frames with matting if desired
- nails and hammer

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Gather the photos and wall art you want. For charm, I chose frames that go together but aren't too matchy-matchy. If clean lines are your game, choose frames that are the same color. I like to have at least three different sizes of frames in my grouping, but you could also choose all the same size frame for more of an art gallery look.
2. Choose the wall and the starting place. Hang the largest piece of art at eye level. If creating a gallery wall above a sofa or on a large wall, I hang the largest piece in the center and work my way out on either side with smaller frames. When hanging a gallery wall on a staircase, I start with my largest frame first and then work my way up the staircase.
3. Spacing determines the success of the look. Leave up to 6" between larger frames and 2" or 3" between smaller ones. Practice your layout on the floor. Position the largest frame first. This helps you map the order and spacing and avoid making extra holes in the wall. Take photos so you can reference the dry run when you start the install.
4. Check the type of hanger each frame has on the back before starting. Some require a nail or screw, while others can be hung with adhesive strips. Finishing nails are great for hanging frames in most drywall. You may need to use an anchor with a screw if the drywall hole is too big or if you have plaster walls. Adhesive strips are great for securing corners of frames to the wall to prevent tilting later.
5. After hanging a few frames, take a step back to assess and adjust early. If a frame looks disconnected, move it in a little closer. It doesn't have to be perfectly symmetrical, but equal spacing will create a balanced look.

TIP

You do not need an anchor for light frames or if you find a stud. A few misses? Hide extra holes with the picture you are hanging, or a quick dab of spackle and some touch-up paint will keep your secret.