PATTERN
PLAY

Mix colors and graphics to take your decor from meh to major with these expert ideas.

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1 ONE AND DONE

You can't go wrong sticking with a single color—it lets you combine patterns to your heart's content. Cheryl Luckett, a designer in Charlotte, North Carolina, shares her tips.

Choose a color from a nearby room in your home. For example, if you have hints of blue in the den, carry that hue into the dining room.

Let upholstery, pillows, and wallpaper be the jumping-off point. Then incorporate patterned tiles or rugs.

Go with one large-scale pattern. Add a few medium and small patterns; play with tones of the color within those.

3

SET THE TONES

A tone-on-tone palette and simple geometric shapes create a patterned oasis, says Cortney Bishop, a designer in Charleston, South Carolina.

USE NEUTRAL SHADES to ensure a calming experience. Nothing should be jarring to the eye.

INCORPORATE DIFFERENT SCALES OF THE PATTERN. "A larger pattern on a rug might be too dominant if alone in a room, but adding a similar, smaller pattern on drapes can balance it out," Bishop says. "Curtains are a great place to use pattern, because they can make a room feel finished."

EMBRACE PATTERNED UPHOLSTERY OR CUSHIONS. They're pretty, of course, but also very practical—they can hide stains, pet hair, and general wear.

2

A FAILPROOF FOUNDATION

In this Los Angeles living room, designer Emily Henderson used a white sofa as the blank canvas for pillows—perfect elements to experiment with if you're pattern shy. Here's how to pull off a cohesive look.

Choose one pattern family. Even on a neutral background, pillows with very different patterns would look off. Henderson chose mostly stripes, with varying widths.

Opt for safe color choices. Navy and mustard provide pop without being too bold. Find other color ideas on page 115.

For a laid-back feel, gather an odd number of pillows (like three or five) into groups. If you want a more traditional vibe, go with groups of even numbers.

5

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OLD MEETS NEW

If you are a fan of florals but afraid they'll look fuddy-duddy, designer Charlotte Harris Lucas from Charlotte, North Carolina, suggests pairing them with geometric shapes to keep the look modern.

If you plan to place a large-scale floral right next to another pattern, go with a smaller geometric print.

An edgy pattern can make a room feel fresh, as can a solid, bright accent color (like chartreuse or tangerine) on a pillow or upholstered chair.

4

CHECKS, PLEASE

Different colors and sizes of gingham bring a playful camp vibe to a room. Max Humphrey, a designer in Portland, Oregon, and the author of *Modern Americana* (out in April), mixed checks in a kids' room.

USE LARGER PATTERNS ON BIGGER ITEMS, like the rug, and smaller ones on littler things, like pillows.

CREATE MOMENTS OF VISUAL REST. The mostly white Hudson's Bay blanket breaks up the patterns so they don't overwhelm the space. The candy-colored stripes still play off the linear quality of the gingham.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A ROOM'S ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS when choosing patterns. Here, the board-and-batten wall echoes the lines of the rug. The grain of hardwood floors or the brick on a fireplace can function as a pattern too.

ANOTHER WAY TO TWEAK THE TRADITIONAL Upholster a classic antique in an era-defying fabric—think Marimekko on an Empire loveseat.

6

PRIMARY PRINT

For Houston designer Katie Davis, the inspiration for this bedroom came from a single swatch of floral fabric (it became the bolster pillow).

Choose a solid color from a fabric or wallpaper and use it on a large area, as Davis did here with the pinky-peach headboard. It adds some simplicity among the many patterns.

Wallpaper bigger spaces, like bedrooms or dining rooms, in large patterns. "A tiny pattern can be a lot to take in," Davis says.

Seek balance. If you choose a fantastically patterned wallpaper, balance it with solid upholstery. If you use a boldly patterned sofa or headboard, hold back on dominant patterns on walls and window treatments.

7 CAST OF CHARACTERS

If you want to go all out with patterns and colors, New York City designer Crystal Nielsen recommends a 1-2-3 formula: one dominant pattern, two supporting patterns, and three solids.

PICK A PRIMARY PATTERN that has many colors to broaden your options for the supporting patterns and solids.

THE SUPPORTING PATTERNS SHOULD BE VISUALLY QUIET. Layering bold on bold isn't advised for anyone dipping their toes into the pattern-mixing pool.

SANDWICH A SOLID-COLORED PILLOW between two patterned ones to highlight the design.

WINNING COLOR COMBOS

Sometimes the hardest part of pairing patterns is figuring out what colors go together. These are a dozen of our favorite groupings.

- SAGE — PINK
- YELLOW — PURPLE-GRAY — PLUM
- BLUE-GREEN — PEACH
- BLACK — WHITE
- VIOLET — INDIGO — ORANGE
- COBALT — TANGERINE
- GOLD — BUTTER — CREAM
- PINK — SEAFOAM
- PALE BLUE — DARK BLUE — LIGHT GRAY
- CHARCOAL — EARTHY SAND
- RED — NAVY — BLACK — WHITE
- MOSS GREEN — PINK — OLIVE