

# HOMES & CONDOS



Hanging a great painting on the wall is an easy way to draw the eye into the room. You can use the entire wall as a focal point by scattering artworks.

## Getting it in focus

Instantly change the look and feel of a room by creating a focal point

LISA EVANS

If you've ever been confused as to why a room that has nice furniture and collectables that you love just isn't working for you, chances are it doesn't have a focal point.

A focal point is a feature of a room that instantly grabs your attention and is the object around which the rest of the room's design revolves.

"Without one, the eye wanders around aimlessly and one has difficulty being drawn into a room," says Ottawa interior designer Tanya Collins.

Focal points serve not only to create emphasis in a particular area of the room, but to make the entire space feel more inviting.

"The main function of a focal point is to add dramatic impact. Without an element of 'oh wow,' you're less inclined to want to spend time in the room," she says.

When deciding on a focal point, use the room's natural features first. Architectural elements such as a fireplace, a window that frames a beautiful view of the garden or built-in shelving instantly attract attention. If your room is lacking a natural focal point, you can easily create one with these simple tips.

### GET HANGING

Hanging a great painting on the wall is an easy way to draw the eye into the room. Collins suggests using the entire wall as a focal point by scattering photos.

"I like to fill the wall that you see upon entry with art hung from floor to ceiling in a salon-style arrangement," she says. Start by placing the largest, most interesting or colourful piece in the centre of the wall — just below eye level — and work from there, using frames of different sizes and styles.

### MIRROR, MIRROR

An oversized round mirror in an entryway or above the sofa can create a focal point as well as add depth, instantly changing your perception of the space. "The round shape tends to offset the typically square or rectangular proportions of most rooms," says Collins.

### PAINT AND PAPER

Used on one wall, wallpaper in a bold pattern can provide a focal point in smaller spaces such as a dining room, office or dressing room. Painting an accent wall in a different colour also adds depth and interest. Collins says this technique is especially useful in a long hallway

where you want to stop the eye. Alternatively, "placing a darker colour on the end wall to contrast a lighter colour or neutral is an effective way of lengthening the hallway."

### STACK 'EM UP

Floor-to-ceiling bookcases in a living room or office are easy to install and create a dramatic effect in a room.

### THINKING SMALLER

Even small objects can be used to create a focal point. Candles in a bold colour grouped together on the living room table or bold throw pillows on the couch create interest in the room. A gallery pedestal with a sculpture placed atop can serve as a focal point if it's properly lit.

"Framed in a window is another way to create a focal point or arresting vignette," says Collins.



As the largest piece of furniture in the room, the bed is typically the focal point, especially if it's positioned directly opposite the door.

### Create a focal point in every room

**Dining room:** An interesting chandelier above the dining table often becomes the focal point. A flower vase in the centre of the table or a colourful table runner can also do the trick.

**Bathroom:** Install a free-standing tub between two vanities or an artistic glass sink to create a focal point in the bathroom.

**Kitchen:** A dull backsplash that blends into cabinets makes the kitchen uninteresting to the eye. Use mosaics to create a design above the stove that serves as the kitchen's

focal point or add colourful tiles illuminated by under-cabinet lights.

**Bedroom:** As the largest piece of furniture in the room, the bed is typically the focal point, especially if it's positioned directly opposite the door. A bold-patterned or bright-coloured duvet can make the bed stand out even more, while matching end tables with lamps make it appear wider.

"Table lamps frame the bed, giving it more presence, especially if they're large in scale," says Ottawa interior designer Tanya Collins.



Installing a free-standing tub between two vanities, as Holitzner did in its Hampton model, creates a dramatic focal point in a bathroom.

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