

# Furniture

Furniture is an essential component in any home. It turns bedrooms, family rooms, dining rooms and other areas into comfortable, enjoyable and functional living spaces. Good furniture is designed to incorporate elements that are both useful and stylish. With such a wide variety of types, styles, colors and finishes to choose from, navigating through the sea of available choices can be a little intimidating. Taking a few minutes to consider the rooms you will be furnishing, the intended purpose of each item and the type of atmosphere you wish to create will go a long way toward helping you find the ideal furnishings for your home. Before you start looking at your options, consider the following questions and keep your answers in mind as you shop:

- Which room or rooms are you furnishing?
- Are there specific items of furniture you want to add?
- What materials and finishes will look best?
- What size is the room and how should that affect your choices?
- How can you most effectively furnish different rooms?

## Type, Style, Placement and Features

Furniture varies greatly from room to room, but its basic function remains the same. Whether a piece of furniture is placed in your living room, dining room, bedroom or home office, it should provide comfort, enhance utility and add style. Each room you furnish presents a unique set of considerations, so decide which room you are going to be tackling and determine its particular dimensions, color scheme and main purpose before purchasing any items. Most furniture is designed to match a certain type or style of room, so choose pieces whose looks and features best suit the room where they will be placed.

**Living/Family Room:** If your family tends to spend most of its time gathered together in your living room, make sure you have plenty of comfortable furniture that will hold up to the rigors of daily use. Decide how much seating you need and populate the space with enough armchairs, recliners, rocking chairs and couches for you, your family members and a few guests. For smaller rooms or to free up space, look for an L-shaped couch that can fit in a corner. Sectional couches can be configured to fit nearly any room and some even feature built-in cup holders or tables for added convenience. Consider both the style and type of material. Leather provides sophisticated style and durability while chenille and velvet provide soft cushioning and an elegant feel. Ottomans can be used to enhance comfort and complete a room's look.

- Reclining chairs provide an ultra-comfortable way to relax in front of the TV
- Choose a comfortable arm height that's neither too low nor too high
- Select armless couches and chairs with simple lines for a more modern feel
- Some items feature hollow spaces to provide extra storage room
- Special theater-style seating can turn a family room into a movie theater

**Bedroom:** If there's one item in your house that absolutely, positively must be comfortable, it's your bed. With so many options to choose from, it's easy to find the ideal combination of luxury, size and style. Traditional mattresses and box springs come in twin,

full, queen and king sizes. Consider the size of the room and the amount of space you need to sleep comfortably to help determine the best size. New visco-elastic "memory" foam mattresses contour to your body for added comfort while adjustable beds allow you to customize positions for your head and feet. Dressers, chests and armoires all provide storage in the bedroom while adding an element of style. Choose one that provides enough space while enhancing the room's appearance.

- California king-sized beds are slightly longer and narrower than conventional kings
- Airbeds, futons, bunk beds and loft beds provide space-saving sleep alternatives
- Ensure waterbeds are made from high-quality materials to avoid leaks
- Nightstands frame a bed while providing handy storage and surface space
- Add mirrors to smaller rooms to create a sense of depth and openness

**Dining Room/Kitchen:** Size is one of the most important considerations when placing furniture in your kitchen or dining room. You'll need to ensure that there's enough room to comfortably sit at a table without crowding. Try to allow 24" to 30" for each person. You'll also want to be sure there is room for people to slide chairs in and out. Round tables work best in smaller dining rooms and kitchen nooks as they maximize the amount of useable space. Rectangular tables are better for larger rooms and formal dining areas.

Dining chairs are available in a wide array of styles to suit your décor. Look for chairs that fit well when pushed up close to the table.

- Tables that are too small make rooms seem large and less intimate
- Tables that are too large make a dining room feel crowded
- Dining tables are typically available in 29" or 30" heights
- Expandable tables can grow to accommodate more guests

**Home Office:** A comfortable chair and a desk with plenty of storage space are the hallmarks of a useful home office. If you spend a lot of time typing, e-mailing and working through spreadsheets, be sure you have a chair that provides enough support to keep you feeling comfortable over long periods of time. Look for one that allows you to make multiple adjustments, particularly if more than one person uses it. The more you can customize a chair, the greater your comfort level will be. Cloth and mesh materials provide ventilation to keep the chair cool while leather and vinyl offer a stylish look that's easy to clean. A good desk should provide plenty of space for your computer, speakers, discs, mouse and keyboard. If you use your desk for more than computer work, look for a larger surface and extra drawers. In small rooms, consider desks that provide vertical storage or include spaces for other peripherals such as a printer.

- Ergonomic features eliminate unnecessary strain on your back, neck, shoulders and more
- Height, armrest and tilt adjustment allow customization for long-term, comfortable use
- Chairs with five-point bases provide stability while casters provide improved mobility
- L-shaped desks can be placed in a corner for better use of space in small areas

**Wood Finish:** Many pieces of furniture feature wood finishes that provide lasting beauty in any room of your house. When it comes to determining which one best suits your style and preferences, the chart below provides a handy reference.

Finish	Appearance	Points to Consider
Bleach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lightens color</li> <li>• May turn wood almost white</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A durable, clear coating preserves the finish</li> </ul>
Enamel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hides grain and color</li> <li>• Applied over paint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates tough, scratch-resistant surface</li> </ul>

<b>Lacquer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear lacquer shows the wood grain</li> <li>• Colored lacquer hides or masks the grain</li> </ul>	Brushed or sprayed on in multiple layers for different effects
<b>Oil</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural look</li> <li>• Enhances color</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several coats must be rubbed into surface</li> <li>• Delicate finish</li> </ul>
<b>Paint</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of color choices</li> <li>• Hides imperfections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be glossy or semiglossy</li> <li>• Can chip or scratch</li> </ul>
<b>Shellac</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear coating</li> </ul> Serves as a sealer to protect against damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily marred</li> <li>• Shows water spots</li> </ul>
<b>Stain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adds and/or alters color</li> </ul>	Can be used to simulate the look of different wood types
<b>Varnish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adds a rich, brown color</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finishes include matte, satin and glossy</li> </ul>
<b>Wax</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retains natural appearance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protects wood</li> </ul>

## Features

**Table Leaves:** Expandable tables with drop-in leaves allow you to have a cozy table that can grow to accommodate guests.

**Loft Beds:** For small bedrooms, consider using a loft bed to maximize available space. Loft beds are raised up off the floor and have an open space beneath, much like a top bunk bed with no bottom bunk below. The room beneath the bed gives you space for items such as a computer desk, dresser or couch.

**Themed Furniture:** When furnishing your child's room, consider choosing furniture with a special theme that reflects his or her interests. With everything from race cars and fire trucks to cartoon and movie characters, you can find a bed, desk, table or other item, that is bound to make your child feel more at home.

**Pillows:** Decorative pillows provide stylish accents for couches, loveseats and chairs. They are available in a variety of sizes, materials and aesthetic styles. For sleeping, choose a pillow that matches the way you sleep. If you sleep on your back, select pillows of medium firmness. Use softer pillows if you sleep on your stomach. Firmer pillows will provide greater support for side sleepers.

**Corner Chairs:** Just as there are L-shaped couches that fit into corners, there are V-shaped chairs for the same purpose. These chairs are designed to maximize space and allow you to face either direction when sitting.

**Modular or Sectional Construction:** Items that can be easily taken apart and reassembled make moving a breeze. Whether the door is too small or the piece is too heavy, furniture that can be reduced to small, easy-to-manage sections are extremely helpful.