

# How To Decorate Your Children's Rooms

By Cathy Knopp

Whether you're transforming a nursery into a room for toddlers or making over a guestroom into a teen bedroom, redecorating a child's room requires careful thought and planning. It's important to think about how many children will occupy the room and the types of activities they enjoy. Visit department stores and furniture stores with children's room settings to get ideas. Home improvement stores offer an amazing variety of shelves and modular units that are easy to install.

One of the biggest challenges in decorating a child's room is creating living and sleeping space in a small area. Bunk beds are space savers when two children share a room. Loft beds are perfect for small rooms because they offer sleeping space on top and room for bookshelves, storage chests or a desk and chair below. (Kids also love climbing the ladder to the loft!) Trundle beds are a great idea for children with frequent sleepover guests. (A trundle bed looks like a twin bed, but offers an extra twin bed that pulls out from underneath when needed.)

When choosing furniture for a child's room, consider lighter colors that can be painted a different color when the child gets older, or go with a neutral color such as birch or maple that can be accessorized a variety of ways. Look for furniture that is easy to assemble and easy to clean. Laminated tops will extend the life of pieces such as dressers, chests and desks so they may be used for years.

An inexpensive way to decorate a child's room is to paint the walls in a soft color, then use pre-cut stencils or wallpaper to add interesting borders. Children's interests change quickly so it's not necessarily a good idea to paint their favorite cartoon characters on the wall. Indulge their passion of the moment with pillows, sheets and accessories that are easily changeable.

Preschool children and toddlers enjoy primary colors. Instead of painting the walls red, keep the walls a neutral color and accessorize with toy boxes, shelves and bedding in red, blue, yellow or green. As your child grows older and his tastes change, it's easy to transform the room to suit a teenager by simply switching accessories, pictures and wall shelves.

Children love to play on the floor and spread out their toys. A large area rug gives them a soft place to play. If the room is very small, place a colorful rug and a few pillows in a corner to create a cozy nook for reading and visiting with friends.

Most children enjoy hanging posters of their favorite TV stars or cartoon characters. You can supply them with a bulletin board or corkboard to hold all the things they clip and save or you can help them create a special cloth-covered board they can use to hang posters, souvenirs, and banners. Preschoolers and toddlers enjoy using blackboards and whiteboards hung on the wall at their level. (It takes care of their urge to scribble on the wall without driving their parents crazy!)

Storage is always important, especially if you're short on closet space. Colorful boxes and bins in a variety of sizes help children keep toys, clothes and sports equipment off the floor. You'll find other organizers like hat racks, lockers and chests at major retail outlets as well as at your local furniture and home stores. If stuffed animals and Beanie Babies are getting out of control, invest in a toy hammock available at discount and drug stores. It attaches to the wall with tiny screws and holds a large horde of stuffed animals up and out of the way. Wall hooks are a good option for hanging caps, belts and book bags.

Inflatable furniture can be a fun and inexpensive way to decorate. Kids of all ages love to lie on air-filled plastic chairs and tiny sofas that can easily be deflated and stored away when more floor space is needed. Shop local flea markets and antique stores for child-size rocking chairs and tables that can be repainted. As long as the chair or table is sturdily constructed, it can be refinished and decorated with decoupage or stencils.

It's easy to give your child a themed room by choosing a bedding ensemble (sheets, curtains, bedspread) with favorite animals, racecars, cartoon characters and the like. Many manufacturers offer accessories from rugs to lamps and shelves that are designed to coordinate with their bedding. Matching curtains, pillows and chair covers can be fashioned from coordinating fabrics or extra bed sheets.