

CONSUMER HOW-TO

CREATE “FAMILY-FRIENDLY” ROOMS AS EASY AS “ABC”

They're 63 million strong and they're out to mess you up...scribble on your walls...track mud across your floor...and put their feet on your furniture. Who are they? Your kids!

So, how can you create a fashionable, comfortable living environment without shipping the kids off to Grandma's house? The solution is simple. Create “family-friendly” rooms where kids can play, parents can put up their feet and families can spend quality time together in stylish, appealing settings.

“Today, families are spending more time than ever at home – relaxing, eating, entertaining and working,” said Paula Hoyas, product manager for major upholstery at La-Z-Boy. “That's why it is more important than ever for rooms to be comfortable and livable, as well as attractive.”

How does one create a family-friendly room? According to Hoyas, it's easy as knowing your ABCs.

A Is For “Activities”

Any parent knows that kids mean chaos at home. Toys, games, crafts and other activities result in an ongoing battle with clutter. The battle can be won, however, with the help of creative storage ideas and some cleverly designed furnishings.

Hoyas recommends incorporating storage for toys and games into every room in the house, or at least anywhere kids play. And, instead of disrupting the look of a room by adding large unattractive storage bins, work with what you have. For example, who says entertainment centers can hold only electronic equipment and accessories? The lower shelves of an entertainment unit are ideal for storing toys when not in use and keeping games within easy reach of their users.

Another option is to choose furnishings that feature built-in storage. Many of today's sofas, chairs, ottomans, tables and even beds have drawers or storage space incorporated into their designs. Consider the convenience of stashing toys, blankets and newspapers inside your ottoman, or in a “hidden” drawer built into the base of your sofa. Today, you even can find storage compartments inside the arms of your recliner. What better place to keep the remote control and a TV Guide?

B Is For “Bonding”

Spending quality time together with family and friends is what “family-friendly” rooms are all about. So, when decorating, create settings that encourage communication, interaction and fun.

Arrange furniture in a comfortable grouping that nurtures conversation while accommodating the activity needs of everyone in the family. To achieve this easily with just one piece of furniture, Hoyas recommends a modular grouping as the seating choice for a family-friendly room.

“The ideal family-friendly room is one where the entire family can spend time together while doing things they enjoy,” explained Hoyas. “With a modular sofa grouping, there's plenty of room for adults to recline in comfort, while kids watch TV or play video games. La-Z-Boy even makes a sofa with a back cushion that pulls down to reveal a table ideal for accommodating activities and snacks.”

Another “family-friendly” piece of furniture is a recliner. Offering the ultimate in comfort for any individual in the family, it's also a great place to curl up with a child, a good book – or both.

C Is For “Caution”

An important part of any family-friendly room is safety, especially if there are small children in your home. Be sure furniture pieces are sturdy so they will not move or topple over easily. It's probably best to steer clear of anything made of glass, such as a tabletop, lamps or fragile accessory items. Also, avoid sharp or pointed edges and corners. According to Hoyas, the best choices are fully upholstered seating pieces with soft, rounded arms and sturdy tables with curved edges.

“The tops of tables and the arms of many sofas and chairs are positioned at a child's eye-level, so avoid sharp corners at all costs,” warned Hoyas. “Pointed edges are merely accidents waiting to happen.”

In addition to preventing harm to your family, you also should take “caution” against the many other “C” words that can threaten the lives of your furnishings, such as cookies, chips, candies, crumbs, chocolates and colas that can end up in cracks and crevices, and on cushions. To ward off spills, stains and spots, select upholstery fabrics that feature bold patterns and dark colors that help hide and disguise those occasional accidents. Also, when shopping for new upholstered furnishings, make sure fabrics are specially treated for stain protection.

“There's no question that families mean wear and tear on furniture,” said Hoyas. “So, look for high-quality products that offer both durability and good looks.”
- article from www.la-z-boy.com