

Expand Your Room

Even small spaces can project the airy quality of something larger. Here, architects and designers offer their best tips on how to make rooms seem roomier.



WORK THE WALLS

Wallpaper with stripes or geometric shapes will make the eye think an area is bigger, says Richard Fleischman of Cleveland's Richard Fleischman + Partners Architects. When painting, opt for white or pastels over primary hues. To "raise" a ceiling, paint the baseboard a color that contrasts with the wall, says *The New Apartment Book* author Michele Michael. Add a thick stripe about a quarter of an inch above the baseboard, and then paint thinner stripes stacked atop it (as shown).



STAY AWAY FROM WALL-TO-WALL CARPETING

It makes a room seem smaller, says Fleischman. Keep floors uncovered, or try area rugs. When strategically placed two to three feet away from the walls, they can give the optical illusion of a much more spacious floor.

SKIP DRAPES AND CURTAINS

They clutter up a room. Naked or near-naked windows give a sense of openness. So stick with simple blinds and sleek shades, or if privacy isn't an issue, go bare.



ACCESSORIZE WITH WHIMSICAL OBJECTS

Think of small rooms as tiny gems, says Amy Devault, a Los Angeles-based interior designer. Little touches such as antique mirrors or quirky works of art can provide big character.



STREAMLINE YOUR FURNITURE

"You know the chair no one's sat in for more than six months? Throw it out!" says designer Richard Pennington, a co-owner of the San Francisco firm Modern Spaces. "Keep only items that are used constantly." Also forgo bulky, ornate couches in favor of love seats and chairs with slender legs. Coffee tables should be no larger than half the size of your couch. And for the best space-enlarging effect, place the couch either up against the wall or at least three feet away from it.

—ARIANNE COHEN



REPLACE OVERHEAD LIGHTING WITH LAMPS

Central ceiling fixtures emphasize a room's actual size, says Fleischman. "But floor and table lamps cast shadows, making your space seem cavernous."