

How To Choose Bedroom Furniture

By Curt Hagedorn

Today's bedrooms are a great deal more than a place to sleep – the bedroom has become an oasis, a multi-purpose room where you set the tone, sometimes in a style completely different from the more public areas of your home. Bedrooms are often taking their cue from upscale hotel rooms, including things like refrigerators, audio and video systems and, of course, upscale linens and other accoutrements. Choosing furniture for your bedroom depends on both the atmosphere you're trying to create and the number of functions you're trying to accommodate in that piece of real estate – for example, some parents like to keep their bedroom as a solely adult preserve where children may enter only with permission, in other families the parent's bedroom is a second family room where parents and kids snuggle up and lounge around on evenings and weekends.

Naturally, the first piece of furniture you need for your bedroom is the bed – and not only do you need to decide on the size from full to queen to king, but also whether you want a frilly four poster or an austere platform. Since today's bedrooms are all about comfort and luxury, choose the largest bed that will logically fit in your space (nothing looks odder than a huge bed in a tiny room, however, so if a king won't fit without going wall to wall, settle for a queen. And, like everything else, do your research and buy the best you can afford when it comes to mattresses – fortunately mattresses are always on sale and many mattress dealers have “we will not be undersold” policies so if you find a good price on a model at one place, you can transfer it to another.

Depending upon how much storage you have, next you should assess things like dressers, wardrobes and the like. You might not want the traditional mirrored dresser of the standard bedroom set – one common new idea is to have your closets professionally done to provide you with the hanging space, drawers and shelves you need, and if you want a bedroom that's less bedroom and more “luxury hotel.” A wardrobe can hold a TV and audio system and DVD's; bed tables can hide refrigerators, video games and other entertainment items. You also might want to have a lounge area with a table and chairs where an intimate meal can be served (or kids can color, for that matter.) The bedroom is also often the only room for an exercise area or machine. Whether that consists of a mat and a rubber ball or a complete weight machine, treadmill or exercise machine is up to you.

Lighting and accessories are also extremely important in furnishing a bedroom, from telephones to reading lights. There's nothing more important than a couple of good, unidirectional reading lights if you share a bed, in addition to bedside lamps these lights can illuminate the page in front of you while keeping the rest of the room relatively dark, think of them as the accessory version of “itty bitty book lights.” Bedside lamps should be dimmable and cast flattering illumination; you may want wall sconces or soffit lighting as well as lighting above the lounging area and perhaps special lighting inside or in front of closets and mirrors for dressing, and in the exercise area.

Like all furnishings, no matter what you buy, remember that quality is key – a cheap bed and flimsy mattress will pay off in rapid deterioration and back trouble. Sub-par wardrobes and dressers will result in saggy doors and disintegrating drawers. So always purchase the absolute best you can afford from reputable dealers and known brands. The same goes for upholstered furniture and lighting and other fixtures, as well as floor covering (wall to wall carpeting is usually preferable for a bedroom for both warmth and comfort.) Also, when furnishing your bedroom, remember you have to sleep there. Loud colors, synthetic fabrics, uncomfortable furnishings all may scream that you're an aficionado of modernism, but it's not likely to be very conducive to sleep. So remember to go at least a bit for more rounded edges and muted colors and simplicity.

Though it's tempting to buy one of those incredibly priced complete bedroom suites, you'll probably be happier if you mix and match and put your money where you most need it or where it provides the most comfort and convenience – in most cases, that bed.

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