

Ten tips from a professional designer

There are several ways to create the feeling of a spacious, beautiful room, especially if you start in the house planning stages.



Catherine Brown Well Being by Design

1. Square rooms are more comfortable than rectangular rooms. This is not Feng Shui, it's simply instinct. We feel great outside in open spaces, and a square room is more representative of open space than a long room.
2. When choosing tile and grout, make sure they are similar colours. The grid effect of contrasting tile and grout colours has a restrictive visual impact. Avoid white grout unless you are using white tile.
3. Tiles come in all shapes and sizes these days. Rectangular tiles placed vertically or horizontally can have a striking difference in the look of a room. Whether bathroom windows are placed horizontally or vertically can indicate the best direction to pose a rectangular tile.
4. For small to medium sized rooms, use soft, light, luminous, neutral colours on the walls. Paint a few special accent walls and columns a few shades darker than the rest. It's also possible to paint two accent walls in an L shape, and leave the other two walls in a lighter shade. Four same colour walls give a boxed in effect. The ceiling should be the lightest shade of the same pallet.
5. The larger the room, the more you can afford to use dark colours. Dark colours are a luxury to be enjoyed when it's not necessary to create the illusion of space.
6. Consider using stain rather than paint for doors and door frames. Our concrete homes can use this touch of warmth.
7. Bring out the beauty of wood wherever possible. Translucent white stain is a novel twist to beautify open rafter beam ceilings, while preserving the spacious feel of a light colour overhead.
8. As with paint colours, use neutrals for large surfaces on furniture, such as sofas. Reserve the bright colours and prints for throw pillows and accent chairs... and art, of course! Our Caribbean art is so bright and colourful, furniture and fabrics should act as a canvas to highlight the art. Unless you are sure of your artistic ability, don't use fabrics with prints everywhere.
9. If you are renting, consider glass surfaces. They are not as fragile as wood and can easily be replaced.
10. In St. Maarten, the land of salt, the most durable and beautiful outdoor furniture is synthetic weave with drain drip cushions. One of the world's best outdoor furniture companies is Laneventure. See its unique cushion manufacturing method in this online video: <http://laneventure.com/ultimatecushion.aspx>