

EASY AS CHILD'S PLAY

Designing your youngster's bedroom shouldn't be hard. A trio of Bergen County pros offers five tips for spaces that will nourish a kid's spirit — and have staying power too. *By Haley Longman*

Remember the punitive cry "Go to your room!"? Chances are that your child has been spending more time than usual lately in his or her bedroom, and not as a punishment. Whether or not learning this fall is all or partly at-home and virtual, kids' bedrooms may deserve a fresh look — or even a fresh design.

Interior design for the younger set, of course, poses special problems. Your growing child is an aesthetic moving target, and you can't do a full redo every time he or she reaches a new stage or switches to a new governing passion. Then there's the more-than-slight possibility that the room may not be maintained by its occupant with consistent impeccable neatness.

But Bergen County's designers love a challenge. That's why three of them have bravely stepped up to offer specific pointers. It's not an impossible dream, after all, that your child's bedroom could end up looking really, really cool. At least for a minute.

1 CHOOSE A COLOR PALETTE RATHER THAN A THEME.

Pinterest and Instagram may lead you to believe that themes are necessary to make kids' rooms look cohesive—babies' rooms especially—but pros advise that to ensure that the room grows with the child, you should stick to a specific color palette rather than an outright theme. "I tend to build the design of a room around a singular item, such as a meaningful photo or piece of art," says Melissa Selvaggio of Melissa's Designs in Upper Saddle River. "From there you can create your color palette, which ensures you can take your room from toddler to teen with the same décor." Alternatively, consider choosing fabrics and wallpapers that would work with different palettes should your son or daughter want to alter the colors as he or she gets older. "Twens will want to change up their 'babyish' rooms, and painting is the best bang for your buck when redecorating," says Julie Johnson of Julie Johnson Interiors in Franklin Lakes.





2 ADD A FEW 'WOW' ELEMENTS.

Once you (and your youngster) have settled on the overall aesthetic, consider interspersing little “pops” into the space with a vibrant print. Both Selvaggio and Laurie DiGiacomo of Laurie DiGiacomo Interiors in Ho-Ho-Kus like using a bold print in bedding or drapes—decorative items that can be easily swapped out later. “Stripes and plaids are always great options for boys, and Moroccan ogee, polka dots and tie-dye are popular with the girls,” DiGiacomo says. If you’d rather make a statement via color, you can paint a bold accent wall or the ceiling, install removeable wallpaper or, for a less expensive option, paint smaller pieces of accent furniture in a bright hue. Just remember to keep the palette balanced. “If you feature a bold color on the walls, choose more neutral or harmonious colors for the bedding and carpet and accessorize with pieces that emulate the bold design or color on the walls,” Selvaggio says.



3 INVEST IN FURNITURE FOR THE LONG TERM.

The last thing you want to do is buy new furniture for your child’s room every couple of years. The key to furnishing it, then? Purchase quality foundation furniture, such as a bed, dresser, desk and nightstand, in a wood or neutral-painted finish so it will last the child into the college years and beyond. If you or your youngster want to easily change things up through the years as tastes evolve, you can paint or lacquer desks and nightstands in fun colors—“these pieces are usually less expensive and easier to swap out [than beds and dressers],” says DiGiacomo—or consider replacing pieces kids no longer love with vintage furniture. “Reusing and upcycling are great concrete examples for children to take pride in their family’s environmental consciousness,” adds Johnson.

4 CREATE “ZONES” TO MAXIMIZE SPACE.

Bedrooms with just a bed, a few drawers and a closet are a thing of the past. The new trend for kids’ rooms, space permitting, is “zoning off spaces designated for specific activities, which helps keep clutter at bay and makes the room more functional,” DiGiacomo tells us. “Zones” will vary by age, but can include a play space for the toddler set, a reading nook for elementary school-aged kids and a lounge area for tweens and teens. Another way to utilize square footage is to create a deep window seat under a dormer that can double as toy storage, Selvaggio suggests, or “create secret areas in crawl spaces, closets or around en-suite bathroom doors,” says Johnson. “Kids’ spaces are a free-for-all to let creativity fly!”



5 PERSONALIZE ART AND ACCESSORIES.

Our designers agree that livening up those four walls with some personal touches is key to making a space feel like home, but these accent pieces need not be monogrammed pillows or signs with their names spelled out in funky fonts. “I love using three-dimensional wall décor, sports equipment, framed artwork the clients have made or elements of a hobby they enjoy,” says DiGiacomo. Selvaggio agrees—she often livens up a young client’s room with “meaningful quotes, sentimental photos or objects that reflect his or her personality.” In other words, have fun! “Try to remember that your parents probably did not put this much thought into your childhood bedroom,” Selvaggio says. “Don’t stress too much!”

